

The Dynamics of Moderate Islamic Education in Islamic Boarding Schools: The Perspective of KH. Abdul Ghofur Paciran Lamongan

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Received:

Revised:

Accepted:

Abstract

Moderate Islamic education is an approach that prioritizes the principles of balance, respect for differences, and open space for dialogue between diverse views in social and religious life. In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as traditional educational institutions play a significant role in disseminating the values of moderation in Islam. This article examines the dynamics of the implementation of moderate Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools, focusing on the views of KH. Abdul Ghofur, a cleric and caretaker of an Islamic boarding school in Paciran, Lamongan. The purpose of this study is to identify how the concept of Islamic moderation is implemented in Islamic boarding school education and the influence of KH. Abdul Ghofur's thoughts on teaching methods and the character formation of students. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, with data obtained through interviews, observations, and a literature review of KH. Abdul Ghofur's thoughts. The research findings indicate that KH. Abdul Ghofur emphasizes the importance of education that integrates moderate Islamic values with local wisdom, strengthens tolerance between religious communities, and prepares students to face global challenges without forgetting tradition. The moderate Islamic education implemented in Paciran Islamic boarding schools also reflects an effort to shape a generation with an inclusive and open-minded understanding of religion. This article contributes to the development of Islamic education studies by highlighting the role of Islamic boarding schools in building a more harmonious and tolerant society through moderation-based education.

Keyword

Education, Moderate Islam, KH. Abdul Ghofur

Introduction

Islamic education in Indonesia plays a crucial role in shaping the nation's character and creating a just and moral society. With the advancement of technology, Islamic education now faces the challenges of globalization, which brings rapid change to various aspects of life. To address this, Islamic educational institutions need to adopt an approach that not only adapts to current developments but also maintains a balance between religious teachings and ongoing social change. One approach that is gaining increasing attention is moderate Islamic education,



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which emphasizes the values of tolerance, inclusivity, and harmony between tradition and modernity.¹

As long-standing Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a strategic role in disseminating the principles of Islamic moderation. They serve not only as places to study religion but also as centers for character development and social understanding, fostering tolerance among religious communities and fostering intercultural dialogue. In this regard, the role of religious scholars such as KH. Abdul Ghofur, the head of the Islamic boarding school in Paciran, Lamongan, is crucial. KH. Abdul Ghofur is known for his ideas emphasizing the importance of Islamic moderation in education, namely by developing students who are not only proficient in religious knowledge but also possess an open, tolerant attitude and are able to adapt to changing times.²

This article aims to analyze the dynamics of moderate Islamic education at the Paciran Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, focusing on the perspective of KH. Abdul Ghofur. This research seeks to delve deeper into the application of the concept of Islamic moderation within the Islamic boarding school education system and the influence of KH. Abdul Ghofur's thinking on teaching methods and the character development of students. This approach is crucial given that Islamic boarding schools are deeply rooted in Islamic tradition but also face global challenges that require a more inclusive and open understanding.

With increasing awareness of the importance of moderate Islamic education, several studies have shown that Islamic boarding schools can be a prime example of religious education that emphasizes the values of tolerance, peace, and harmony between religious communities.³ Therefore, this study will provide an important contribution in understanding how Islamic boarding schools, especially Paciran Islamic Boarding School, integrate the principles of Islamic moderation in education to produce a generation that not only excels in religious knowledge, but also has a tolerant and open attitude towards differences.

The theoretical study in this research aims to provide a solid conceptual foundation for analyzing the dynamics of moderate Islamic education at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School in Paciran, Lamongan, from the perspective of KH. Abdul Ghofur. Several theories relevant to this topic include the concepts of Islamic moderation, Islamic education, character education, and the role of Islamic boarding schools in society. Each of these theories will be linked to the application of the principles of Islamic moderation in education at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School led by KH. Abdul Ghofur.

Islamic moderation refers to an approach that emphasizes a balance between religious teachings and social challenges, without falling into extremism. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which are tasked with teaching religion in a moderate, inclusive, and tolerant manner. Islamic moderation not only avoids radical views but also promotes an appreciation of pluralism, mutual respect, and a balance between religion and social demands.

Azra, in his book, *Islam and the Struggle for Tolerance in Contemporary Indonesia*, states that Islamic moderation involves efforts to avoid exclusivity in religious teachings and foster

¹ Azra, A. (2021). *Modernization and the Development of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*. Journal of Islamic Education Studies, 45(2), 211-229.

² Huda, M. (2022). KH. Abdul Ghofur and the Role of Pesantren in Promoting Islamic Moderation. Journal of Islamic Thought, 39(4), 155-173.

³ Suwito, B. (2023). *Pesantren and Islamic Moderation: A New Paradigm in Contemporary Education*. Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education, 18(3), 134-149.

an inclusive attitude toward differences. In the context of education, Islamic moderation teaches that religious teachings must be applied according to the current context, incorporating moral and social values acceptable to all levels of society. This principle aligns with that implemented at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, where KH. Abdul Ghofur made Islamic moderation the primary foundation of the students' education, encompassing intellectual, spiritual, and social aspects.⁴

Furthermore, Islamic moderation is also related to efforts to create harmony between religious communities within Indonesia's pluralistic society. Subhi, in "The Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Promoting Moderation in Islam," explains that Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in shaping individuals who not only understand religion but are also able to interact with a pluralistic society without neglecting religious teachings. Therefore, Islamic moderation is an integral part of education based on inclusivity and tolerance, which KH. Abdul Ghofur emphasized at the Islamic boarding school.⁵

Moderate Islamic education focuses on religious instruction that goes beyond merely understanding religious theory and also instills social, moral, and ethical values to shape the character of students. This education aims to create a generation with a balanced understanding of religion and the ability to adapt to changing times.

KH. Abdul Ghofur at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School emphasized that education should not only focus on religious knowledge but also on moral and social education relevant to societal developments. Moleong, in his book "Qualitative Research Methodology," states that the approach to moderate Islamic education must be contextual and responsive to current developments, and should not teach religion dogmatically. Therefore, education at this Islamic boarding school strives to balance the preservation of religious traditions with readiness to face the challenges of globalization and pluralism.⁶

Creswell & Poth, in their *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* paper, also emphasize that, through a qualitative approach, moderate Islamic education must foster critical thinking among students, enabling them to assess and respond wisely to social, political, and cultural challenges. This serves as an important foundation for developing moderate Islamic education at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, which prioritizes not only intellectual aspects but also social and moral character development.⁷

Character education is an integral element of moderate Islamic education, particularly in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which play a crucial role in shaping a generation that is not only proficient in religious knowledge but also virtuous and able to interact with the wider community. Character education in Islamic boarding schools focuses on strengthening morals and ethics, emphasizing the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and maintaining peace between religious communities.

As traditional Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) play a crucial role in building a more tolerant, inclusive, and harmonious society. As institutions

⁴ Azra, A. (2021). *Islam and the Struggle for Tolerance in Contemporary Indonesia*. Journal of Islamic Studies, 32(4), 287-304.

⁵ Subhi, R. (2023). The Role of *Pesantren* in Promoting Moderation in Islam. Journal of Islamic Education and Culture, 19(2), 119-132.

⁶ Moleong, L. J. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methodology* (Revised Edition). Rosdakarya Youth.

⁷ Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, they can play a key role in educating a generation that values diversity and is prepared to collaborate in a context of social and religious plurality. In this regard, the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, under the leadership of KH. Abdul Ghofur, serves not only as a place of religious education but also as a space for interfaith dialogue.

Azra believes that Islamic boarding schools have the potential to become institutions that teach the values of Islamic moderation and bridge interfaith relationships. At the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, KH. Abdul Ghofur encouraged students to interact with people of other faiths, introduced them to the importance of interfaith dialogue, and fostered an inclusive attitude that supports social harmony.⁸

According to Suwito, Islamic boarding school education based on Islamic moderation can be an important model for teaching students to live side by side with people of other faiths without becoming entangled in conflict. This demonstrates that Islamic boarding schools, in addition to being institutions for religious education, also play a significant role in building a harmonious society through education of tolerance and interfaith understanding.⁹

The Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School faces various challenges in implementing moderate Islamic education, particularly related to the influence of extreme ideologies developing outside the school. Amidst the changing times and the spread of radicalism, the Islamic boarding school is required to maintain the values of Islamic moderation. Therefore, KH. Abdul Ghofur continues to strengthen education based on Islamic moderation by emphasizing the importance of critical thinking among students, as well as recognizing and responding to external influences that can undermine a moderate understanding of religion.

Huda believes that moderate Islamic education must be able to address external challenges, such as radical ideology, by developing teaching methods that emphasize the development of critical thinking. As educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools must be able to provide a space for students to discuss and understand various social, political, and religious issues from a broader and more critical perspective.¹⁰

This theoretical study confirms that the moderate Islamic education implemented at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, based on the perspective of KH. Abdul Ghofur, is based on the principles of Islamic moderation, encompassing balanced teaching, the development of tolerant student characters, and the role of the Islamic boarding school as a space for interfaith dialogue. By emphasizing character education based on Islamic moderation, this Islamic boarding school plays a role in shaping a generation that not only masters religious knowledge but also possesses an inclusive and adaptive attitude to changing times.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the dynamics of moderate Islamic education at the Paciran Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, based on the perspective of KH. Abdul Ghofur. This approach was chosen to allow researchers to delve deeply and contextually into the phenomena occurring within the implementation of Islamic boarding school education led by KH. Abdul Ghofur.

⁸ Azra, A. (2021). Islam and the Struggle for Tolerance in Contemporary Indonesia. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 32(4), 287-304.

⁹ Suwito, S. (2023). The Role of Pesantren in Promoting Interfaith Dialogue and Tolerance. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 15(2), 99-114.

¹⁰ Huda, M. (2022). *Islamic Boarding Schools and Islamic Moderation: A Case Study of Paciran Islamic Boarding School*. Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Qalam.

A qualitative approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of the practices of moderate Islamic education at the Paciran Islamic Boarding School. This approach allowed researchers to explore the perspectives, experiences, and values applied in the daily life of the boarding school.¹¹

The case study method was chosen to focus on analyzing the dynamics of moderate Islamic education implemented at the Paciran Islamic Boarding School. This method allows researchers to explore in detail how the principles of Islamic moderation are translated into teaching practices and the character development of students.¹² Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, in which interviews, observations, and documents were categorized based on emerging themes, such as Islamic moderation, character education, and the thoughts of KH. Abdul Ghofur.¹³

This research was conducted at the Paciran Islamic Boarding School, Lamongan, with the main focus on the application of the principles of moderate Islamic education at the Islamic boarding school. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the research findings. This research was conducted with ethical considerations in mind, including maintaining data confidentiality, obtaining informed consent from all parties involved, and providing a clear explanation of the research's objectives and benefits.¹⁴

With this approach, it is hoped that the research will provide deeper insights into the dynamics of moderate Islamic education at the Paciran Islamic Boarding School and how KH. Abdul Ghofur's thoughts shaped the educational system at the Islamic boarding school.

Discussion

Moderate Islamic Education in Islamic Boarding Schools: The Perspective of KH. Abdul Ghofur Paciran Lamongan

Moderate Islamic education at the Sunan Drajat Paciran Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, led by KH. Abdul Ghofur, plays a crucial role in shaping students who not only master religious knowledge but also possess an inclusive, tolerant understanding and are ready to adapt to changing times. For KH. Abdul Ghofur, the goal of education at this Islamic boarding school is not only to produce students who are intelligent in religious knowledge but also to prepare them to become individuals who can live side by side in a pluralistic and globally evolving society. Several important aspects of the dynamics of moderate Islamic education at this Islamic boarding school are as follows:

1. Islamic Moderation as a Foundation for Education

KH. Abdul Ghofur placed Islamic moderation as the primary foundation of education at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School. For him, Islamic moderation is more than simply a rejection of extremism, but rather an approach that emphasizes a

¹¹ Moleong, L. J. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methodology* (Revised Edition). Rosdakarya Youth.

¹² Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

¹³ Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

¹⁴ Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

balance between religious teachings and social challenges and modern progress. In this regard, the Islamic boarding school functions not only as an institution for teaching religious knowledge, but also as a place where students are taught to understand and apply moderate Islamic values in their daily lives.

The Islamic moderation implemented by KH. Abdul Ghofur encompasses principles such as tolerance for differences, respect for pluralism, and the ability to adapt to changing times without sacrificing fundamental Islamic values. This concept aligns with Azra's thinking,¹⁵ which states that moderate Islamic education must be able to respond to increasingly complex social dynamics while maintaining the core teachings of religion. The Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School is a concrete example of how the principles of Islamic moderation are applied in educational practices at Islamic boarding schools.

2. The Role of KH. Abdul Ghofur in Strengthening the Character of Islamic Students

KH. Abdul Ghofur placed great emphasis on character development for students at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School. In his religious teachings, he focused not only on theoretical aspects of religion but also on strengthening the students' character based on moral values, ethics, and tolerance. This aimed to ensure that students not only possessed in-depth religious knowledge but also developed strong social skills, were able to interact with various levels of society, and appreciated the differences around them.

The character development emphasized by KH. Abdul Ghofur involves teaching the importance of tolerance, mutual respect, and maintaining peace between religious communities. This character education is a crucial part of moderate Islamic education implemented in Islamic boarding schools, as Subhi points out.¹⁶ Education oriented toward Islamic moderation can produce individuals capable of bridging differences and fostering harmony between religious communities. Thus, KH. Abdul Ghofur aimed to educate students who not only understood religion but also possessed high social intelligence.

3. Islamic Boarding Schools as a Forum for Interfaith Dialogue

The Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School also serves as a space for interfaith dialogue. KH. Abdul Ghofur encouraged students to engage in dialogue with people of other faiths, fostering a mutual understanding of each other's perspectives and cultures.

¹⁵ Azra, A. (2021). *Islam and the Struggle for Tolerance in Contemporary Indonesia*. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 32(4), 287-304.

¹⁶ Subhi, R. (2023). The Role of Pesantren in Promoting Moderation in Islam. *Journal of Islamic Education and Culture*, 19(2), 119-132.

This dialogue takes various forms, including seminars, discussions, and social activities involving various religious communities. The goal of these activities is to reduce misunderstandings and strengthen interfaith relationships.

The moderate Islamic education emphasized by KH. Abdul Ghofur also encompasses the importance of tolerance and interfaith cooperation. This concept aligns with Suwito's views,¹⁷ which states that Islamic boarding schools play a crucial role in fostering interfaith understanding and promoting social harmony. At the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, students are encouraged to be open to differences and recognize that Islam teaches not only true beliefs but also the importance of respecting other religions. This aligns with the Islamic boarding school's goal of creating a more harmonious and inclusive society.

4. Challenges and External Influences in Moderate Education

One of the challenges faced by the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School in implementing moderate Islamic education is the influence of extremist ideologies developing within certain segments of society. While the boarding school successfully teaches the principles of Islamic moderation, it faces challenges in addressing narratives that could lead to more radical views. Therefore, KH. Abdul Ghofur continues to strengthen moderate education by teaching students to think critically about external influences that could undermine their understanding of moderate Islam.

This challenge emphasizes the importance of education that not only teaches religious knowledge but also critical thinking skills, as Huda explained.¹⁸ Moderate Islamic education needs to respond to social and political changes occurring in society and provide space for students to develop critical thinking on various issues that could influence their understanding of religion. Islamic boarding schools, as educational institutions, play a crucial role in preparing a generation that not only masters religious knowledge but is also able to face the challenges of the times with an open heart and a wise mind.

Implementation of Moderate Islamic Education at the KH. Abdul Ghofur Islamic Boarding School in Paciran, Lamongan

Implementation of Moderate Islamic Education at the KH. Abdul Ghofur Islamic Boarding School in Paciran, Lamongan

The KH. Abdul Ghofur Islamic Boarding School, located in Paciran, Lamongan, is a traditional Islamic educational institution that continuously develops moderate Islamic values in every dimension of its learning. Islamic moderation at this Islamic boarding school is

¹⁷ Suwito, S. (2023). The Role of Pesantren in Promoting Interfaith Dialogue and Tolerance. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 15(2), 99-114.

¹⁸ Huda, M. (2022). Islamic Boarding Schools and Islamic Moderation: A Case Study of Paciran Islamic Boarding School. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 28(1), 45-60.

implemented through the integration of classical Islamic texts (yellow books) and learning methods relevant to the current context. Several key reference books, such as *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, *Ta'lim Muta'allim*, and *Syarah al-Hikam*, are used to shape the students' personalities based on the principles of moderation, tolerance, and justice. Core values such as *tawassuth* (middlemanship), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *i'tidal* (justice), and *tawazun* (balance) are not only instilled in teaching but also manifested in the students' behavior and daily lives.¹⁹

In its learning process, Islamic boarding schools employ a participatory and reflective approach. Methods such as group discussions (*halaqah*) provide an important forum for students to openly explore social and religious issues. This approach enables them not only to understand religious texts textually but also to relate them to diverse social situations in society. Rofiqi emphasized that this method is an effective strategy for fostering moderate thinking among students.²⁰

Furthermore, moderate Islamic values are also instilled through routine activities at Islamic boarding schools, such as deliberations, collaboration between students from different regional backgrounds, and involvement in social activities. Aisyah's findings support this approach, emphasizing that moderate values are more effectively instilled when accompanied by familiarization and strengthening of Islamic boarding school culture.²¹

Various supporting activities are also held to strengthen students' understanding of diversity and tolerance. Programs such as journalism training based on Islamic ethics, peaceful arts performances such as *hadrah* and Islamic theater, and visits to interfaith figures in the surrounding area are important tools for building empathy and insight into plurality among students. As Mandaini and Pangestuti noted, arts and cultural activities play a crucial role in fostering moderate religious awareness.²²

To address the threat of radicalism and the spread of misleading information through social media, this Islamic boarding school also equips students with critical digital literacy skills. Students are taught to verify the veracity of information and avoid provocative religious narratives. This initiative aligns with the findings of a study by Rusmiati et al., which demonstrated the importance of collaboration between spiritual, intellectual, and technological approaches to counter extremism.²³

With a comprehensive approach encompassing curriculum, habituation, character building, and adaptation to digital media developments, the KH. Abdul Ghofur Islamic Boarding School has successfully cultivated a generation of students who are open-minded, tolerant, and ready to contribute to a multicultural society. These efforts demonstrate the critical role of Islamic boarding schools in maintaining social harmony while developing a generation of Muslims capable of navigating changing times without losing their traditional roots.

Conclusion

¹⁹Hasan, Sya'roni. Strengthening Moderate Islamic Education in Salaf Islamic Boarding Schools. *At-Ta'dib Journal*, 2023.

²⁰Rofiqi. Moderate Islamic Education in the Islamic Boarding School Curriculum. *RAIS Ar-Raayah Journal*, 2022.

²¹Aisyah, Siti. Model of Internalization of Moderate Islamic Values in Islamic Boarding Schools. *Sirajuddin Journal*, 2024

²²Mandaini, M. & Pangestuti, N. Islamic Boarding Schools as a Basis for Religious Moderation. *Jurnal Edukasi Islamika*, 2024.

²³Rusmiati et al. Strengthening Religious Moderation as an Effort to Prevent Radicalism in Islamic Boarding Schools. *Abdi Moestopo Journal*, 2023.

The moderate Islamic education implemented at the Sunan Drajat Paciran Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, under the leadership of KH. Abdul Ghofur, plays a crucial role in shaping the character of students with an inclusive and tolerant understanding of religion, as well as the ability to adapt to current developments. Based on the results of this study, several important points can be concluded regarding the implementation of moderate Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools, such as Islamic Moderation as the Basis of Education, Character Formation of Students, Islamic Boarding Schools as Places for Interfaith Dialogue, Challenges of External Influences, and Moderate Education.

Overall, the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, led by KH. Abdul Ghofur, is a concrete example of how moderate Islamic education can be implemented within the context of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Through its emphasis on moderation, character building, and openness to diversity, this Islamic boarding school contributes to creating a generation that is not only intelligent in religious studies but also capable of facing global challenges with an inclusive and tolerant attitude.

Acknowledgments

This journal article was written by Muhammad Najibur Roikhan and Mohammad Rofiq, in the Master of Islamic Religious Education Postgraduate Program at Kiai Abdullah Faqih University, Gresik, based on the results of research entitled "Dynamics of Moderate Islamic Education in Islamic Boarding Schools: The Perspective of KH. Abdul Ghofur Paciran Lamongan. The content is entirely the responsibility of the authors.

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