



**RELIGIOUS MODERATION EDUCATION MODEL IN ISLAMIC BOARDING
SCHOOLS BASED ON THE TEACHINGS AND STRATEGIES OF THE
WALISONGO`S DA`WAH**

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the religious moderation education model in the Islamic boarding school environment in Central Java. This research is included in qualitative descriptive research. A phenomenological approach was used to explore the implementation of religious moderation values in the Islamic boarding school environment in-depth and comprehensively. This research was carried out in Central Java Province, with sample selection through purposive sampling, including Al-Hidayat Lasem Islamic Boarding School, Qudsiyyah Kudus Islamic Boarding School, Futuhiyyah Demak Islamic Boarding School, Annawawi Purworejo Islamic Boarding School, and Al-Hikmah Benda Sirampog Brebes Islamic Boarding School. Research data were obtained through documentation, observation, and interviews, which were then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. The research results uncovered that Islamic boarding schools adopt the teaching values and strategies of Walisongo da'wah in cultivating religious moderation. These teachings encompass maintaining local wisdom, anti-fanaticism, economic independence, nationalism, broad-mindedness, and serving the

community. These teachings are framed in the Islamic boarding school curriculum, teaching materials, kyai's uswah, and Islamic boarding school culture, which then produces tolerant student behavior, loves ulama, understands history, is trustworthy, develops knowledge, upholds the foundations of the state, and is open-minded.

Keywords: Education; religious moderation; Islamic boarding schools; and central java

A. Introduction

The conflicts that occur in Indonesia, Asia, and even in the wilderness of the world are driven by several fundamental issues, specifically issues of race and religion. As a result, they disturb not only the stability of the country concerned but also the surrounding countries or nations involved in it. The religious issues that underlie the conflict are more influenced and determined by the shallow understanding of Islam or the failure to dialogue religious understanding with the diverse, plural, and multicultural social reality in Indonesia, which then becomes a doctrine for carrying out violence in the name of religion, even though the motives are actually more related to political interests.

To maintain harmony between religious followers, it is imperative to instill the values of religious moderation in social life. The government, through the Ministry of Religion, continues to prioritize mainstreaming the values of religious moderation (Kominfo, 2019). Religious moderation is a creative effort in religious life amidst various kinds of tensions, threats, and divisions caused by attitudes of subjectivity, arrogance, radicalism, and religious secularism. Religious moderation is also a tradition of the Indonesian nation, which always prioritizes politeness, tolerance, and the ability to dialogue in diversity (Tapingku, 2021).

Religious moderation serves as the main shield in protecting the nation's next generation, especially students and Islamic boarding school students (*santri*). This is due to the fact that students and *santri* are highly susceptible to being influenced by radical communities in expanding their influence (Mujizatullah, 2020). The Walisongo, in fact, has formulated a more systematic da'wah strategy or cultural strategy, particularly on how to deal with Javanese and Indonesian culture in general, which is very old, strong, and very well established. Apparently, the Walisongo had a very wise

method. Javanese, Cirebon, and Banten historiographers describe Walisongo figures with various sacred stories (Sunyono, 2017).

The moderation principle above elucidates Walisongo's position in terms of Sharia, essence, and *ma'rifat*, namely Islam itself. This is because the concept of moderation can be understood as a middle way, not too extreme to the right and not too extreme to the left, not too high to deify the Prophet, or too down to earth to abandon the teachings of the Prophet. Meanwhile, Islamic moderation is often used to refer to religious labels, such as modernist, progressive, and reformist Islam. One of the processes of Islamization through Islamic preaching carried out by the spreaders of Islam was through taking over local education systems with Hindu-Buddhist and *Kapitayan* characteristics, such as hamlets, dormitories, or hermitages, manifesting into Islamic educational institutions called "Islamic boarding schools," which were recorded as amazing results of preaching (Sunyoto, 2017).

Walisongo has a moderate attitude toward local culture (Masyitoh & Subekti, 2022; Ningsih, 2021). In the Walisongo era, da'wah emphasized the pattern of introducing a new culture amidst the institutions of royal power, namely Islamic religious culture, which was integrated with local culture or local wisdom values (Tajuddin, 2014). The Walisongo who were famous for developing Islam on Java Island were Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Giri, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunung Jati (Sultoni, 2016).

The Walisongo's religious moderation is continued by Islamic boarding schools, which can maintain local traditions at great risk, both theologically and ideologically, are polite in spreading moderate religious teachings, are full of tolerance, and can position themselves as a force that integrates and maintains the integrity of the Indonesian nation within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. As a comprehensive and integrated approach, the practice of Walisongo's teachings and da'wah should become the identity, vision, style, and main characteristics of Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools. Apart from being a solution to various global religious and civilizational problems, this idea of mainstreaming is also the right time for the moderate generation to take more aggressive steps. If radical, extremist, and Puritan groups speak loudly accompanied by violent actions, moderate Muslims must speak louder accompanied by peaceful actions (El-Fadl, 2005).

Based on that reality, the phenomenon of religious moderation education in Islamic boarding school environments is an important study in an effort to offer solutions to various problems and obstacles currently faced. Religious moderation is reflected in Muslims' attitudes when facing various problems and differences. Religious moderation is also the basis for daily life behavior

B. Method

This research is included in a qualitative descriptive study. Descriptive research aims to describe phenomena and their characteristics. Qualitative research is more holistic and involves various sources to gain a deeper understanding of the opinions, perspectives, and attitudes of participants (Maxwell & Reybold, 2015; Nassaji, 2015). A phenomenological approach was used to explore the implementation of Walisongo's teaching practice values and da'wah strategies in religious moderation education in the Islamic boarding school environment in-depth and comprehensively. More specifically, phenomenology is a science about phenomena or what appears to explore the essence of the meaning contained therein (Bandur, 2016; Murdiyanto, 2020). In this way, the intricacies related to Islamic boarding school activities in the context of implementing religious moderation education could be revealed more clearly and in-depth (Nasution, S., 1990).

To complement the naturalistic approach, the researchers also employed a social action model, in which the researchers directly observed and integrated with the research subjects in various Islamic boarding school activities, which were actively researched through participant observation (Murdiyanto, 2020). This involvement aimed to understand the various phenomena and perceptions of educational practitioners in Islamic boarding schools by using not only the interpretation of facts using emic and ethical models but also the logic of noetic interpretation. This research was carried out in Central Java Province, with sample selection through purposive sampling, involving, among others, Al-Hidayat Lasem Islamic Boarding School, Qudsiyyah Kudus Islamic Boarding School, Futuhiyyah Demak Islamic Boarding School, Annawawi Purworejo Islamic Boarding School, and Al-Hikmah Benda Sirampog Brebes Islamic Boarding School. Research data were obtained through documentation, observation, and interviews with Islamic boarding school stakeholders, including KH. Nurul Adha, KH. Zaim Ahmad, KH. Agus Faiz, KH. Chalwani, KH. Labib, and KH. Solahuddin. Then, the data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively.

C. Result dan Discussion

Based on data mining from observations, documentation, and interviews with Islamic boarding school stakeholders, a model of religious moderation education in Islamic boarding schools in Central Java was formulated as follows:

1. The Practice of Walisongo's Teachings and Da'wah Strategies as Strengthening Religious Moderation

Wali Songo brought the teachings of *Ahlusunah Waljama'ah* so that they are suitable for the conditions of the pluralistic Indonesian nation. The following is a form of teaching and da'wah strategies carried out by Walisongo and continuously maintained in the Islamic boarding school tradition:

a. Maintaining Local Wisdom

Local wisdom is a cultural product that should be used as a guide for life because of the many values that can be taken from it. This aligns with the teachings and da'wah strategies carried out by Sunan Kudus, as stated by Nurul Adha that the figure of Sunan Kudus is very central in the life of the Kudus community and its surroundings (Adha, 2021). This centrality was realized because Sunan Kudus had provided the foundation for tolerant religious and cultural teaching. This is proof that Sunan Kudus's teachings of tolerance are timeless and are even more relevant amidst the current of radicalism and religious fundamentalism, which is increasingly widespread today.

Some values of tolerance displayed by Sunan Kudus towards his followers were prohibiting his followers from slaughtering cows (Mahlail Syakur, 2021). Not only was slaughter prohibited, but cows, which are halal for Muslims, were also placed in the mosque yard at that time. Sunan Kudus's steps certainly invited sympathy from the people who, at that time, considered cows to be sacred animals (Rohman, 2021). Sunan Kudus's da'wah strategy transcends time. This is because preaching by promoting the values of acculturation was not widely practiced at that time by the spreaders of Islam in Indonesia in general.

b. Anti-fanatic About Arab Culture

Even though Islam came from Arabia, Walisongo did not outright teach Islam like Islam in Arabia. The da'wah method used by Walisongo, such as Sunan Kalijaga, was to always wear a *blangkon* and continue to use a *keris* and

others (Khoirin, 2021). Even if it is modified to suit the present, the substance of the cultural approach should not change. Preaching not only teaches people to truly understand the religion of Islam but also to have an attitude of wisdom because wisdom is the process of preaching politely and prioritizing peace of mind to the community (Chalwani, 2021).

Therefore, today's ulama can understand that the main key to preaching is to have the ability to adapt to the socio-cultural conditions of the local community. Frequently, tradition clashes with religion. In fact, traditions are permitted in Islam as long as they do not contain harm. As a matter of fact, if culture contains positive values, culture or traditions can be used as a medium for da'wah.

c. Economic Independence

The Walisongo as individuals are also people with good intellectual and economic abilities. From an economic perspective, the Walisongo generally lived well because of their background as traders. This is also reflected in the philosophy of '*gusjigang*,' which is the personification of Sunan Kudus so that Kudus people have good character (morality issues, morals), are good at reciting the Qur'an, which means studying, diligent in worship, and good at trading (Ihsan, 2017). From the history of the lives of the Walisongo, it can be concluded that to support the da'wah process, economic independence is required. In Islamic boarding schools, the caregivers equip the students with skills so that they can live independently, many of whom collaborate with outside parties who are considered capable in their fields, such as being equipped with skills in fishing, shipping, and others.

d. Instilling an Attitude of Nationalism

As an Islamic religious figure, Walisongo has a high sense of nationalism. The Walisongo have merged with their homeland; the form of nationalism of the Walisongo can be seen from the names of the regions in their homeland attached to them, not their respective original names (Chalwani A. , 2021). Instilling a sense of nationalism in students is known as the principle of "*khubbul wathan minal iman*," namely, loving one's homeland as part of one's faith (Bisri, 2019). The instilling of this nationalist attitude by Walisongo's successors remains to be guarded, maintained, and inculcated in the students through various activities at Islamic boarding schools, such as flag ceremonies, scouting, commemoration of the Republic of Indonesia's Independence Day,

and others (Ihsan, 2021). That way, when they enter society, the students have a strong spirit of nationalism.

e. Broadminded

The requirement to be a moderate Muslim is to have broad religious insight (Misrawi, 2010), not only knowing but also understanding deeply; it is not only *ushuliyyah* but also *furuiyyah*, such as knowing the *khilafiyah* of ulama in responding to an existing problem. Without broad insight, a moderate attitude will not be realized. Thus, it is important, especially in educational institutions, both Islamic boarding schools and madrasas and even public schools, to provide their students and *santri* with a broad and deep understanding so that they can have a moderate attitude (Hanif, 2021).

f. Serving the Community

Walisongo believes that education is a duty and calling from religion. Educating society is the same as educating one's own family, so they need to be given love, respected and looked after. As a result, when they grow up, they will be able to continue the struggle to spread the religion of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (Mas'ud, 2013).

As preachers who have direct contact with the community, the personality of each Walisongo is a crucial factor. In this case, Islam is a living truth; therefore, the morals of the carriers of Islamic messages are a reflection of the values they carry. This is where the Walisongo could appear in society as calm figures, have noble characters, and are very loved by anyone who interacts with them. In Indonesian society, one of the important aspects is cultural plurality, with kyai or ulama as informal leaders and quite influential in society, especially in Javanese Muslim society. Furthermore, they used Islamic boarding schools as a place for religious and social consolidation.

2. Religious Moderation Education in Islamic Boarding Schools in Central Java as a Role Model that Needs to be Developed

As a role model for religious moderation, Islamic boarding schools and the elements that make them up have their ways of developing religious moderation. One element and another are interconnected and cannot be separated, where these elements include kyai (ulama'), *santri*, and learning sources (study books). Kyai is at the forefront of strengthening the moral, ethical, and spiritual foundations of *santri* life

through the study of *Kitab* as a source of teaching. Meanwhile, the religious moderation model that Islamic boarding schools have developed includes the following.

a. Tolerance

This attitude of tolerance is a real example of what the elders at the Islamic boarding school do and act out. One thing that cannot be separated from the world of madrasas and Islamic boarding schools is the existence of ulama figures who always guide institutions and the quality of education. With the existence of these scholars, it is clear that the cultivation of morals has always been the primary focus.

b. Loving Ulama

The central figure of an Islamic boarding school is the presence of the kyai or what are often called ulama. Kyai is the top leader and part of the spirit of the Islamic boarding school. There are at least three kyai roles that are very strategic in the eyes of students. The first is that the students are interested in the depth of knowledge and fame of the Kyai, so they want to get closer to him. Second, the kyai's attention to his students is not limited to classical learning, meaning that the kyai still monitors his students outside of learning. Third, the students consider their Kyai as if they were their fathers, while the Kyai consider the students as a gift from God who must always be protected.

c. Understanding the History of the Predecessors

Santri, who lived in their time, must always be introduced to the struggles of their predecessors as a means of motivation to fulfill the developments of the times. They also need to be introduced to how their predecessors pioneered Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions and how they fought society's ignorance through their preaching. In fact, quite a few kyai fought for the independence of this nation.

Instilling the values of the struggles of their predecessors is one of the *santri's* enthusiasm for learning and serves as *qudwah* (Shodiq, 2021). Likewise,

KH. Chalwani responded to the role of *santri* as agents of change with his statement that *santri* must know the history of their predecessors as a reflection of progress in achieving independence according to the Islamic teachings of *rahmatan lil'alamin*.

d. Trustworthy Character

The current generation is the future leader, so there is a need for training on how to deal with life in society. *Santri*, who have returned to society, will later assume responsibility as leaders in a community, at least as leaders for themselves. This implies that a position led by a *santri* must be imbued with a trust that will be accountable to society and God.

Furthermore, the mandate that must be held accountable is to maintain peace on earth for leaders. The Islamic teachings of *Rahmatan Li'alamin* can be imbued by the students in maintaining unity and integrity through an understanding of religious moderation.

e. Maintaining Islamic Boarding School Teachings

In *Manhaj Al-Tarbiyah Al-Islamiyah*, it is stated that the Prophet Muhammad is the greatest role model for humans throughout history. He is also a teacher and role model for human morals who acted first before speaking, both regarding the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This is motivated by the fact that Allah has educated him as well as possible, so he is the highest example for humankind (Jauhari, 2006). If adapted to the current context, the role models for students are teachers who follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad.

To maintain *santri* traditions in the educational process, KH. Labib explained that students can carry out three activities to gain knowledge, namely first, by understanding religious sources in the form of the Qur'an and Hadith; second, related to example or *uswah*; Third, *khidmah*, which in Indonesian means "devotion." Islamic boarding school is not only a place to study but also a place

to apply the knowledge that has been gained. Students who have finished studying or have passed a class have the next task, namely serving at the Islamic boarding school first before leaving the Islamic boarding school or, in other words, *boyong*. Furthermore, KH. Labib explained that many lessons could be taken from *santri* service activities, apart from putting their knowledge into practice, namely cultivating a fighting spirit in *santri*.

f. Developing Science

Proof that Islamic boarding schools are not *jumud* is the existence of an open attitude in accordance with changes in knowledge, social, and economic society. In the Al-Hikmah 2 Islamic boarding school, under the care of KH. (Agus) Sholahuddin tries to combine religious knowledge with the needs of society, both religious and economic needs. He further explained that students must have an attitude of economic independence and must even be agents of change in the community's economy. Aside from science being the main focus, this Islamic boarding school develops soft skills to provide skills for the students. To equip students' skills, Al-Hikmah 2 Islamic boarding school caregivers adapt to the natural resources that exist around the Islamic boarding school environment. For example, two skills were developed in this Islamic boarding school, namely coffee plantations and fisheries.

g. Instilling Moderation through Learning Resources

Learning activities, such as the *Kitab* Study adopted from the Islamic boarding school learning system, can be a means of instilling Islamic values of moderation. The choice of *Kitab* to be studied will, of course, have a significant effect on students' understanding of moderate Islamic values (Mahmasoni, 2023). An important element in Islamic boarding schools is the study of the Yellow Book (*turats*), which is conveyed by the kyai to the students. This study is urgent in the process of imparting knowledge to students. *Kitab* studies are carried out periodically and continuously to provide a complete understanding

of the contents of the books, not only content containing a sense of nationalism.

In terms of cultivating moderation in the students of Al-Hikmah 2 Brebes Islamic Boarding School, the *kitab* used is *Idlotun Nayi'in* (Sholahuddin, 2021). Various pieces of advice are written in this book, with the hope of becoming a complete human being, decorated with commendable morals and understanding the problems experienced by the nation. Not much different from al-Hikmah Brebes is the Futuhiyah Mranggen Islamic boarding school, which instills national insight in its students through the study of *Kitab*. At the Futuhiyah Islamic boarding school, there is a book written by KH. Muhammad Hanif Muslih, the caretaker, entitled "The Law of Respecting the Flag According to Islam." This book explains the permissibility of saluting the flag, accompanied by arguments.

h. Upholding the Foundations of the State

Regarding strengthening nationalism, the Qudsiyyah Islamic Boarding School has a unique way, namely with a national poem. This poem was written by KHR. Asnawi, founder of Madrasah Qudsiyyah. The lyrics in the national obligatory song will inflame the spirit of struggle so that students can be trained to respect the struggle of the nation's heroes and remember their services in defending the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia from colonial rule. With songs, they do not think rigidly but are more flexible in finding solutions to various cases or problems they face every day. Also, they become strong and confident.

i. Open Minded

Openness in responding to problems according to conditions is one of the characteristics of modern thinking. This thinking has also emerged in Islamic boarding schools to respond to the rapid changes of the times. This open attitude is something that is not easy because openness also takes into account

realities and priorities. Proof of modern thinking in Islamic boarding schools is the opening of schools that use the national curriculum. For example, the Futuhiyah Islamic Boarding School opens kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, and vocational school educational institutions, in addition to opening all formal madrasa levels. However, all levels of education at Futuhiyah are affiliated with Islamic boarding schools.

In relation to Islamic boarding schools in modern times, first, they are increasingly oriented towards functional education, meaning they are open to developments outside themselves; secondly, diversification of programs and activities is becoming more open, which can also equip students with various knowledge outside of religious subjects as well as skills needed in the workplace; third, Islamic boarding schools can function as centers for community development because socio-cultural issues are studied in Islamic boarding schools.

3. Religious Moderation Model for Islamic Boarding Schools Based on Walisongo Da'wah Teachings and Strategies

This research aims to analyze the religious moderation education model in the Islamic boarding school environment based on the implementation of Walisongo's teaching practices and da'wah strategies. It is important to develop and strengthen religious moderation in the Islamic boarding school environment so that it can become a role model for religious moderation education. In summary, the religious moderation education model in the Islamic boarding school environment based on the implementation of Walisongo's teaching practices and da'wah strategies can be seen in Figure 2 below.

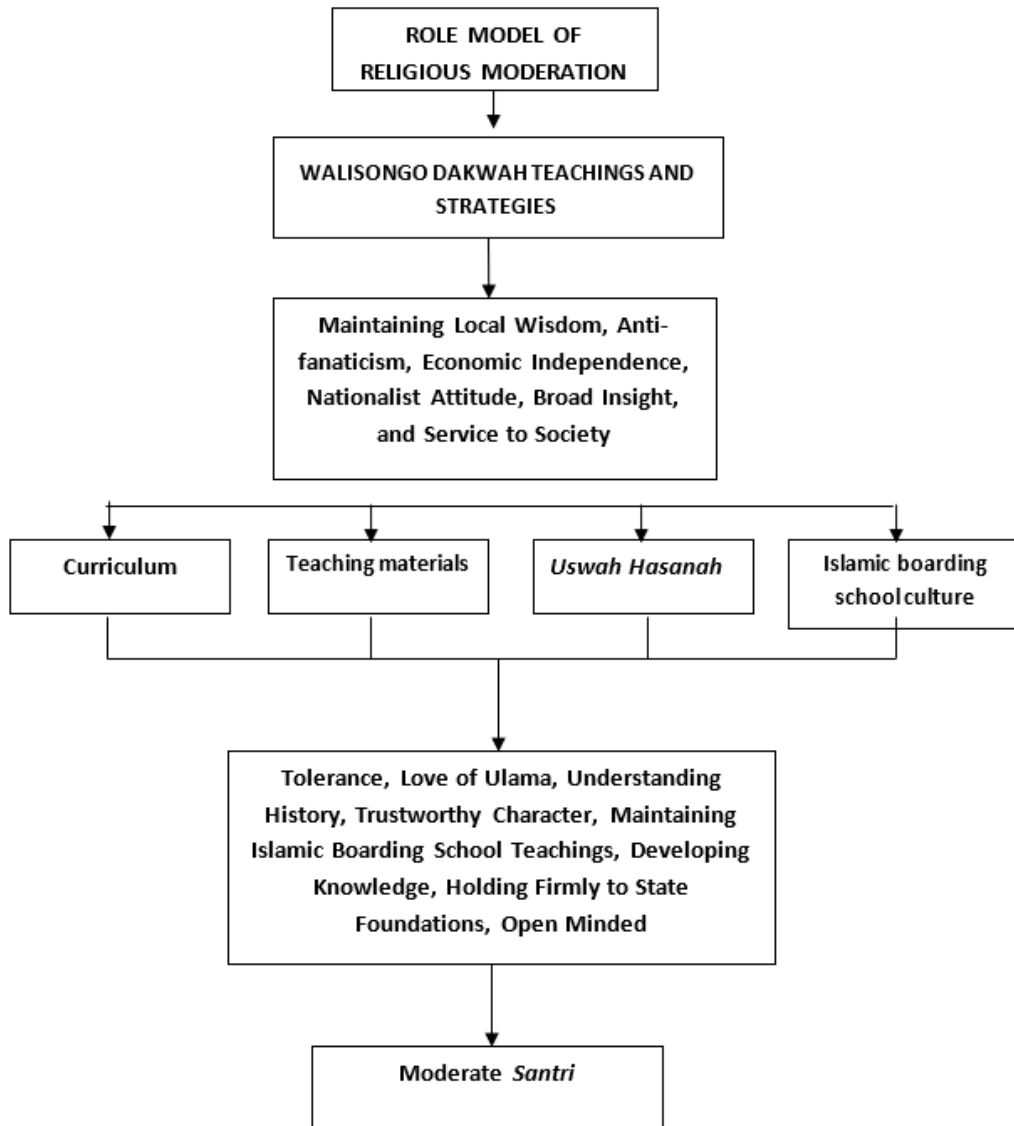


Figure 1. The religious moderation education model in the Islamic boarding school environment based on the implementation of Walisongo's teaching practices and da'wah strategies

In this figure, it can be seen that Walisongo's teachings and da'wah strategies are guidelines for developing religious moderation in the Islamic boarding school environment. There are four Walisongo teachings and da'wah strategies, including maintaining local wisdom, anti-fanaticism, economic independence and nationalist attitudes. These four teachings by Islamic boarding schools are outlined in the

curriculum, teaching materials, *uswah hasanah*, and Islamic boarding school culture. This is carried out so that efforts to instill religious moderation can be carried out as a whole, both within the scope of formal education through the curriculum and teaching materials that have been prepared and in the non-formal scope in the form of *uswah hasanah* and Islamic boarding school culture. The values instilled in the development of religious moderation in the Islamic boarding school environment based on Walisongo's teachings and da'wah strategies include tolerance, love of ulama, understanding history, trustworthy character, and maintaining Islamic boarding school teachings. All these values will shape the character of students into moderate students.

D. Conclusion

Religious moderation in Indonesia results from the process of spreading Islam through the preaching of the Walisongo. They brought Islamic teachings with an *Ahlusunah Waljama'ah* pattern, which aligns with the diversity of Indonesian society. This teaching emphasizes the values of tolerance, agreement, and reconciliation between the worlds of science, politics, and spirituality in building Islamic civilization. The Walisongo teaching tradition is still closely held by Islamic boarding schools as an example of how to live in diversity. The concept of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamain* is the basis for creating peace through da'wah strategies, which include maintaining local wisdom, rejecting fanaticism, economic independence, nationalism, broad insight, and service to the community.

As an example of religious moderation, Islamic boarding schools have an important role with complementary elements, such as kyai (ulama'), *santri*, and learning resources (*Kitab* study). Kyai plays a major role in strengthening the morals, ethics, and spirituality of *santri* through the study of *Kitab* as a source of teaching. The model of religious moderation developed by Islamic boarding schools encompasses the values of tolerance, respect for ulama, understanding of history, trustworthy character, maintenance of Islamic boarding school teachings, development of knowledge, loyalty to the foundations of the state, and a tendency to think openly.

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