



Policies and Practices of Religious Moderation in Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Jambi City

S. Sagap¹, Muhammad Rafii², Arfan³

Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

seggafuinjambi@gmail.com¹

muhammadrafii@uinjambi.ac.id²/Corresponding author

arfanaziz@uinjambi.ac.id³

Abstract

This study focuses on and aims to examine the policy and implementation of religious moderation in private Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi City. The research method used is qualitative by collecting data through in-depth interviews, policy document analysis, and observation. The results of the study indicate that the policy of religious moderation in two private Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi City has a different approach. There are differences in the interpretation and implementation of policies that give rise to certain challenges and dynamics in the campus environment. A number of factors, such as campus culture, student participation, and support from leaders, influence the success of the implementation of religious moderation policies. This study contributes to understanding the implementation of religious moderation policies in the context of private Islamic higher education institutions. The implications of these findings can be the basis for developing more harmonious policies in creating a moderate private Islamic higher education institution environment.

Keywords: Education Policy, Best Practices, Religious Moderation, Islamic Higher Education Institution

A. Introduction

Religious moderation in Indonesia is a view, and actions in taking the middle path are inevitable for Indonesia in the future. Therefore, this country must be free from all forms of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism to bring to life the point of moderation (Haidar Nashir, 2019, 71). Religious moderation or moderate Islam is a moderate understanding and attitude of religion, not extreme left or right, and is interpreted with four indicators, i.e., national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodating to local culture (Tim Penyusun, 2019, 42).

Recommendations for the implementation of religious moderation academically, both formal and informal, in accordance with the situation and conditions of the higher education context have received legal certainty. In addition, recent studies have shown that the success of counter-radicalism strategies can be achieved through the implementation of moderation (Benny Afwadzi and Miski, 2021). One effort to strengthen religious moderation is through the institutionalization of religious moderation in certain binding programs and policies (Tim Penyusun, 2019, iv). Nevertheless, the policy of religious moderation must receive support from Islamic higher education institutions, although the implementation of moderation in Islamic higher education institutions faces challenges from external parties (Khamami Zada (Ed), 2019, 168).

An important reason to bridge moderation with Islamic education is to strengthen the understanding of moderation and religious understanding in the Islamic education environment. Lately, religious understanding tends to display a new identity that is resistant to local wisdom, and not a few even lead to rejection or reluctance to accept Pancasila as the basis of the state (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, 2019). In this case, higher education institutions are expected to build religious moderation through various activities, including maximizing the dissemination of the idea of religious moderation in religious activities, conducting scientific activities, and integrating science in every educational institution. Thus, higher education institutions can fill the perspective of Islamic education by sowing moderate values in the academic community environment (Muhammad Qasim, 2020, 180).

For instance, long before the Ministry of Religion's policy on moderation was issued, UIN Walisongo Semarang implemented and echoed religious moderation. Meanwhile, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta has implemented and mainstreamed religious moderation culturally through the Center for the Study and Development of

Nusantara Islamic Boarding Schools (PKPPN) (Hasyim Muhammad, 2022). However, it was also shown that IAIN Salatiga, UIN Raden Mas Said, IAIN Manado, and IAIN Ambon have not firmly established policies for implementing religious moderation. Therefore, commitment from higher education institutions' leaders is vital in implementing the program (As'ad et al., 2022, 89–90). In comparison, UIN Malang, Darussalam Gontor University Ponorogo, and Ma'had Aly As'adiyah instill the value of religious moderation through campus Islamic boarding schools (Nasir & Rijal, 2021, 213). In their practice and operations, in UIN Jakarta, UIN Bandung, and UIN Yogyakarta, the implementation of the moderation program remains not as expected. This denotes that Islamic higher education institutions are not yet ideal to be called agents of religious moderation (Subhan & Pratama, 2021, 11).

In Jambi Province specifically, the policy of religious moderation has not been seen in its implementation in state and private Islamic higher education institutions. Meanwhile, out of 16 private Islamic higher education institutions (PTKIS) in Jambi, there have been no signs of implementing a religious moderation program, which is considered to be the spirit of preserving local culture, sowing tolerance, and defending the Republic of Indonesia. In fact, religious cases in Jambi cannot be considered small because several cases in the name of religion are inseparable from the lives of religious people in Jambi. This can be traced from the following cases: blasphemy, the sealing of churches, conflicts over the establishment of houses of worship in Jambi, and terrorism (Admin, 2022). On the other hand, fundamentally, Islamic higher education institutions are considered capable of disseminating the values of moderation to middle-class society by establishing various programs, such as socialization, training, and activities.

For that reason, this study takes the locus of Islamic higher education in Jambi City, with a number of arguments to strengthen the urgency of researchers taking the following two institutions as objects of study. First, the Mambaul Ulum Islamic Institute (INISMU Jambi) is a private Islamic higher education institution that has a pesantren base, which is considered to have a strong influence on Islamic teachings, is tolerant, moderate, and upholds brotherhood and religiosity. The pesantren-based offer for education at the higher education institution level also enlivens and, at the same time, answers the community's need for Islamic higher education, which is colored by the culture and values of pesantren. Second, STAI Ma'arif Jambi is a private Islamic higher education institution with a Nahdlatul Ulama organizational background, which has a

positive network and track record in various issues of diversity, Islam, and nationality. Therefore, STAI Ma'arif, which was much earlier present in the community than other private Islamic higher education institutions, received critical questions regarding its contribution to the practice of religious moderation at the higher education institution.

B. Method

This research was conducted at STAI Ma'arif Jambi and INISMU Jambi. The determination of the research location was based on the facts and experiences of religious cases that occurred in several regions and regencies according to the existence of the campus and the facts with the research subjects. The research method employed was qualitative. Meanwhile, the technique for determining the research subjects was carried out by purposive sampling. Interviews were conducted with a number of institutional leaders at each Islamic higher education institution, including the Rector, Vice Rector I, Vice Rector III, Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Chairperson of LPM, Chairperson of LPPM, lecturers, and students.

The data analysis technique used a flowing data analysis model, namely an analysis carried out since the data collection stage, writing the results, until the conclusions of the research. The analysis steps were carried out through the following stages: a) Describing the data. At this stage, the researchers described the collected data to provide an overview of what was obtained from the field. b) Determining data classification. The data described were then grouped or classified into certain categories to facilitate further analysis. c) Seeing the interaction of the data classification carried out. The researchers examined how the classified data interacted with each other and identified the relationships and patterns that emerged. d) After observing the interactions between data, the researchers analyzed the results of the interactions to understand the arising implications and impacts. e) The final stage was to find and interpret the meaning of the results of the interactions of the data analyzed and then used to draw conclusions and provide recommendations based on research findings.

C. Results and Discussion

Distribution and Research Findings on Tolerance Education

The policy of religious moderation in Islamic higher education institutions reflects a deep effort to create an educational environment that is balanced between Islamic values and moderate values. These higher education institutions are faced with

a difficult task because they not only provide solid religious education but also promote inclusive and tolerant understanding of differences in beliefs. This involves a series of strategies and actions to manage the diversity of religious views and practices in the academic community. However, in practice, the implementation of the policy of religious moderation in Jambi Islamic higher education institutions does not always run smoothly. Challenges arise in managing differences in the interpretation of Islamic values and in responding to social and cultural changes that can affect the dynamics of diversity in the higher education institution environment.

Ahlu Sunnah Waljama'ah: Moral and Thought Guide at STAI Ma'arif Jambi

Historically, Jambi society generally practices the teachings of Ahlusunnah Waljamaah (ASWAJA). To preserve and develop these teachings, the presence of a higher education institution is needed. STAI Ma'arif Jambi is here to develop Islamic knowledge based on the beliefs held by the Jambi community. This campus is under the auspices of the Nahdlatul Ulama Higher Education Institution (LPTNU), i.e., an institution under the auspices of PBNU, which is tasked with developing higher education.

The Strategic Plan (RENSTRA) of STAI Ma'arif Jambi 2018-2023 shows a high commitment to organizing education and producing quality graduates. In terms of graduate quality, STAI Ma'arif Jambi departs from the idea that "as an Islamic higher education institution that adheres to Ahlussunnah Waljama'ah, it is necessary to produce graduates who demonstrate Islamic values. Therefore, graduates need to have integrity of personality and religious morality both in the context of individual and social life" (Dokumentasi, RENSTRA STAI Ma'arif, 2018-2023).

ASWAJA is often referred to as the Sunni sect, which is one of the main sects in Islam. Sunni is the largest Islamic group in the world, and the majority of Muslims in various countries identify themselves as Sunni, including in Indonesia. Religious moderation in the Sunni context refers to a balanced approach to religion, not extreme, and avoiding fanaticism and radicalism (Mu'ti, 2023). The understanding and framework of moderate religious practice respect diversity of opinion and differences among fellow Muslims. In Indonesia, NU is the strictest organization and practices Sunni teachings derived from the Quran, hadith, companions, and previous scholars (Muhammad Qasim, 2020). As a representation of Islam in Indonesia, NU has a moderate spirit in religious views and practices. The concepts of *tawasuth*, tolerance, and balance are the

foundations of NU to guide its people towards an inclusive and harmonious understanding of Islam (Sunoko, 2020).

STAI Ma'arif is also the oldest NU college in Jambi. In general, the existence of NU higher education in Jambi colors the dynamics of religious education that is developing in the college environment. Adhering firmly to the principles and teachings of NU, STAI Ma'arif can respond proactively to various needs of society, education, socio-religious, preaching, politics, and others. ASWAJA, as the ideology of NU, cannot be marginalized in the dynamic practice of college life. With the ideology of NU and the values of ASWAJA, STAI Ma'arif firmly maintains various classical thoughts, moral guidance, and practical laws that are developing in the higher education environment. Regarding STAI Ma'arif, in the firm confession of the Chairman of STAI Ma'arif, Dr. Miftahur Rizik, it was stated that the college is present on the road and moves under the guidance of ASWAJA and NU (Interview, Ketua, 14 Oct 2023).

This recognition is the starting point for a clear explanation and displays the identity of traditional NU Islam by maintaining and fighting for the high spirit of NU higher education institutions. STAI Ma'arif, as an NU higher education institution in Jambi, participates in various practices that are consistent with the spirit of religious moderation. Although normatively, moderation is not displayed textually in this institution, none of the Tri Dharma (Three Principles of Higher Education) activities of lecturers and students are contrary to religious moderation. This was acknowledged by the Head of LPPM STAI Ma'arif Jambi as follows:

"Untuk penelitian dan pengabdian di kampus kita, sampai saat ini, memang belum spesifik mengarah pada kebijakan moderasi beragama. Semua diserahkan kepada seluruh dosen yang melakukan penelitian atau pengabdian di STAI Maarif Jambi. Namun, penelitian dan pengabdian yang dilakukan oleh dosen STAI Ma'arif Jambi tidak ada yang bertentangan dengan moderasi beragama, tidak eksrem kiri, dan tidak ekstrem kanan"

"For research and community service on our campus, until now, it has not specifically led to a policy of religious moderation. Everything is left to all lecturers who conduct research or community service at STAI Maarif Jambi. However, the research and community service conducted by STAI Ma'arif Jambi lecturers do not conflict with religious moderation, are not extreme left, and are not extreme right" (FGD, STAI Ma'arif Jambi, 14 Oct, 2023).

The spirit of academic freedom is highlighted at STAI Ma'arif Jambi. The statement above confirms that the commitment to higher education and the concept of religious moderation is manifested in non-formal forms (Mu'ti, 2023). Although the findings above cannot be used as binding, they align with the government's vision to mainstream religious moderation in educational institutions. For this campus, this can be seen from the positive response of the university leadership to the government's recommendations.

In the statement of the Chairman of STAI Ma'arif Jambi, formal and written affirmation of religious moderation has certainly not been done. However, it is thus realized that Islamic higher education institutions such as STAI Ma'arif understand and have even organized moderation education on campus on a limited basis, as stated in the following quote:

"Di STAI Ma'arif Jambi, kalau moderasi itu kan keseimbangan, ada upaya menghindari sikap eskrem dan kekerasan di perguruan tinggi. Kalau di STAI Maarif ini, kita memang walaupun belum punya rumah moderasi beragama. Ada beberapa upaya yang dilakukan oleh para dosen, pengelola, dan juga mahasiswa untuk memberikan edukasi kepada mahasiswa terkait konsep moderasi beragama ini. Makanya, beberapa kegiatan kita kolaborasi kemaren dengan mendatangkan Diskremsus POLDA Jambi, pihak-pihak luar juga, untuk memberikan seminar, workshop terkait pemahaman dan edukasi moderasi beragama di STAI Maarif Jambi ini"

"At STAI Ma'arif Jambi, moderation is a balance; there are efforts to avoid extreme attitudes and violence in higher education. At STAI Maarif, even though we do not have a religious moderation house, there are several efforts made by lecturers, administrators, and students to provide education to students regarding the concept of religious moderation. Therefore, we collaborated on several activities yesterday by bringing in the Jambi Police Diskremsus and external parties to provide seminars and workshops related to understanding and education of religious moderation at STAI Maarif Jambi" (FGD, STAI Ma'arif Jambi, 14 Oct, 2023).

Moderation education oriented towards religious texts is the focus of student learning activities. This is useful for developing an understanding of religious moderation so that students gain a strong foundation in promoting religious moderation. Thus, unconsciously, this institution participates in countering radical ideologies and movements that have always used religious texts to justify their actions (Mu'ti, 2023).

Conceptually, STAI Ma'arif, in this case, represented by the highest leader, has adequate knowledge related to discourse or lectures on religious moderation. The statement above also indicates a good understanding of the existence or position of religious moderation in higher education. The logical consequence of this understanding is that STAI Ma'arif informally has conducted and provided moderation education for students, for example, by organizing seminars, workshops, or discussions related to religious moderation by presenting a number of speakers from various agencies, including the Jambi Regional Police (POLDA) (Interview, Wakil Ketua I, 14 Oct 2023).

STAI Ma'arif also opens its doors wide and provides space for the development of thought and science in the campus environment. Practicing tolerance towards hijab users is a natural thing and can be accepted by all campus academics. This acknowledges that the development of thought is inevitable, including the choice of using symbols or clothing affiliated with a particular religion. The policy of religious moderation at STAI Ma'arif refers to the ideology of NU and the values of ASWAJA. STAI Ma'arif takes an approach that is in accordance with the principles of moderation, namely efforts to maintain balance in practicing religion and avoiding extremism (Interview, Kepala LPPM, 14 Oct 2023).

Religious ideology as a basis for policy reflects the view that religious values and principles should be the primary basis for policy-making and governing society. In this context, religion is seen as a source of morality, ethics, and guidelines for life that should guide the actions of society and individuals. Religious ideology often encompasses various forms of religious implementation in society, from countries that explicitly base their laws on the teachings of a particular religion to societies that recognize the influence of religion in the form of internalized values and norms (Nunu & Darul, 2022).

Although religious ideology can bring positive values such as ethics and justice, this approach can also be controversial. Decision-making that relies too much on a particular religious interpretation can ignore the diversity of society and result in inequality (Jost et al., 2014). Religious ideology as the basis for educational policy reflects an approach that makes religious values and principles the main guideline in designing educational curricula, rules, and practices.

Governments and educational institutions that adhere to religious ideologies can include religious teachings in the curriculum, either as part of special religious subjects or by integrating them into general subjects (Utami, 2022). However, this approach

often causes controversy because it has the potential to conflict with the principles of freedom of religion and belief. Some people may feel that religious ideology applied in educational policies can restrict freedom of thought. Therefore, the main challenge in implementing religious ideology in educational policies is finding the right balance between religious values and the principles of freedom and pluralism (Sunoko, 2020).

This is consistent with the community's need for a religious attitude as a middle ground. The religious moderation program is carried out by considering every relevant discipline in developing students' moderate attitudes (Pajariantanto et al., 2023). Higher education institutions cannot remain silent but must choose religious ideology as the basis of strategic policy because the greatest desire of the majority of Muslims in the world to condemn radicalism is related to the world's resistance to acts of terrorism. The drive and motivation of most Muslims to condemn radical and terrorist movements is born from an ethical-moral commitment to universal Islamic values (Van Es et al., 2021).

Higher education based on religious ideology often aims to produce scholars and professionals who not only have academic excellence but are also educated within the framework of ethical, moral, and spiritual values recognized by a particular religion (Haidar Nashir, 2019). The application of moderation in educational and political policies in the modern era can be seen as an ongoing process to cover up various divisions in society. It is not only an ideological division in politics, as moderates sometimes imagine. Handling this division is what makes the tradition of moderation have a pleasant, friendly, tolerant, and anti-violent character (Mithen, 2023).

In national life, moderation can be a strategy to promote religious moderation as a preventive measure against extremism, radicalism, and terrorism. Given Indonesia's position in Southeast Asia, which is vulnerable to the spread of radicalism and terrorism by international terrorist groups in a global context, cooperation from all parties is needed. This cooperation does not only involve the government but also intellectuals, especially in higher education institutions in Indonesia, to promote moderate values (Purwanto et al., 2023).

However, the application of religious ideology in higher education can also pose challenges, particularly related to academic freedom and diversity of views. Higher education institutions that uphold a particular religious ideology may face the risk of ignoring diversity and pluralism in the academic world. Hence, it is necessary to find the

right balance between religious values and the principles of freedom of thought so that higher education institutions remain an inclusive space that values diversity of views and beliefs.

Strengthening Pesantren Values: Religious Moderation Policy at the Mambaul Ulum Islamic Institute

Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, is not only a place to study religion but also a place to form character and instill life values. By practicing the values of pesantren, the academic community can understand and apply Islamic principles in campus life and create a society based on high morals and ethics. Pesantren, as the heirs of Islamic knowledge, always become the foundation for the formation of a strong and authoritative Islamic character. Therefore, pesantren has a significant role in efforts to foster an attitude of religious moderation in society. In this sense, an attitude of religious moderation reflects a middle and balanced attitude in carrying out religious teachings. Thus, the values of pesantren can be an important agent in fostering a moderate attitude in society (Zuhdi, 2018).

In this case, the Islamic Institute of Mambaul Ulum (INISMU) Jambi is a higher education institution built on the values of pesantren. As recognized by many researchers, pesantren plays a role in fostering and instilling a moderate young generation (Pajarianto et al., 2023). One important thing that can be stated is that pesantren contains various Islamic values, which are characteristic of traditional education. Formal religious moderation does not have written rules or norms. However, INISMU disseminates religious values, including moderation in courses; Islam, nationality, and pesantren (FGD, INISMU, 21 Oct 2023).

In formal education carried out in the classroom, especially in ASWAJA and pesantren courses, lecturers often convey the spirit of ukhuwah Islamiyah, wathaniyah, and basyariyah (FGD, INISMU, 21 Oct 2023). Ukhuwah Islamiyah guides that fellow Muslims have a theological bond. Meanwhile, ukhuwah wathaniyah means that all citizens uphold brotherhood, share the same fate and struggle, and have the same love for the nation and state. Likewise, ukhuwah basyariyah shows that with the values of the pesantren that are upheld, INISMU spreads the spirit of moderation in practices that are close to the lives of students. Pesantren are certainly considered the most authoritative to discuss religion, Islam, and religious discourse, as well as religious traditions.

Thus, ASWAJA education taught in lectures has proven effective and efficient in increasing students' tolerance towards differences and anticipating the emergence of radical groups or movements that can threaten their existence. Lecturers and prospective Islamic Religious Education teachers need to get inclusive religious material through such mentoring. Therefore, strengthening ASWAJA as an effort to anticipate radicalism for prospective PAI teachers is a must (Jazil et al., 2023).

INISMU also realizes that this institution is and continues to experience development. Thus, various activities that are considered to contribute to the development of the institution are always well received, including the spirit of religious moderation. This can be seen from INISMU's cooperation partners with institutions outside of Islam, both for the benefit of student education and the development of its resources (Interview, Wulan, 15 Oct 2023). In addition, pesantren has an important role in building religious moderation in society. Pesantren is not only a place to study religion but also a place to instill the values of religious moderation (Sunoko, 2020). This is done by integrating moderate values into the curriculum. Hence, students are taught to understand Islamic teachings holistically (Mu'ti, 2023).

Additionally, pesantren also creates an inclusive atmosphere that allows for dialogue between religious communities. Through interactions between students from different backgrounds, space can be created to build understanding and tolerance for diversity (Purwanto et al., 2023). In this context, pesantren is not only educational institutions but also social institutions that make a real contribution to the formation of character and attitudes in religion. Pesantren also creates a balance between strong Islam and the ability to live side by side with a diverse society (Zuhdi, 2018).

Strengthening the values of pesantren through the policy of religious moderation at INISMU is a manifestation of this institution's commitment to maintaining its Islamic identity by adhering to the values of moderation and inclusivity. As an institution that combines Islamic education and general knowledge, this policy emphasizes strengthening moderate and contextual Islamic teachings (FGD, INISMU, 21 Oct 2023). The curriculum is carefully designed to teach an understanding of moderate Islam, avoid extreme attitudes, and instill the values of moderation in daily religious practices. This can be seen from the development of extracurricular programs that support the formation of moderate Islamic character (Interview, Wulan, 24 Oct 2024).

Further, the role of university leaders who implement the learning encounter approach has proven effective in campaigning for religious moderation. This program not only increases understanding and awareness of the importance of a moderate attitude in religion but also plays an important role in creating harmony between religious communities (Nunu & Darul, 2022). Such an approach can build stronger harmony and prevent potential conflicts between religious communities. This aligns with the policy of religious moderation at INISMU, which conducts interfaith dialogue. This policy also includes the introduction of pesantren values as part of the formation of student character. Thus, strengthening pesantren values through the policy of religious moderation at INISMU can ensure that these traditional values are interpreted moderately and inclusively.

Practice of Religious Moderation at STAI Ma'arif Jambi

The practice of religious moderation in Islamic universities can be an important approach to creating an inclusive educational environment and supporting tolerance between religious communities. STAI Ma'arif carries out various practices that are based on ideological awareness, strategically designed, and implemented in the campus environment. The practice of religious moderation here has not been formalized as an effort to implement religious moderation in universities. However, real practices show that activities in the campus environment have been in line with religious moderation. This can certainly be called a natural conception of religious moderation.

STAI Ma'arif seems to have a great opportunity to preserve and organize special cultural-based activities. According to one of the lecturers, respect for the campus's local culture is certainly not in doubt. This is because a number of lecturers, students, and alums of the campus are members of arts and cultural organizations in Jambi (FGD, STAI Ma'arif Jambi, 14 Oct 2023). This can support the organization of festivals and cultural gatherings on campus, which can be a place to celebrate diversity, such as art exhibitions, cultural performances, and discussions and workshops that raise cultural issues. These activities create a strong environment with local cultural colors and provide a stimulus for the academic community to see and learn more about local culture (Nunu & Darul, 2022).

It is undeniable that the Malay tradition makes local wisdom a legacy of ancestors that continues to be preserved in maintaining social relations in society. Strengthening social relations is deemed crucial in the religious life of urban

communities. Theoretically, this contributes to building a healthy relationship between God's products, namely religious values and local culture, and human products (Pajarianto et al., 2022).

The practice of religious moderation at STAI Ma'arif is a form of holistic approach to forming students who understand and practice Islamic teachings moderately. One aspect of the practice of religious moderation at STAI Ma'arif is a comprehensive educational approach. The carefully designed curriculum includes a contextual understanding of Islamic teachings and their application in everyday life. Students are required not only to master the scientific aspects of religious knowledge but also to understand the values of moderation, tolerance, and respect for differences (Interview, Wakil Ketua I, 21 Oct 2023).

The curriculum, in fact, is an important part of planning the long-term profile of graduates of each study program in a university. Therefore, a study emphasizes that a curriculum that reflects the spirit of religious moderation is an essential and strategic step in managing a higher education institution (Nasir & Rijal, 2021). As a center for the production of knowledge and the dissemination of religious and national values, religious higher education is responsible for producing graduates who can contribute to the progress of religion in the future.

Therefore, the development and evaluation of a curriculum based on religious moderation in higher education is a necessity. The various approaches offered, including efforts to integrate the value of moderation into higher education institutions, are valuable notes for institutions (Zuhdi, 2018). Campuses can organize academic and non-academic programs in an effort to foster a spirit of moderation and tolerance as well as local culture in a subtle way. One of the best practices that occurs in this campus environment is that lecturers and students have an agreement to accept differences. Thus, a peaceful, conducive, and comfortable atmosphere is created in lectures. This choice is a reflection of a moderate and tolerant attitude in maintaining harmony between religious communities (Utami, 2022).

Accordingly, amidst the rampant intolerance and violence in the name of religion, Islamic education is increasingly needed to foster a pluralistic attitude that is principled and positive and helps build harmony, peace, and national unity. Islamic education is required so that religion plays a more meaningful role in the progress of the nation. This pluralistic Islamic education is not limited to discussions of worship alone

but is developed outside of Fiqh, with contextualization of religious understanding in the lives of religious communities (Mu'ti, 2023).

The practice of religious moderation at STAI Ma'arif Jambi is also reflected in religious and extracurricular activities. Activities such as recitation, yellow book studies, and religious discussions are moments to discuss the values of moderation and apply this understanding in daily worship practices. The existence of a space for dialogue and exchange of ideas between students and lecturers creates an atmosphere that supports a deeper understanding of moderate Islamic teachings (Van Es et al., 2021).

In addition, STAI Ma'arif Jambi also promotes social activities that contain the values of moderation. Students are encouraged to be involved in humanitarian projects and social activities that support the principles of social justice and solidarity (Interview, Ketua Program Studi PAI, 21 Oct 2023). This is a concrete manifestation of the application of moderate Islamic values in serving the community. In daily interactions on campus, the practice of religious moderation is also reflected in social norms that prioritize tolerance and mutual respect between campus residents. Lecturers and staff become role models in practicing the values of moderation, thus creating a harmonious and inclusive learning environment. Campus activities, such as discussions on pluralism and joint social activities, also play a role in strengthening understanding and acceptance of diversity (Subhan & Pratama, 2021).

Hence, religious moderation is not only a concept but also a real practice at STAI Ma'arif Jambi. The practice of religious moderation at STAI Ma'arif Jambi includes the integration of moderation values in the curriculum, religious activities, and social norms in the campus environment. This approach contributes to the formation of students who are not only skilled in religious knowledge but also have an understanding of moderate Islam that can be applied in everyday life and the wider community.

Religious Moderation: Living Values at the Mambaul Ulum Islamic Institute

Religious moderation that lives and develops in Islamic higher education institutions based on pesantren reflects the essence of balanced and tolerant higher education. Pesantren, as the basis of Islamic education, plays a central role in shaping the character of students, with a focus on the values of moderation that include a middle attitude, full of tolerance, and balance in practicing religious teachings.

In the campus environment, INISMU students not only gain a deep understanding of religious aspects but are also taught to live their daily lives with a moderate attitude. The curriculum oriented towards religious moderation is designed to provide a strong religious foundation and teach tolerance for differences in beliefs (FGD, INISMU, 14 Oct 2023). The importance of religious moderation is also reflected in the role of the pesantren leader, who acts not only as a teacher but also as a role model of the values of moderation. Leadership that emphasizes a middle attitude, interfaith dialogue, and equality has a major impact on shaping students' character (Zuhdi, 2018).

INISMU leaders act as facilitators to develop a moderate attitude in living daily life and in interacting with the wider community. The Islamic boarding school actively adapts to the dynamics of globalization, maintaining a balance between tradition and progress. This includes integrating global aspects into a local approach so that students not only have deep religious insight but also understand the challenges and opportunities offered by the global world (Khamami Zada (Ed), 2019).

In the context of Islamic higher education, the discourse of moderation is expected to balance religious values and national spirit. It is stated that education that combines moderate Islamic values, such as tolerance and inclusiveness towards change, can encourage a stronger sense of nationality among students. It is also believed that through education, higher education institution leaders can prevent radicalism and extremism that often arise due to a narrow understanding of religion (Sunoko, 2020).

Non-formal and social activities in Islamic higher education institutions based on pesantren are a means to involve students in the real practice of moderation values, strengthen attitudes of tolerance, and improve interfaith dialogue skills. By being based on pesantren, INISMU strives to ensure the consistency and sustainability of teaching religious moderation (Interview, Wakil Rektor I, 20 Oct 2023). This initiative not only aims to produce scholars who master religious knowledge but also individuals who are able to live their lives with a moderate attitude. Thus, religious moderation becomes a living value and is manifested in every aspect of life in Islamic higher education institutions based on pesantren (Benny Afwadzi and Miski, 2021).

The importance of religious moderation in INISMU can be seen from the joint efforts with external institutions with non-Muslim backgrounds to organize joint activities that prioritize tolerance and mutual understanding. This step, in addition to strengthening relations between religious communities, also provides a concrete

example of how religious moderation can be a glue in society. Thus, INISMU becomes a laboratory for the values of religious moderation in responding to the complexity of religious life. This approach provides a strong foundation for students to understand the role of religion in modern life. Armed with the synergy of religious traditions, pesantren values, and moderate values, INISMU contributes to forming individuals who can become agents of peace in society.

D. Conclusion

Religious moderation has conceptually become a prominent legal product for educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The policy of religious moderation and its practice at Islamic higher education institutions in Jambi—STAI Ma'arif Jambi and the Mambaul Ulum Islamic Institute (INISMU)—are not formally stated. However, these Islamic higher education institutions accept religious moderation as an offer in the lives of religious people. STAI Ma'arif Jambi makes ASWAJA and NU the basis for morals and thinking. The moral basis applies in every practice of social interaction, social interaction, student ethics, lecturer ethics, and ethics on campus. Meanwhile, the basis of ASWAJA and NU's thinking is present in strategic areas, as stated in the curriculum and RENSTRA of STAI Ma'arif for 2018-2023. The practice of moderation at STAI Ma'arif is also found in the commitment to nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and respect for local culture. Unlike STAI Ma'arif, INISMU makes the values of the pesantren the basis for the norms of institutional management. Therefore, pesantren-based policies and practices are essential choices amidst the diversity of Muslim society and support the spirit of religious moderation, which is stated in moderation education, cooperation with non-Muslim institutions, national commitment, and respect for local culture. This study confirms and strengthens that the implementation of religious moderation in the higher education institution environment is effectively carried out with strategic policies that encompass various practices of religious moderation. Thus, religious moderation can become a value that lives continuously in the campus environment.

E. Acknowledgments

Thanks to the Institute for Research and Community Service of UIN Jambi, which has been willing to facilitate this research so that it can be completed until this article is published.

REFERENCES

- Admin. (2022). *Densus 88 Tangka[3 Terduga Teroris di Jambi*. Religionkompas.Com.
- Benny Afwadzi and Miski. (2021). Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education: Literature Review. *Ulul Albab*, 22(2).
- Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam. (2019). *Pedoman Implementasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pendidikan Islam*. Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia.
- Dokumentasi, RENSTRA 2018-2023*. (2023).
- Haidar Nashir. (2019). *Moderasi Indonesia dan Keindonesiaan: Perspektif Sosiologi*. UMY.
- Hasyim Muhammad. (2022). *Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama di PTKIN*. Rafi Sarana Perkasa.
- Jazil, S., Fahmi, M., Hunaida, W. L., Rohman, F., Djazilan, M. S., Prasetya, S. A., Sholihuddin, M., & Mas' ud, A. (2023). Strengthening Aswaja An-Nahdliyah to Anticipate Radicalism for Islamic Education Teacher Candidates. *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*, 18(1).
- Jost, J. T., Hawkins, C. B., Nosek, B. A., Hennes, E. P., Stern, C., Gosling, S. D., & Graham, J. (2014). Belief in a just God (and a just society): A system justification perspective on religious ideology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 34(1).
- Khamami Zada (Ed). (2019). *Implementasi Moderasi Beragama dalam Pendidikan Islam*. Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia Bekerjasama dengan Lembaga Daulat Bangsa.
- Mithen, N. (2023). Two Concepts of Moderation in the Early Enlightenment. *The European Legacy*, 28(3–4).
- Mu'ti, A. (2023). Pluralistic Islamic Religious Education: A Vision for Indonesia. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 21(2).
- Muhammad Qasim. (2020). *Membangun Moderasi Beragama Umat Melalui Integrasi Keilmuan*. Alauddin University Press.
- Nasir, M., & Rijal, M. K. (2021). Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation Through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia.

- Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 11(2).
- Nunu, B., & Darul, I. (2022). Typologies of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education Institutions. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 16(2).
- Pajarianto, H., Pribad, I., & Sari, P. (2022). Tolerance Between Religions Through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation. *Theological Studies*, 78(4).
- Pajarianto, H., Pribadi, I., & Galugu, N. S. (2023). Youth Religious Moderation Model and Tolerance Strengthening Through Intellectual Humility. *Theological Studies*, 79(1).
- Purwanto, Y., Saepudin, A., Shofaussamawati, Islamy, M. R. F., & Baharuddin, D. (2023). Tasawwuf Moderation in Higher Education: Empirical Study of Al-Ghazālī's Tasawwuf Contribution to Intellectual Society. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1).
- Subhan, A., & Pratama, A. J. (2021). *Potret Moderasi Beragama Di Kalangan Mahasiswa Muslim: Kasus Tiga Kampus Islam (Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta)*.
- Sunoko, A. (2020). Transformation Of Aswaja Ideology In The Nahdlatul Ulama Pesantren (NU). *EDUKASI: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1).
- Tim Penyusun. (2019). *Moderasi Beragama*. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI.
- Utami, P. . (2022). Raising Religious Inherency: The Role of Interreligious Competence in Achieving Religious Education Equality in Multireligious Public Schools in Indonesia. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 9(1).
- Van Es, M. A., Laan, N. ter, & Meinema, E. (2021). Beyond 'Radical' Versus 'Moderate'? New Perspectives on the Politics of Moderation in Muslim Majority and Muslim Minority Settings. *Religion*, 51(2).
- Zuhdi, M. (2018). Challenging Moderate Muslims: Indonesia's Muslim Schools in the Midst of Religious Conservatism. *Religions*, 9(10).