

Religious Moderation Practices in Indonesian Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Literature Review on Typology, Strategy, and Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – Various studies have explored religious moderation in Indonesian higher education in some aspects. However, these studies remain limited by the lack of an overview capturing the field's overall development in terms of implementation and evaluation. Therefore, this study aims to map the implementation of religious moderation across Islamic and general Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), classifying the strategies employed and evaluations in diverse institutional contexts.

Design/methods/approach – A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted, examining high-quality Scopus-indexed articles published between 2019 and 2025 using the Watase Uake software. Articles were systematically screened using standard exclusion and inclusion criteria, with selected studies subjected to thematic analysis.

Findings – 21 articles were selected from an initial pool of 217 studies. These studies covered 41 HEIs, comprising 27 Islamic and 14 general HEIs. Five main strategies for promoting religious moderation were identified: academic integration, the optimization of the House of Religious Moderation (RMB), Pesantren, Madrasah Diniyah, and institutional policy. These strategies were evaluated in the academic literature across multiple dimensions, focusing on student, lecturer, approach, content, and comparative analysis.

Research implications/limitations – This study is limited by the lack of cross-institutional comparison of strategies and the absence of real-time data for evaluating religious moderation practices. Future research should address these gaps through empirical and comparative studies.

Originality/value – The study provides practical guidance for HEIs that have not yet optimally implemented religious moderation, and for those seeking to enhance or expand their current practices. It highlights the importance of integrating both traditional and contemporary mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of moderation in HEI.

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Introduction

Religious moderation has become a critical focus in academic and policy discourse, particularly in response to the rise of extremism in thought and action (Angkat, 2021). To counter this, Indonesia promotes multi-dimensional approaches to embed moderation in education. Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in nurturing tolerance, preventing radicalism, and fostering peaceful coexistence (Mulyana, 2023; Syarif, 2024). As agents of transformation, they are expected to integrate inclusivity and pluralism into both policy and academic culture. This urgency is reinforced by its incorporation into national frameworks such as the National Medium-Term Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional / RPJMN) and the strategic plans of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Muhlisin et al., 2023). These initiatives are implemented across educational institutions from primary to tertiary levels (Balitbang Diklat, 2021; Ma'rifah & Sibawaihi, 2023).

Despite strong institutional and policy commitments, efforts to promote religious moderation in Indonesian higher education face persistent challenges (Suhendi et al., 2020). Empirical studies reveal a gap between programmatic goals and practical realities, as radical ideologies continue to thrive, particularly in Islamic higher education institutions and General higher education institutions (Achmad et al., 2023). The intolerant and extreme Islamic ideologies often spread through underground networks and student recruitment (Ismail et al., 2021). A survey by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat / PPIM) found that in 2021, 48% of Muslim students saw Islamic education as a barrier to peaceful coexistence, while 23% avoided interfaith interactions due to their upbringing (Sahal & Bayuseto, 2021). Although the government has banned radical groups, ex-members remain active in academic spaces (Syahbudin, Raja, et al., 2023). Sustained innovation is needed to strengthen moderation initiatives (Ma'arif et al., 2023; Patterson et al., 2024).

Some higher education institutions in Indonesia face challenges in implementing religious moderation, despite it being a key government vision for education (Hanif et al., 2024). One reason is that these higher education institutions focus solely on their own campuses, without considering how religious moderation is practised across other institutions, highlighting the need for broader references and diverse models of implementation (Chotimah et al., 2025). Additionally, some authorities express concerns that religious moderation might blur religious boundaries, resembling interfaith pluralism (Kristianto & Pradesa, 2020). Meanwhile, the concept and mechanisms of religious moderation, as applied in many campuses, maintain the core principles of Islam while adopting a contextual approach to address contemporary challenges (Ismail et al., 2021). Understanding these variations and practices across institutions is therefore essential to provide comprehensive guidance, inform policy, and identify effective strategies, thereby paving the way for the formulation of these research questions. This is important so that authorities and higher education institutions that are still experiencing challenges in

applying religious moderation can obtain a more comprehensive overview of options (Maharani, 2025).

To understand the persistence of challenges in implementing religious moderation, it is crucial to clarify its normative and operational meaning. Religious moderation refers to balanced religious behaviour that avoids both extremism and liberalism, promoting justice, peace, and middle-path thinking (Rizza et al., 2025; Zaduqisti et al., 2020). Terms such as moderate Islam and Islam *wasathiyah* are often used interchangeably (Hermanto, 2022; Sapdi et al., 2022). This study adopts a broad understanding of religious moderation as a framework that integrates tolerance, adaptability, and balance in religious expression within pluralistic societies.

Several prior studies have examined religious moderation in Indonesian higher education (Jamaludin, 2022), focusing on specific aspects such as content (Hanafi et al., 2023), impact (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Marpaung et al., 2024), and policy (Muhlisin et al., 2023). However, these remain fragmented and lack a holistic, nationwide synthesis, particularly one that comprehensively captures both Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI or Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam) and general higher education institutions (PTU or Perguruan Tinggi Umum). To fill this gap, the present study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to capture both typologies of strategies and evaluations, thereby gaining insight into how religious moderation has been applied across diverse higher education contexts. It addresses three research questions: Firstly, which higher education institutions have implemented or engaged with religious moderation? Secondly, what strategies are used to promote religious moderation, and how are these strategies operationalised within higher education institutions? Lastly, how is religious moderation evaluated in academic studies? This contribution provides both conceptual clarity for scholars and practical guidance for policymakers and higher education leaders seeking to strengthen religious moderation initiatives.

Although it encompasses studies from both Islamic and general higher education institutions, the intention is not to undertake a direct comparison between the two HEIs. Instead, their inclusion enriches the empirical landscape, broadens the analytical horizon, and more accurately reflects the diversity of Indonesia's higher education system (Betavia et al., 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The identification of religious moderation strategies in higher education can be robustly grounded in institutional theory, as outlined by Scott (1987) which conceptualises institutions through three interrelated pillars: regulative, normative, and cultural–cognitive. Through the regulative pillar, strategies become observable in formal policies, regulations, and institutional directives that structure behaviour and include mechanisms of compliance such as guidelines, monitoring, and sanctions. The normative pillar allows strategies to be identified through academic standards or values, curricular goals, instructional objectives, and professional expectations that embed moderation into teaching–learning processes. Meanwhile, the cultural–cognitive pillar makes strategies

visible in campus routines, shared meanings, symbolic practices, and interactional patterns that reflect internalised values (Budi, 2023). Using Scott's framework, strategies for implementing religious moderation naturally emerge from institutional documents, curricular instruments, pedagogical approaches, and embedded campus practices, offering a comprehensive lens that aligns closely with the multidimensional findings of this Systematic Literature Review (Zucker, 1987).

Stufflebeam's CIPP (Context–Input–Process–Product) model is theoretically relevant for understanding how educational initiatives are conceptualised, implemented, and assessed. In this study, however, the CIPP model is not employed as a program evaluation tool, but rather as an analytical framework to categorise and synthesise the evaluation approaches reported in the reviewed literature on religious moderation in higher education (Stufflebeam, 1983). Within this analytical framework, the Context dimension is used to classify evaluation indicators related to institutional settings, policy environments, and the rationales underlying religious moderation initiatives. The Input dimension captures indicators associated with curricular design, academic resources, human capital, and institutional support structures. The Process dimension refers to how moderation policies and designs are operationalised through pedagogical practices, learning activities, and campus-based programs. Finally, the Product dimension encompasses outcome-oriented indicators, including reported changes in students' attitudes, institutional culture, and the perceived impacts of religious moderation initiatives (Ogwudile, 2025). By applying these four dimensions as analytical categories, the CIPP framework provides a systematic theoretical basis for mapping variations in evaluation practices across academic studies, while avoiding direct evaluative judgments on specific programs. This approach enables a transparent and coherent synthesis of how religious moderation is assessed within diverse higher education contexts.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to map, analyse, and synthesise findings on religious moderation practices in Indonesian higher education institutions. The review followed a structured process comprising several stages: formulating research questions, identifying relevant sources, applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, and conducting thematic analysis to identify the typology of religious moderation practices, the type of strategies employed, and evaluations within the higher education context (Pachouly et al., 2022).

Data Sources and Keywords

Data were retrieved from the Scopus database in December 2025 using WataSe Uake, a tool selected for its efficiency in identifying Scopus-indexed articles (Syahrudin, 2025). Scopus was chosen due to its high reputation, rigorous indexing standards, and extensive coverage of peer-reviewed international journals, making it suitable for systematic literature reviews in the social sciences and education (Wahono, 2015). The data

search focused on journal articles that met the following criteria: (1) the study explicitly discussed the implementation or practice of religious moderation, (2) religious moderation was examined within an Islamic perspective, (3) the implementation took place in a higher education context, and (4) the study was situated in Indonesia. These criteria were applied to ensure the selected studies were relevant to the research objectives.

Based on the predefined inclusion criteria, a Boolean search strategy was employed to ensure a systematic, transparent, and reproducible identification of relevant studies. Boolean operators (AND/OR) were deliberately used to integrate multiple conceptual domains, namely religious moderation, implementation or practice, assessment, higher education institutions, the Islamic context, and the Indonesian setting, thereby balancing search sensitivity and specificity (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Specifically, the AND operator was used to link core concepts that must appear simultaneously in the literature, while the OR operator was used to capture terminological variations within similar concepts. Accordingly, the following search string was constructed to maximise coverage of relevant studies while avoiding excessive retrieval of unrelated records: (Religious Moderation AND (Implementation OR Practice) AND Assessment AND (Higher Education OR University) AND Islamic AND Indonesia.

Exclusion and Inclusion

The inclusion criteria for this systematic literature review were as follows: (1) the article was written in English; (2) the study was published between 2019 and 2025; (3) the full text of the article was accessible; (4) the article was published in a Scopus-indexed journal (Q1–Q4); and (5) the study explicitly addressed religious moderation within the context of higher education in Indonesia. Articles were excluded if they did not meet these criteria or were not aligned with the research questions. For instance, studies by Muqowim et al. (2022), Nasution et al. (2023), and Rusmana et al. (2025), although addressing religious moderation, were excluded because they focused on non-higher education contexts.

PRISMA Flow Diagram

To ensure transparency and methodological rigour, the study selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 reporting guideline. PRISMA 2020 is a standardised framework developed to enhance clarity, transparency, and reproducibility in systematic reviews, encompassing four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021). The use of PRISMA 2020 enables a clear, structured presentation of the article selection process, thereby strengthening the methodological transparency of the review. Consistent with previous systematic reviews adopting PRISMA-based procedures (e.g., López-Sánchez et al., 2023) The results of each stage are presented narratively to ensure coherence and traceability of the selection process.

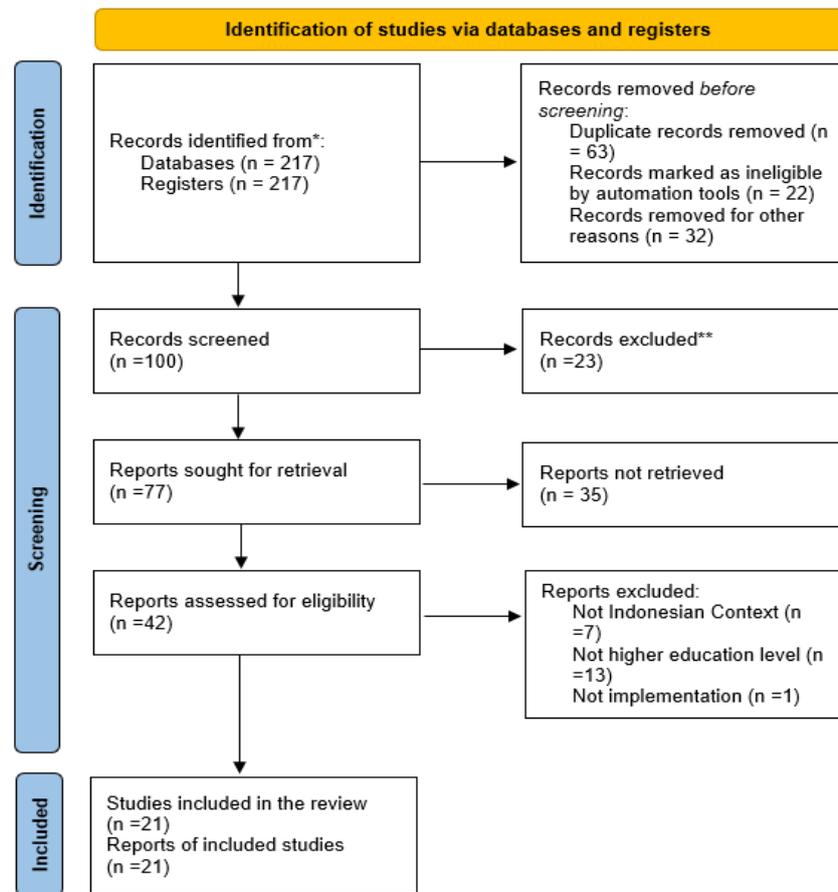


Figure 1. Prisma Flow Diagram of Article Results

Results and Discussion

Based on the study selection process, which followed the PRISMA 2020 framework, of the 217 initial records, 21 studies met all inclusion criteria. They were included in the final synthesis, presented in the table below.

Table 1. Data Extraction (n=21)

Extraction	Year	Study
21 articles	2025	Ainissyifa & Nasrullah, 2025, Arifin et al., 2025, Marhumah et al., 2025, Sirojuddin et al., 2025.
	2024	Afwadzi et al., 2024, Anwar et al., 2024, Djamaluddin et al., 2024, Hanif et al., 2024, Mukhibat et al., 2024, Jati et al., 2024, Yani & Hazin, 2024.
	2023	Muhlisin et al., 2023, Hanafi et al., 2023, Syahbudin, Ahmad, et al., 2023, Yani et al., 2023.
	2022	Burhanuddin & Ilmi, 2022, Hanafi et al., 2022, Naim et al., 2022, Pelupessy et al., 2022, Rahman et al., 2022.
	2021	Nasir & Rijal, 2021.
	2019-2020	No publications were found.

No articles published in 2019 and 2020 met the inclusion criteria of this review. Based on the search conducted using Watase Uake, the available studies during this period

predominantly examined religious moderation from non-Islamic perspectives, such as Christian theology (Sihombing et al., 2020), or were situated in European contexts rather than in Indonesia (Blinder et al., 2019). As a result, these studies were excluded because they did not align with the focus of this review on Islamic religious moderation in Indonesian higher education.

The number of articles identified in this study differs from those reported in previous systematic literature reviews. Such variation is expected, as distinct research objectives, problem formulations, search strategies, and article selection frameworks shape each SLR. For instance, a study by Shofiyuddin et al. (2023) aimed to map research trends on religious moderation among university students and to identify key implications arising from these studies. Their review employed the PICOS framework as a conceptual guide for data extraction. It utilised Zotero as a technical tool for filtering and selecting articles, resulting in 24 articles with a broader analytical scope than the present study, which specifically focuses on institutional typologies, implementation strategies, and evaluation approaches.

Similarly, Murad & Rizki (2022) identified 17 articles using Publish or Perish, with a primary emphasis on the dissemination of intolerance narratives within higher education contexts. Their study aimed to investigate the ideas and patterns of covert radicalism disseminated through counter-religious texts. In contrast, the present study adopts a different analytical orientation by focusing on institutional engagement with religious moderation. Rather than examining ideological threats alone, this study maps higher education institutions affiliated with religious moderation initiatives and analyses the strategies and evaluation mechanisms employed to counter radical ideologies. These dimensions constitute the core contribution of the present study.

Other studies have also examined implementation-focused aspects of religious moderation; however, their scope remains temporally limited, such as the review by Musyahid & Kolis (2023), which identified 16 articles published up to 2023. Collectively, these consecutive review efforts reflect an ongoing attempt to monitor the circulation and institutionalisation of religious moderation within higher education, which is essential for informing policy development aimed at preventing radicalism in Indonesian higher education institutions (Muhlisin et al., 2023).

A total of 21 articles were identified as the core sources of evidence and analysis in this study, serving as the basis for addressing the predetermined research questions. First, the review identifies the types of higher education institutions that are actively implementing or engaging in the agenda of religious moderation. Second, it examines the strategies used to promote religious moderation in higher education settings, including how they are translated into concrete practices on campus. Third, the study analyses how religious moderation has been evaluated in existing academic literature. The following three major points will be elaborated upon in the discussion below.

1. Higher Education Institutions Implementing and Engaging with Religious Moderation

Based on an analysis of 21 empirical and conceptual studies, this section presents a consolidated list of institutions identified as actors implementing religious moderation practices or having engaged with it, as shown in the table below.

Table 2. List of Indonesian Higher Education Institutions

Type and amount	Name of HEI
27 PTKIs (Islamic higher education institution)	Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Ponorogo, IAIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Universitas Islam Malang (UNISMA), IAIN Bukittinggi, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) Musaddadiyah Garut, STAI Muhammadiyah Garut, STAI Siliwangi Garut, Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan & Ilmu Pendidikan (STIKIP) Al-Hikmah Surabaya, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri (UNUGIRI) Bojonegoro, Universitas Nahdhatul Ulama Sidoarjo (UNUSIDA), Universitas Islam Kadiri (UNISKA) Kediri, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN SGD (Sunan Gunung Djati) Bandung, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim (Suska) Riau, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, UIN Alaudin Makassar, Universitas Darussalam Gontor (UNIDA), Universitas KH. Abdul Chalim (UAC) Mojokerto, Ma'had 'Aly As'adiyah South Sulawesi, Anonymous Islamic higher education institution, Anonymous HEIs in Semarang, Anonymous Islamic HEIs in Maluku.
14 PTUs (General higher education institution)	Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Universitas Dr. Soetomo (UNITOMO), Universitas Pembangunan Nasional (UPN) Veteran, Universitas Trunojoyo Madura (UTM), Universitas Brawijaya (UB), Universitas Airlangga (UNAIR), Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), Universitas Negeri Malang (UM), Institut Teknologi Sepuluh November (ITS), Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Universitas Syiah Kuala (USK) Aceh, Anonymous general HEIs in Bandung.

The dataset includes 41 Indonesian HEIs, comprising 27 Islamic HEIs and 14 general HEIs, reflecting the broad institutional spectrum represented in the literature. The identified HEIs have been involved in the application, discussion, or affiliation of values in religious moderation. This fact confirms that religious moderation has become a national, cross-sectoral agenda, not exclusive to religious institutions (Burhanuddin & Ilmi, 2022).

The involvement of general HEIs in religious moderation, affiliation, and practice is increasingly relevant when it is associated with the government's regulatory framework. Presidential Regulation (Perpres or Peraturan Presiden) Number 58 of 2023 concerning Strengthening Religious Moderation, which explicitly assigns ministries and institutions in all sectors to mainstream the value of religious moderation in their institutional functions (Muhlisin et al., 2023). Thus, expanding implementation from Islamic HEIs to general HEIs is not only conceptually reasonable but also a systematic response to the state's mandate

to strengthen social cohesion, tolerance, and diversity governance in the higher education environment (Dodego & Witro, 2020). These findings will complement the previous study, namely the study by Musyahid & Kolis (2023), which focuses solely on the practice of religious moderation in Islamic HEIs. In contrast, Indonesia also has a broader higher education context that is potentially infiltrated by radical groups (Nasution et al., 2023).

The equality of interests to advance the narrative and value of religious moderation, both in Islamic HEIs and general HEIs, is expected to provide double strength to internalise the values of Islam *wasathiyah* and to provide a double fortress for students in Indonesian higher education (Wahidin et al., 2023). In addition, it is hoped that a new policy will be developed and implemented in collaboration among religious moderation, which oversees Islamic HEIs, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, which oversee the general HEIs (Itmam & Aouich, 2024).

2. Strategies in Implementing Religious Moderation

This section outlines the diverse strategies and mechanisms used by Indonesian higher education institutions to embed, promote, and sustain religious moderation values. The categories were inductively derived from recurring patterns across the reviewed studies rather than adopted from a single framework, reflecting how institutions structure, organise, and sustain moderation initiatives as educational programs (Scott, 1987). Thematic clustering of similar strategic initiatives resulted in five overarching categories: academic–instructional strategies; the optimisation of the House of Religious Moderation (RMB or Rumah Moderasi Beragama); Madrasah Diniyah; Pesantren or Ma’had (Islamic residential learning institutions integrated within or affiliated with universities); and institutional policy.

2.1 Academic Integration

Academic integration as a strategy for implementing religious moderation involves incorporating moderation values into academic courses and curricula. At several Islamic higher education institutions in Garut, academic integration is implemented through Islamic courses such as *Ahlussunnah wal Jama’ah (Aswaja)* and *Kemuhammadiyah* (Mukhibat et al., 2024). Similarly, IAIN Ponorogo integrates religious moderation through a dedicated Islamic and religious moderation course, while IPB, UGM, and USK embed moderation values within Islamic Religious Education (Arifin et al., 2025). Through these courses, religious moderation is conveyed via structured teaching, classroom reflection, and value internalisation within the learning process.

Another form of academic integration is implemented through Pancasila and Civics Education courses as found at UIN Suska Riau. In this context, religious moderation is introduced by integrating themes of citizenship ethics, democracy, and interreligious tolerance into course materials and classroom instruction (Syahbudin, Ahmad, et al., 2023), allowing moderation values to be systematically reinforced through academic learning activities. Academic integration is also applied at the study program level. At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, etc,

religious moderation is embedded within Islamic Theology and Philosophy study programs. In this mechanism, moderation themes are incorporated into curriculum structures, distributed across multiple subjects, and reinforced through dialogical and analytical teaching methods within the program's academic framework (Rahman et al., 2022). These curricular initiatives frame moderation not merely as doctrinal content but as an academic competency cultivated through structured, reflective, and dialogical teaching–learning processes that foster both cognitive understanding and affective dispositions, including respect, empathy, and interreligious harmony (Za et al., 2024).

The academic and instructional strategies identified in this review can be interpreted through Scott's institution-oriented perspective, which views educational initiatives as structured responses to contextual needs. The integration of religious moderation into curricula and pedagogical practices reflects an institutional assumption that moderation is an intended educational outcome requiring systematic academic design (Scott, 1987). This institutional pattern is reinforced by evidence that moderation values can be embedded across diverse disciplinary contexts. Syahri et al. (2024) demonstrate that moderate narratives are effectively integrated into non-Islamic courses through transformative pedagogical approaches aligned with academic objectives, while Isnaniah & Islahuddin, (2022) showing that non-religious study programs (Tadris Bahasa Indonesia) can successfully internalise moderation values through systematic planning, sustained supervision, and lecturer capacity-building. Together, these findings suggest that academic integration serves as a standardised and transferable approach, embedding moderation values within routine instructional practices and sustaining them across various HEIs.

Taken together, these academic and instructional strategies reflect a deliberate institutional process of translating moderation ideals into curricular structures and pedagogical practices. The underlying expectation of this process is the gradual formation of students' inclusive dispositions, critical religious reasoning, and social sensitivity through sustained academic exposure. Compared to resource-intensive models such as Madrasah Diniyah or Pesantren-based formation, curricular integration remains the most adaptable and scalable strategy, enabling HEIs with varying capacities to participate in the broader agenda of fostering religious moderation (Scott, 1987; Sirojuddin et al., 2025).

2.2 The Optimisation House of Religious Moderation

The House of Religious Moderation (Rumah Moderasi Beragama) serves as a central institutional unit that coordinates and manages religious moderation initiatives implemented at IAIN Ponorogo. Through this unit, moderation values are operationalised by integrating curriculum development, academic research, conferences, training programs, publications, and public events related to religious moderation (Mukhibat et al., 2024). The establishment of Rumah Moderasi Beragama (RMB) reflects a distinctive institutional strategy in implementing religious moderation within higher education. Unlike academic-instructional integration or residential-based religious formation, RMB functions as a dedicated institutional hub that coordinates, legitimises, and disseminates moderation initiatives across multiple campus domains. Through RMB, religious moderation is no

longer embedded implicitly within curricular or communal life. Still, it is explicitly organised as an institutional mandate that bridges academic activities, student affairs, community engagement, and policy implementation (Ilmudinulloh et al., 2023). Its structured programs, recognisable symbols, and cross-unit engagement mechanisms enable moderate values to be continuously enacted, monitored, and normalised within institutional routines.

Prior studies of Mardhiah et al. (2025) confirmed RMB have shown it to play a crucial role in implementing religious moderation within higher education contexts. Through various centralised programs initiated by RMB, Islamic higher education institutions in Aceh reported effective outcomes in institutionalising religious moderation.

3. The Optimisation of Madrasah Diniyah

Madrasah Diniyah is implemented at IAIN Tulungagung as a supplementary academic program designed to strengthen religious moderation through traditional Islamic learning. This program is conducted through early-morning classes that focus on the study of Islamic classical texts (*turats*) and the teachings of classical Islamic scholars. Within this setting, Aswaja-based Islamic values are internalised through structured recitation, explanation, and guided learning (Naim et al., 2022). The positioning of Madrasah Diniyah as a strategy for implementing religious moderation is theoretically justified by its capacity to embed normative values within structured, routinised institutional practices (Fitriani & Naamy, 2020). Madrasah Diniyah operates through repetitive religious routines, authoritative engagement with texts, and compulsory participation, thereby allowing moderate values to be internalised as part of students' habitual religious life. This configuration enables moderation to be experienced not merely as an abstract concept but as a lived ethical orientation shaped through daily discipline, guided interpretation, and continuous exposure to plural scholarly traditions within classical Islam (Syafri & Budin, 2025). Consequently, Madrasah Diniyah serves as a stabilising mechanism that bridges scriptural understanding (*nash*) and contemporary social realities, ensuring that religious knowledge remains contextually responsive and socially grounded.

Viewed through Scott's institutional theory, Madrasah Diniyah represents a process of institutionalisation in which moderate values are legitimised and sustained through regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements (Scott, 1987). Its compulsory status reflects a regulative dimension that formally binds students to the practice. At the same time, the Aswaja-based framework and reverence for *turats* provide normative guidance that defines appropriate religious reasoning and conduct. At the cultural-cognitive level, repeated engagement with diverse classical interpretations gradually normalises plurality and moderation as taken-for-granted aspects of Islamic understanding (Naim et al., 2023). In this sense, Madrasah Diniyah does not function as an auxiliary religious program but as an institutional carrier of moderate values that reinforce legitimacy, continuity, and resilience against rigid or exclusionary interpretations within higher education. Empirical evidence further strengthens this position in Adzhar et al. (2025), viewed through an institutional lens, Madrasah Diniyah operates as a stabilising mechanism in which

moderation values are legitimised through formal obligation, reinforced by normative *Aswaja*-based frameworks, and normalised through repeated exposure to diverse classical interpretations.

4. The Optimisation of Pesantren

Pesantren, also known as Ma'had in the context of Islamic higher education, refers to a traditional Islamic residential learning institution in which students live under structured religious supervision while engaging in systematic Islamic education and character formation (Haryanto et al., 2024). Pesantren or Ma'had-based formation is implemented at UIN Malang, UNIDA Gontor, Ma'had Aly As'adiyah, and UAC Mojokerto as a residential educational model in which students not only engage in formal learning but also live within a structured Islamic environment. In this model, religious moderation is embedded through daily guidance, supervision, and habitual practices that accompany students' academic activities, exposing students to diverse Islamic traditions and nurturing *wasathiyah*-oriented attitudes (Sirojuddin et al., 2025).

These findings indicate that Pesantren operates as a distinctive institutional strategy for cultivating religious moderation. Unlike conventional classroom-based instruction, which is temporally and curricularly segmented, the Pesantren model offers a total and continuous educational environment in which learning processes, moral formation, and social practice are fully integrated into students' daily lives (Nasir & Rijal, 2021). While Madrasah Diniyah generally functions as a supplementary and time-bound reinforcement of religious values through structured additional classes, Pesantren embeds value internalisation within a residential system characterised by intensive mentoring and enduring authoritative relationships between students and religious educators (Burhanuddin & Ilmi, 2022).

The integration of classical text instruction, sustained guidance by educators (*Kyai* and *Ustadz*), and communal daily life enables the internalisation of moderation values to occur naturally and consistently (Humaidi et al., 2024). Viewed through an institutional lens, the Pesantren model functions as a socially embedded environment in which norms, meanings, and daily routines are continuously reproduced, allowing religious moderation to be internalised as a taken-for-granted disposition rather than merely conveyed through formal instruction (Haryanto et al., 2024). Existing literature shows that such institutional mechanisms foster ethical discipline, reflective reasoning, and emotional resilience among students, factors that play a crucial role in reducing vulnerability to extremist religious ideologies (Sirojuddin et al., 2025). In this sense, Pesantren not only reproduces classical Islamic knowledge but also shapes stable, resilient, and adaptive religious dispositions.

A previous study by Mashudi (2020) on Islamic HEIs in Probolinggo demonstrated that combining pesantren-based immersion with contemporary higher education curricula provides students with a solid foundation for navigating their faith while contextualising religious knowledge within evolving societal cultures. This holistic model exposes students to diverse Islamic traditions, nurtures critical reasoning, and promotes ethical discipline,

making Pesantren not merely a learning space but a strategic incubator for moderate, socially responsible, and resilient Muslim identities (Mappiasse & Hayadin, 2022).

5. Institutional Policy

Institutional policy serves as a formal mechanism for embedding religious moderation within university governance. Several HEIs integrate moderation values into the Campus Academic Introduction Program (PBAK), providing new students with early exposure. Moderation is also aligned with national regulations, particularly the National Education System Law No. 20/2023, positioning it as part of mandated educational objectives (Yani et al., 2023). At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, moderation is mainstreamed across the Tri Dharma, integrating teaching, research, and community service (Muhlisin et al., 2023). Further institutionalisation is achieved through the establishment of RMBs under the 2021 Director General Decree, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, and UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, alongside policies promoting interfaith and community dialogue (Hanif et al., 2024).

The implementation of institutional policies on religious moderation reflects the *regulative pillar* of institutions, in which formal rules, legal frameworks, and authoritative mandates structure organisational behaviour. By embedding moderation principles into programs such as campus events, curriculum alignment, and Tri Dharma activities, HEI not only signals its commitment to balanced religious education but also provides structured avenues for students to internalise tolerance and pluralistic values across their academic and non-academic activities (Yani et al., 2023). By providing both guidance and accountability, policies function as preventive and corrective instruments, ensuring that students internalise moderation not only cognitively but also through adherence to structured practices (Hanif et al., 2024). This approach reinforces *wasathiyah*-oriented attitudes while limiting avenues for extremist influence, transforming the HEI into a systematic and sustainable environment for cultivating socially responsible and resilient Muslim identities (Fitriani & Naamy, 2020).

Institutional policies on religious moderation carry a binding nature for all members within the HEI, ensuring that moderation is not merely encouraged but formally expected and regulated. By codifying these expectations, the policies create a structured framework in which students, lecturers, administrative staff, and HEI leaders, including rectors, develop a shared sense of responsibility to implement and comply with moderation principles according to their respective roles (Muhlisin et al., 2023). Consequently, the maintenance of religious moderation becomes a collective effort, rather than the responsibility of a single group, embedding *wasathiyah*-oriented values across all levels of campus life (Hanif et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, implementation of institutional policies varies across higher education institutions, reflecting differences in campus resources, administrative capacity, and prior experience in promoting religious moderation (Yani et al., 2023). HEIs with greater financial, human, and infrastructural resources are often able to operationalise policies more comprehensively. This is evident, for example, in state Islamic higher education institutions that have been transformed into universities, which tend to have

better human resources, funding, and infrastructure than before (Sibawaihi et al., 2024). Conversely, HEIs with limited resources or less institutional experience may rely on smaller-scale initiatives, ad hoc programs, or integration of moderation principles within existing academic and administrative structures (Muhlisin et al., 2023; Scott, 1987). These variations in capacity and experience not only affect the scope and intensity of policy implementation but also shape how students and staff internalise and practice moderation. Another study indicates that such enforceable provisions significantly reduce susceptibility to radical thought compared to non-regulated interventions (Itmam & Aouich, 2024).

6. Evaluation of Religious Moderation through Academic Studies

This section outlines how religious moderation practices in higher education institutions (HEIs) have been evaluated in academic studies. Five recurring evaluative dimensions emerge from the literature: students, lecturers, approaches, content, and comparative evaluation, reflecting common ways scholars assess value-based educational programs. These dimensions broadly align with Stufflebeam’s evaluative perspective, which emphasises the examination of actors, processes, contexts, and outcomes in educational initiatives (Stufflebeam, 1983). The table below summarises these dimensions based on the reviewed studies.

Table 3. The Evaluation of Religious Moderation

Focus	HEI	Article
Student	UM Malang, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Public HEIs in Bandung, UIN Suska Riau.	Hanafi et al., 2022, Anwar et al., 2024, and Syahbudin, Ahmad, et al., 2023.
Lectuter	UNESA, ITS Surabaya, UNAIR, UTM Madura, UPN Veteran, UM Malang, etc.	Yani & Hazin, 2024.
Approach	Islamic HEIs in Garut, HEIs in Maluku, UNISMA Malang, and Indonesian HEIs.	Ainissyifa & Nasrullah, 2025, Pelupessy et al., 2022, Hanafi et al., 2023, Djamaluddin et al., 2024.
Content	UNESA, ITS Surabaya, UGM Yogyakarta, UM Malang, UB Malang, UNAIR, UNISMA.	Yani et al., 2023.
Comparison	UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, and UIN Lampung.	Hanif et al., 2024.

Student-focused assessments reflect sensitivity to contextual factors and learner needs, while lecturer-centred evaluations highlight the importance of programmatic inputs and human capital in delivering effective moderation education. Attention to curricular content and pedagogical approaches emphasises process quality, revealing how implementation fidelity, teaching strategies, and structured learning experiences mediate the translation of institutional intentions into observable behaviours. Comparative studies further enrich this picture by situating individual programs within broader institutional

landscapes, thereby providing a product-oriented perspective on effectiveness, scalability, and contextual adaptability.

This multidimensional approach aligns with CIPP, Stufflebeam's framework, which emphasises that evaluation is holistic and systematic, not merely focused on outcomes (Stufflebeam, 1983). Context evaluation captures participants' needs and socio-intellectual conditions; input evaluation assesses educator quality, pedagogical strategies, and resources; process evaluation examines how moderation values are consistently implemented through curriculum and teaching methods; and product evaluation measures the extent to which participants understand, accept, and internalise these values (Ogwudile, 2025). By integrating all dimensions, evaluators gain a comprehensive understanding of program effectiveness, identifying strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement. Moreover, such an approach reveals various evaluations across HEIs, highlighting how resource availability, experience, and institutional commitment shape the implementation and impact of moderation programs (Fadlillah & Kusaeri, 2024; Prichard et al., 2025).

Evaluation using the CIPP Model glasses was also successful in previous research as an analytical framework. Alias et al. (2025) revealed that the CIPP model can assess what should be the assessment material objectively, namely, the actors, mechanisms, and benchmarks of the goals to be achieved, so that it can be considered for the sustainability of future programs. The meaning is multidimensional, as evaluation is not limited to a single aspect but also encompasses actors, processes, materials, and contexts (Jati et al., 2024). Moreover, such multidimensional evaluations illuminate structural inequalities, showing, for example, how resource-rich or more experienced HEIs implement moderation more comprehensively, thereby offering evidence-based insights for improving national strategies (Muhlisin et al., 2023). In addition, this variation in the evaluation's focus shows that the religious moderation agenda proclaimed in the RPJMN does not stop at the level of discourse but has been implemented as a strategic program, gradually run, monitored, and evaluated by various HEIs in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This systematic review examined 21 studies drawn from an initial dataset of 217 papers, encompassing 41 Indonesian higher education institutions, 27 Islamic, and 14 general HEIs, reflecting the broad institutional spectrum represented in the literature. The review synthesises how religious moderation practices are implemented and evaluated across diverse contexts, providing an empirical foundation for understanding institutional strategies that foster moderate religiosity and revealing a multifaceted, institutionally embedded set of strategies. The academic integration, the optimisation of Rumah Moderasi Beragama (RMB), Madrasah Diniyah, Pesantren, and Institutional Policy collectively demonstrate how moderation is cultivated not only as a cognitive objective but also as an affective and behavioural disposition among students. Each strategy operates through distinct mechanisms, yet all converge in fostering inclusive, tolerant, and resilient religious identities. Evaluation studies confirm that these practices are systematically

monitored across multiple dimensions, focusing on students, lecturers, program approaches, contents, and inter-institutional comparisons. Overall, the evidence indicates that promoting religious moderation in higher education requires a programmatic design aligned with institutional commitment, the adaptive integration of both traditional and contemporary educational mechanisms, and multidimensional evaluation to ensure the sustainability and contextual relevance of moderate values across Indonesian HEIs.

The implications of this study are threefold. Practically, it provides guidance for higher education institutions facing challenges in implementing religious moderation and offers insights for those seeking to expand or enhance moderation practices within their existing contexts. Theoretically, the findings contribute to a better understanding of how value-based educational programs, such as religious moderation, can be effectively designed, integrated, and evaluated in higher education. Methodologically, the study underscores the importance of considering both traditional and contemporary mechanisms, ranging from academic-instructional integration and residential formation to dedicated institutional hubs and formalised policies in shaping inclusive, tolerant, and resilient student dispositions.

However, the study has certain limitations, notably the absence of real-time data collection during the evaluation of campus-level religious moderation practices and the lack of a direct comparative analysis across HEIs of their strategies. Future research is expected to address these gaps by conducting empirical studies and cross-institutional comparisons, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the cultivation of religious moderation in Indonesian higher education.

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