

Religious Moderation in Muhammadiyah and NU Pesantren: A Comparative Systematic Review

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Abstract

This article comparatively reviews how religious moderation is conceptualized and cultivated in pesantren associated with Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Although both organizations are frequently described as pillars of moderate Indonesian Islam, their pesantren traditions developed through different intellectual, cultural, and organizational pathways. A qualitative comparative systematic review was conducted on 18 traceable sources, comprising peer-reviewed studies, academic books, and a national policy document. The synthesis identifies a shared normative horizon—balanced religious judgment, national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and public responsibility—but different institutional mechanisms. NU pesantren generally cultivate moderation through Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah ethics, plurality within the Sunni legal schools, turath and kitab-kuning learning, kiai authority, adab, and accommodation of local culture. Muhammadiyah pesantren more often express moderation through tajdid, Islam Berkemajuan, integrated religious and general curricula, collective-organizational governance, disciplined character education, and social service. The comparison shows that these are ideal-typical tendencies rather than fixed organizational essences. Both traditions rely on hidden curricula, exemplary leadership, peer communities, and engagement with wider society; both may also experience formalism, insufficient exposure to religious difference, and tension between inherited authority and critical deliberation. The article proposes a comparative institutional-ecology model in which moderation is produced not by doctrine alone but through the interaction of epistemology, curriculum, authority, culture, governance, and civic practice. Convergence in outcomes does not require identical pedagogies, but credible moderation requires observable commitments to citizenship, dialogue, non-violence, cultural respect, and accountable treatment of internal diversity.

Keywords: *religious moderation, Muhammadiyah pesantren, Nahdlatul Ulama, pesantren education, wasatiyyah, comparative systematic review.*

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation became an explicit policy and scholarly vocabulary in Indonesia during the late 2010s, but the practices associated with it are older than the term. The Ministry of Religious Affairs defines moderation as a way of understanding and practicing religion that avoids excess while preserving commitment to faith. It proposes four public indicators: national commitment, tolerance, rejection of violence, and accommodation of local culture (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). These indicators are particularly relevant to pesantren because boarding schools do not only transmit religious knowledge. They organize daily life, authority, peer relations, discipline, ritual, and engagement with surrounding communities.

Pesantren have often been presented as institutional foundations of Indonesian moderate Islam. Their residential character enables the formation of habits through continuous interaction between kiai, teachers, senior students, and younger santri. Classical texts are interpreted within chains of scholarly authority, while communal worship, service, and

everyday negotiation create an educational environment that cannot be reduced to classroom instruction. Ni'am (2015) therefore describes pesantren as a miniature of moderate Islam, whereas later research emphasizes their role in producing non-violent religious identities, civic loyalty, and cultural accommodation (Azizah, 2020; Bosra & Umiarso, 2020; Thoriquttyas & Hanun, 2020).

This general image, however, can conceal substantial institutional diversity. Pesantren differ in theological orientation, curriculum, ownership, leadership structure, regional setting, economic resources, and relationship to mass organizations. Some are salaf institutions centered on kitab kuning; others combine formal schools, modern languages, science, digital media, and professional management. Some are personally owned by kiai and connected to NU through social and doctrinal networks, while others are formally organized as Muhammadiyah charitable enterprises or boarding-school units. Anshori (2020) argues that these distinct organizational relationships shape the social and ideological dynamics of pesantren.

The comparison between Muhammadiyah and NU is therefore analytically important. NU is historically associated with the defense and reinterpretation of Sunni scholarly traditions, especially Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, the authority of kiai, the plurality of legal schools, and accommodation of local religious culture. In pesantren linked to NU, moderation is commonly expressed through tawassut, i'tidal, tasamuh, and tawazun. The pedagogical environment relies on turath, adab, sanad, communal rituals, and the contextual judgment of authoritative teachers. Studies of Salaf Al-Anwar and other traditional pesantren show how plural legal reasoning, national loyalty, and cultural rootedness can produce moderate dispositions without abandoning doctrinal commitment (Nurdin & Naqqiyah, 2019; Azizah, 2020).

Muhammadiyah is more often associated with Islamic modernism, purification, tajdid, rational organization, formal schooling, and social services. Pesantren were not initially the dominant institutional image of the movement, yet Muhammadiyah developed multiple models, including integral pesantren, takhassus programmes, modern pesantren, and Muhammadiyah Boarding Schools (Kuswandi, 2020). Their curricula tend to integrate religious subjects with general education, science, languages, cadre formation, and organizational identity. The values of moderation are often conveyed through Islam Berkemajuan, disciplined character, civic service, and the combination of religious commitment with modern knowledge (Baidhaw, 2017; Wahyudi et al., 2020). These differences should not be simplified into a contrast between a tolerant traditionalism and an intolerant modernism, or between culturally open NU and culturally detached Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2011) demonstrates that Muhammadiyah's interfaith stance contains both firm theological boundaries and practical possibilities for coexistence. Baidhaw (2017) identifies humanitarian and cosmopolitan dimensions in the movement's Qur'anic ethos. Conversely, the existence of a traditional curriculum does not automatically produce moderation. Authority can become closed, inherited practices may resist criticism, and limited exposure to social diversity may reduce dialogical competence. The relationship between institutional form and moderate outcome must therefore be examined rather than assumed.

The literature also tends to study pesantren as isolated cases. Research may describe a particular curriculum, kiai, management programme, or extracurricular activity without placing it within the wider organizational traditions of Muhammadiyah and NU. Other publications discuss the two organizations at a macro level without analyzing how moderation is reproduced through residential education. Consequently, the mechanisms that connect doctrine, curriculum, authority, culture, and civic practice remain fragmented.

A comparative systematic review can address this fragmentation by identifying both convergence and difference. The purpose is not to rank the two traditions or to determine which is more moderate. Such a ranking would ignore variation within each organization and reduce moderation to a fixed organizational label. The more productive question is how different educational ecologies can generate similar public orientations and where their respective vulnerabilities are located.

This article reviews literature published no later than December 31, 2020 and asks three questions. First, how is religious moderation conceptualized in studies of Muhammadiyah and NU pesantren? Second, what curricular, epistemic, cultural, and organizational mechanisms are used to cultivate moderation? Third, where do the two traditions converge, differ, and face limitations? The study contributes a comparative institutional-ecology framework that treats moderation as the outcome of interacting pedagogical arrangements rather than a slogan attached to organizational identity.

METHOD

The study used a qualitative comparative systematic review. The procedure combined structured searching, explicit inclusion criteria, source appraisal, data extraction, thematic synthesis, and comparative interpretation. The review was designed for a heterogeneous body of scholarship in which organizational history, educational case studies, conceptual articles, and policy documents perform different evidentiary functions. It therefore did not conduct statistical meta-analysis or infer institutional prevalence from the frequency of publications.

Search terms were developed in English and Indonesian. They included combinations of religious moderation, *moderasi beragama*, *wasatiyyah*, pesantren, Muhammadiyah Boarding School, pesantren Muhammadiyah, NU pesantren, pesantren salaf, Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, multicultural education, tolerance, curriculum, kiai, and Islamic moderation. Searches were conducted across academic search engines, Indonesian journal portals, publisher websites, institutional repositories, and reference lists of relevant publications. Citation chaining was used because older studies frequently discuss moderate pesantren without using the later policy term *moderasi beragama*.

A source was included when it was published no later than 2020; was available in English or Indonesian; had traceable authorship and publication information; substantively addressed pesantren education, moderation, tolerance, nationalism, non-violence, multicultural education, or organizational models associated with Muhammadiyah or NU; and provided evidence relevant to at least one review question.

Sources that only mentioned pesantren or either organization in passing were excluded. Unverified web commentary, news reports, promotional texts, and studies published after the temporal boundary were not treated as analytical evidence.

The final analytical corpus comprised 18 sources: 14 peer-reviewed journal articles, three academic books, and one national policy book. Some sources were not formally limited to Muhammadiyah or NU institutions but were retained when they clarified mechanisms of pesantren moderation that appeared in both traditions, such as hidden curricula, extracurricular education, managerial commitment, and the role of *kiai*. Official or policy formulations were used to identify normative indicators, not as proof that all pesantren implement those indicators consistently.

Data were extracted into a matrix covering publication identity, institutional affiliation, pesantren type, concept of moderation, sources of religious authority, curriculum, pedagogy, governance, cultural orientation, civic outcomes, and reported limitations. The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, within-tradition synthesis identified recurrent mechanisms in Muhammadiyah and NU-oriented studies. Second, cross-tradition comparison examined convergence, divergence, and functional equivalence. The categories were guided by the evidence and by the four policy indicators of religious moderation, but the review also added internal diversity, dialogical competence, and institutional accountability because they repeatedly appeared as conditions of credible practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Characteristics of the Literature

The corpus is strongly concentrated in 2019 and 2020, reflecting the institutionalization of religious moderation as a national policy vocabulary. Earlier publications provide the intellectual and organizational background. Burhani (2011) examines Muhammadiyah's interfaith position, Ni'am (2015) conceptualizes pesantren as a miniature of moderate Islam, and Baidhawiy (2017) develops the humanitarian and progressive ethos of Muhammadiyah. Later studies translate these broader ideas into curricula, management systems, character formation, and localized pesantren practice.

The evidence base is asymmetrical. Research on NU-oriented pesantren contains more direct discussion of moderation as a theological and cultural tradition. It frequently names *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, *tawassut*, *turath*, *kiai*, and local culture. Research on Muhammadiyah pesantren more often studies integrated curricula, discipline, organizational development, and boarding-school management; moderation is frequently inferred from these mechanisms rather than named as the sole research object. This asymmetry should not be interpreted as absence of moderation in Muhammadiyah institutions. It shows that the two literatures use different conceptual vocabularies.

2. A Shared Normative Horizon

Across both traditions, moderation is not defined as theological relativism or the weakening of religious commitment. It is presented as disciplined balance: fidelity to Islam combined with just conduct toward other groups, loyalty to the Indonesian state, rejection of violence, and capacity to live within cultural plurality. The national policy formulation captures the public dimension through commitment to the nation, tolerance, anti-violence, and cultural accommodation (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). Pesantren scholarship adds religious depth by linking these outcomes to adab, knowledge, worship, and moral self-control.

Both traditions also reject the assumption that moderation is simply a midpoint between liberalism and conservatism. Asrori (2020) argues that moderation is embedded in the complex reading of texts, the recognition of multiple scholarly opinions, and institutional values. Bosra and Umiarso (2020) similarly describe moderation as theological consciousness expressed in social action and rationality. The reviewed literature therefore treats moderation as a patterned capacity for judgment rather than the mechanical selection of a centrist position.

3. NU Pesantren: Embedded-Traditional Moderation

The NU-oriented literature presents moderation as embedded in a scholarly and social tradition. Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah is commonly interpreted through tawassut, i'tidal, tawazun, and tasamuh. These principles are not only doctrinal statements; they organize how differences within Islam are approached. Exposure to multiple legal opinions in the classical schools trains students to recognize that authoritative Islamic reasoning may produce more than one defensible answer.

The kitab-kuning curriculum is central to this process. Nurdin and Naqqiyah (2019) show that Salaf Al-Anwar uses turath as the principal medium for cultivating moderation. Classical texts transmit legal plurality, ethical discipline, and continuity with scholarly traditions. Their moderating potential, however, depends on interpretation. Texts do not produce tolerance automatically. The kiai contextualizes them, explains differences among authorities, and connects inherited knowledge with the social and national circumstances of santri.

Authority in this model is personal, relational, and moral. Kiai credibility is constructed through knowledge, piety, service, and the chain of transmission. Adab toward teachers and peers creates a hidden curriculum of restraint and respect. Azizah (2020) emphasizes the role of kiai and salafiyah curriculum in presenting Islam as polite, peaceful, and patriotic. The authority structure can reduce impulsive or decontextualized interpretation because students learn within a supervised scholarly community rather than through isolated textual consumption.

Cultural accommodation is another prominent mechanism. NU pesantren are frequently embedded in local communities and participate in religious rituals, social ceremonies, conflict mediation, and public service. The distinction between Islam and local culture is negotiated through the maxim of preserving beneficial traditions while adopting better innovations. This allows religious identity to remain socially rooted and makes moderation visible through everyday coexistence rather than only through formal interfaith programmes.

National commitment is explicitly integrated into the moderate identity. The Al-Anwar study records a formulation connecting Pancasila, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and the 1945 Constitution. Such civic language places the santri's religious formation within the national political community. Moderation is therefore a combination of Sunni scholarly discipline, cultural belonging, and citizenship.

The embedded-traditional model also has vulnerabilities. Moderation may depend heavily on the personal authority of a particular kiai, making institutional continuity uncertain when leadership changes. Deference may discourage questions when not balanced by deliberation. Local embeddedness may support cultural accommodation but also limit direct interaction with religiously diverse publics. Traditional identity can become a symbolic label if students memorize values without learning how to apply them to gender, minority rights, digital conflict, and new forms of political polarization.

4. Muhammadiyah Pesantren: Programmatic-Integrative Moderation

Muhammadiyah pesantren emerge from a different organizational history. The movement became widely identified with schools, hospitals, universities, and modern social services rather than with the classical pesantren system. Nevertheless, pesantren became increasingly important for cadre formation and the integration of religious learning with the movement's modern educational infrastructure. Kuswandi (2020) identifies several models, including integral institutions, takhassus programmes, boarding schools, and modern pesantren.

The principal moderating mechanism is curricular integration. Muhammadiyah Boarding Schools commonly combine Qur'an, hadith, Arabic, Islamic jurisprudence, and organizational studies with mathematics, sciences, languages, citizenship education, and formal national curricula. Wahyudi et al. (2020) show how school and pesantren curricula are combined rather than treated as separate systems. The integration seeks to prevent a dichotomy between religious piety and modern knowledge and to form cadres capable of participating in contemporary society.

Tajdid and Islam Berkemajuan provide the broader epistemic orientation. Tajdid contains both purification and renewal: core worship and belief are disciplined through scriptural reference, while social affairs remain open to reason, science, and institutional innovation. Baidhaw (2017) connects the progressive ethos with compassion,

education, and public benefit. In pesantren, this orientation supports the use of modern administration, technology, professional teachers, and social programmes without treating modernity as a departure from Islamic commitment.

Governance is more programmatic and organizational than in the ideal-typical NU model. Muhammadiyah pesantren may be established as formal charitable enterprises, attached to schools, or governed through boards and collective leadership. This structure can make curriculum, finance, staffing, and evaluation more standardized. Fathurrochman et al. (2019) demonstrate that managerial commitment, programme monitoring, and explicit rejection of radicalism can shape an institutional environment supportive of moderation.

Character education is cultivated through schedules, rules, habituation, contextual learning, rewards, sanctions, and role models. Baehaqi and Murdiono (2020) find that discipline in a Muhammadiyah boarding school is strengthened through contextual inquiry, Islamic habituation, unified rules, and teacher example. Such mechanisms can support moderation when discipline develops responsibility, self-control, cooperation, and social sensitivity rather than mere conformity.

Muhammadiyah moderation is also expressed through service. Boarding-school programmes may connect students with preaching, charity, public health, environmental work, and community education. The movement's social infrastructure gives religious learning a practical orientation. Moderation in this context is demonstrated by usefulness, professional conduct, and contribution to society, not only by verbal endorsement of tolerance.

The programmatic-integrative model has corresponding risks. Standardized curricula may become formalistic and may not provide sufficient space for internal disagreement. Scriptural purification can be interpreted rigidly when separated from the movement's rational and humanitarian traditions. Boarding schools may discuss tolerance abstractly while offering limited direct engagement with non-Muslim communities. Modern organization may also weaken cultural rootedness if local practices are approached only as problems to be corrected rather than as social resources requiring contextual judgment.

5. Functional Convergence Through Different Mechanisms

The comparison reveals functional equivalence. NU's plurality of madhhab reasoning and Muhammadiyah's integration of scripture with reason can both prevent simplistic literalism. NU's kiai-centered moral authority and Muhammadiyah's collective governance can both provide interpretive supervision. NU's local cultural embeddedness and Muhammadiyah's social-service orientation can both connect religion with public responsibility. The mechanisms differ, but they may converge in balanced judgment, civic belonging, non-violence, and service.

The convergence is not automatic. A mechanism becomes moderating only when it remains open to accountability and real social difference. Kiai authority must include moral responsibility and recognition of legitimate disagreement. Organizational governance must allow critical reflection rather than only compliance. Classical texts must be contextualized; integrated curricula must expose students to intellectual plurality. Cultural accommodation must avoid injustice hidden within tradition, while purification must avoid delegitimizing communities through narrow labels.

Research on multicultural extracurricular activities reinforces this point. Rahman (2019) shows that recognition of ethnic, religious, racial, and intergroup diversity can be cultivated through activities outside the formal curriculum. Thoriquuttyas and Hanun (2020) similarly identify curriculum and extracurricular practice as complementary channels. Moderation therefore depends on the total educational ecology: what is taught, who interprets it, how authority operates, what students repeatedly practice, and whom they encounter.

Discussion

1. Moderation as an Institutional Ecology

The principal theoretical implication is that religious moderation should be analyzed as an institutional ecology. Doctrinal statements are necessary but insufficient. Moderate dispositions emerge from repeated interactions among epistemology, curriculum, authority, culture, governance, peer relations, and civic practice. The same doctrinal vocabulary may produce different outcomes under different educational arrangements, while different vocabularies may support comparable public ethics.

This ecology explains why organizational labels cannot substitute for institutional assessment. Calling a pesantren NU does not establish that it practices *tawassut*, and calling a school Muhammadiyah does not prove that *tajdid* is intellectually open. Affiliation identifies a repertoire of traditions, symbols, and governance relationships. Implementation must be examined through curricula, classroom interpretation, treatment of dissent, disciplinary practices, external engagement, and the social conduct of graduates.

The comparison also challenges linear accounts of tradition and modernity. NU moderation is not produced merely by preserving old texts; it depends on the capacity to interpret them through plural legal traditions and contemporary responsibility. Muhammadiyah moderation is not produced merely by modern curricula; it depends on combining renewal with ethical restraint, humanitarian concern, and recognition of social complexity. Tradition can sustain plural reasoning, while modern organization can become rigid. Conversely, charismatic authority can be dialogical, and standardization can protect students from extremist infiltration.

A useful distinction is between embedded-traditional and programmatic-integrative moderation. Embedded-traditional moderation is carried through social memory, scholarly lineage, communal ritual, cultural negotiation, and personal exemplarity.

Programmatic-integrative moderation is carried through designed curricula, organizational policy, professional management, structured discipline, and service programmes. These are ideal types. Actual pesantren often combine them: NU institutions establish modern schools and universities, while Muhammadiyah boarding schools adopt residential traditions, Arabic learning, and intensive teacher-student relations.

The two models also differ in how they handle cultural accommodation. NU pesantren are generally more comfortable treating local practice as part of the social field in which Islamic judgment operates. Muhammadiyah's reformist orientation more strongly distinguishes religious norm from inherited custom. Each orientation offers a corrective to the other. Cultural embeddedness can protect social harmony but may preserve unequal practices; purification can challenge superstition or domination but may disrupt communal belonging when applied without sociological sensitivity. A moderate pesantren requires evaluative accommodation: culture is neither accepted uncritically nor rejected indiscriminately.

Authority is another area of reciprocal learning. Kiai-centered authority provides coherence, moral intimacy, and protection from fragmented digital knowledge. Yet it needs mechanisms for consultation, succession, and critical inquiry. Collective governance distributes responsibility and facilitates evaluation, but it may produce bureaucratic distance and standardized language without deep moral formation. Moderation is strongest when authority is credible, knowledgeable, accountable, and capable of explaining reasons rather than demanding obedience alone.

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2. Evaluating Moderate Outcomes

The Ministry's four indicators provide an important public baseline, but pesantren evaluation requires additional dimensions. National commitment should be visible in acceptance of constitutional citizenship and equal public belonging. Tolerance should include the ability to live with intra-Muslim and interreligious difference without coercion. Anti-violence should cover not only terrorism but also verbal humiliation, bullying, punitive excess, and justification of vigilantism. Cultural accommodation should be assessed through reasoned engagement with local traditions rather than symbolic participation alone.

Three further criteria emerge from the review. First, internal pluralism concerns how institutions handle differences among teachers, students, legal opinions, gender experiences, and organizational orientations. Second, dialogical competence concerns whether students can listen, explain, disagree, and revise judgment without hostility. Third, accountability concerns whether authority and discipline are subject to ethical limits, complaint mechanisms, and transparent reasoning. These criteria distinguish moderation as an educational capability from moderation as institutional branding.

Graduate behavior is a further but under-researched indicator. The reviewed studies mostly describe curricula, leaders, and programmes. Few follow alumni into universities, workplaces, political organizations, digital networks, or religiously diverse

communities. Claims that a pesantren produces moderate citizens therefore remain stronger at the level of institutional aspiration than long-term causal evidence.

Practical and Scholarly Implications

For NU pesantren, the review supports preserving the depth of turath, sanad, adab, and community embeddedness while expanding structured opportunities for interfaith literacy, gender-sensitive discussion, digital citizenship, and deliberative learning. The authority of kiai remains a major resource when it models intellectual humility, proportional judgment, and national responsibility. Institutional systems should ensure that these values survive leadership transition rather than depending on one charismatic figure.

For Muhammadiyah pesantren, curricular integration and professional governance should be accompanied by deeper study of interpretive plurality, local culture, and lived religious difference. Discipline should cultivate responsibility and critical self-control, not only compliance. Islam Berkemajuan becomes a moderating educational framework when scientific literacy, scriptural commitment, humanitarian service, and respect for difference are experienced as mutually reinforcing.

For both traditions, moderation should be integrated across formal subjects, dormitory life, extracurricular activities, leadership practice, and community engagement. Occasional seminars are unlikely to alter the hidden curriculum if daily language, disciplinary systems, and peer relations communicate exclusion. Institutions should establish indicators that assess student reasoning and conduct rather than only programme completion.

For scholarship, direct comparative field research is still limited. Future studies should compare matched Muhammadiyah and NU pesantren in the same region, controlling for size, gender composition, urban-rural location, and student background. Longitudinal research should follow graduates and examine whether institutional dispositions persist under exposure to university politics, social media, and diverse workplaces. Research should also include women's pesantren, female leaders, non-elite schools, and students who experience the curriculum differently from official narratives.

Limitations

This review has four limitations. First, the literature up to 2020 contains few studies explicitly designed as Muhammadiyah-NU comparisons; the synthesis therefore constructs ideal-typical tendencies from separate case studies. Second, pesantren affiliation is often complex. NU pesantren are commonly owned by individual kiai rather than the organization, while Muhammadiyah pesantren vary in their formal relationship to the persyarikatan. Third, the corpus is weighted toward normative descriptions, institutional leaders, and successful programmes. Critical accounts of intolerance, coercive discipline, exclusion, or student resistance are less visible. Fourth, the temporal

boundary excludes the rapid expansion of moderation policy, digital education, and newer empirical studies after 2020.

The review also does not rank institutions or estimate causal effects. The proposed models are conceptual syntheses grounded in heterogeneous qualitative evidence. They should guide comparative research rather than be treated as proof that all pesantren within either tradition conform to the identified tendencies.

CONCLUSION

This comparative systematic review examined how religious moderation is cultivated in Muhammadiyah and NU pesantren. Both traditions share a public horizon of balanced religiosity, national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, cultural responsibility, and social benefit. Their convergence, however, is produced through different institutional histories and pedagogical repertoires.

NU-oriented pesantren tend to cultivate embedded-traditional moderation through Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah ethics, turath, plurality of legal schools, kiai authority, adab, local culture, and community leadership. Muhammadiyah-oriented pesantren tend to cultivate programmatic-integrative moderation through tajdid, Islam Berkemajuan, combined religious and general curricula, collective governance, disciplined character education, and organized social service. These tendencies are not mutually exclusive, and actual pesantren increasingly borrow from both repertoires.

The central conclusion is that moderation is an institutional ecology rather than an organizational possession. It depends on how knowledge is interpreted, how authority is exercised, how students are disciplined, how culture is evaluated, and how the institution engages people beyond its boundaries. Neither classical learning nor modern management is inherently moderate. Each becomes moderating when it develops contextual judgment, human dignity, civic belonging, non-violence, dialogue, and accountability.

A credible comparison should therefore move beyond labels. The relevant question is not whether Muhammadiyah or NU is more moderate, but how each pesantren transforms its intellectual heritage into observable educational practice. Such an approach recognizes the distinctive strengths of both traditions while maintaining the critical standards necessary to prevent moderation from becoming a ceremonial slogan.

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