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**The Role of Pesantren and Its Literacy Culture in Strengthening Moderate Islam in Indonesia**

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**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran strategis pesantren dalam mengarusutamakan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama melalui penguatan budaya literasi. Di tengah meningkatnya kekhawatiran terhadap radikalisme yang dipicu oleh lemahnya pemahaman keagamaan dan disinformasi digital, pesantren tampil sebagai institusi tangguh yang menanamkan pembelajaran Islam secara komprehensif berbasis literasi teks. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis motivasi praktik literasi santri, model pengembangan yang diterapkan, upaya struktural dan kultural yang dilakukan pesantren, serta kontribusi santri dan alumni dalam menyebarkan nilai-nilai Islam moderat. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif, data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen di Pesantren Nurul Ummah Yogyakarta. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan lima motivasi dominan literasi: dorongan teologis, keteladanan kiai, tuntutan akademik, minat pribadi, dan motif ekonomi. Praktik literasi dilakukan melalui model habituasi individu dan kelompok. Pesantren mendukung budaya literasi ini secara struktural (kurikulum, penerbitan) dan kultural (mutala'ah, media digital). Santri dan alumni terbukti berkontribusi signifikan dalam diskursus keislaman melalui karya tulis, kegiatan pengajaran, serta dakwah di media sosial. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pengembangan budaya literasi berbasis pesantren berperan penting dalam membangun peradaban Islam yang moderat, damai, dan inklusif di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Moderasi Beragama, Budaya Literasi, Pesantren

**Abstract**

This study explores the strategic role of *pesantren* in promoting religious moderation through the cultivation of a literacy culture. Amid rising concerns over radicalism fueled by weak religious understanding and digital misinformation,

*pesantren* emerges as resilient institutions fostering comprehensive Islamic learning grounded in textual literacy. The research aims to analyze the motivations behind literacy practices, the development models applied, the structural and cultural efforts by *pesantren*, and the contributions of students and alumnae in spreading moderate Islamic values. Through a qualitative approach and descriptive method, data were collected via observation, interviews, and document analysis at Pesantren Nurul Ummah Yogyakarta. The findings reveal five dominant literacy motivations: theological drive, *kyai* role modeling, academic obligations, personal interest, and economic incentives. Literacy practices are institutionalized through both individual and group habituation models. *Pesantren* support these initiatives structurally (e.g., through curricula and publishing bodies) and informally (e.g., by promoting *mutala'ah* and media engagement). The students and alumni have contributed significantly to the intellectual Islamic discourse via publications, teaching, and digital media. This study confirms that *pesantren*-based literacy development is pivotal to building a moderate, peaceful, and inclusive Islamic civilization in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Religious Moderation, Literacy Culture, Pesantren*

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era marked by information proliferation and accelerated globalization, enhancing human resource quality through education has become an imperative for national progress. Within this framework, literacy—both textual and contextual—emerges as a foundational force shaping intellectual and ethical consciousness in society. Nations that uphold a robust tradition of literacy are more likely to achieve significant strides in cultural and civilizational development. Saryono (2016) affirms that a country's advancement is intrinsically linked to its literacy culture, which thrives on sustained intellectual engagement with texts. Koentjaraningrat (2013) conceptualizes culture as a total system of ideas and behaviors passed down generationally through learning, influencing both individual conduct and collective identity. Suhendar (2015) argues that genuine literacy is demonstrated by one's ability to relate texts to their social and historical contexts critically. Long (2008) adds that literacy practices empower individuals to act socially and publicly, often through the dynamic interplay of oral and written modes. Taken together, these views reveal that literacy is not merely a cognitive tool but a culturally embedded practice essential for nurturing civic competence and fostering moderate, context responsive religious understanding—especially within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). *Pesantren*, as traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, function not only as centers for classical religious

instruction but also as agents of cultural and social transformation. In an era shaped by complex dynamics of globalization and modernization, *pesantren* continue to prove their relevance through their ability to preserve local wisdom while selectively adopting progressive elements. Conceptually, *pesantren* contribute to national character development through an integrative approach that combines religious knowledge, ethical formation, and social engagement. In a theoretical context, *pesantren* plays a pivotal role in disseminating the principles of *Islam wasathiyah*—an Islamic moderation framework emphasizing balance, tolerance, and justice in social life. The educational model nurtured within *pesantren* elevates literacy to a central instrument in constructing a religious understanding that is both moderate and inclusive. Religious literacy in this context is not confined to textual mastery but includes the contextual interpretation of Islamic teachings in response to contemporary challenges. Therefore, embedding literacy as an integral part of *pesantren* pedagogy is essential for sustaining *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* values among the younger generation while ensuring the continuity of Islamic tradition within evolving social realities.

Several existing studies have highlighted the role of literacy in fostering civic intelligence and Islamic character formation among *santri* or Muslim students. Aini (2018) for instance, demonstrates how literacy practices contribute to intellectual, emotional, and moral competencies. Sari & Pujiono (2017) finds that student literacy activities are often driven by academic obligations rather than intrinsic motivation. Tamrin (2018) on the other hand, maps the administrative dimension of *pesantren* literacy management, focusing on planning, implementation, and evaluation—mainly at the level of basic reading and writing habituation. While these contributions are valuable, there remains a significant gap in a comprehensive understanding of the motivations, pedagogical models, institutional support, and broader contributions of *pesantren* literacy to the propagation of Islamic moderation. This study addresses that gap by investigating not only the technical dimensions of literacy practices but also the ideological and social impact of *pesantren*-based literacy in promoting a tolerant, inclusive, and contextually grounded Islamic worldview. Hence, this article offers a holistic perspective on

*pesantren* literacy culture and its strategic alignment with *Islam wasathiyah* in Indonesia.

This study is anchored in the frameworks of critical literacy theory and the concept of *Islam wasathiyah*. Critical literacy, as developed by Freire and Giroux, underscores the reader's capacity to analyze, reflect upon, and act upon texts within socio-political and cultural contexts. This aligns with the *pesantren* model of education, which fosters not only textual comprehension of Islamic sources but also ethical and social awareness grounded in Islamic values. Within this framework, *Islam wasathiyah* provides the normative foundation for *pesantren* literacy, emphasizing *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *tawasuth* (moderation). It functions not only as a moral compass but also as an epistemological tool for interpreting texts and engaging with contemporary realities. Critical literacy theory also reveals how texts carry ideological assumptions, necessitating reflective reading to deconstruct dominant narratives. The integration of these theoretical perspectives allows for a sharper analysis of *pesantrens* spaces of religious literacy production that contribute to inclusive and progressive Islamic thought. This framework thus underpins the inquiry into the motivations of *santri*, institutional strategies, and literacy contributions in advancing *Islam wasathiyah*. The primary objective of this study is to offer a comprehensive understanding of how *pesantren* literacy culture contributes to the reinforcement of moderate Islamic values. Broadly, it seeks to address the paucity of integrated research linking *santri* literacy practices with the conceptualization and dissemination of *Islam wasathiyah*. Specifically, this study investigates the factors motivating *santri* to engage in literacy, the pedagogical and habituation models employed, the structural and cultural support systems within the *pesantren*, and the extent to which *santri* and alumni contribute to the dissemination of moderate religious narratives through written and socio-religious activities. The significance of this research lies not only in its theoretical contribution but also in its practical implications for educational policy and curriculum development. It offers actionable insights for embedding critical literacy and Islamic moderation into *pesantren* education. In the long term, strengthening a contextually relevant literacy culture within *pesantren* presents a strategic educational response to the dual

challenges of religious extremism and declining societal literacy in pluralistic Indonesia.

This study rests on the assumption that a robust and context-sensitive literacy culture within *pesantren* plays a strategic role in cultivating a religious understanding that is moderate, tolerant, and inclusive. The central argument posits that literacy is not merely a technical act of reading and writing but a cognitive, affective, and ideological process that shapes a *santri*'s perceptions of Islamic teachings and social realities. In this view, literacy functions as a vehicle for meaning-making and religious identity formation grounded in *Islam wasathiyah* values. Alarmingly, Indonesia's low literacy rankings, as reported by the OECD (2019), underscore the urgency of developing high-quality, moderation-oriented literacy practices. If *pesantrens* successfully internalize literacy practices infused with *rahmatan lil 'alamin* values, then *santri* will not only possess high literacy competencies but also a balanced religious consciousness capable of resisting extremism. This assumption is tested by analyzing motivational dynamics, institutional strategies, and the literacy expressions of *santri* and alumni as manifested in written works and religious outreach initiatives.

This research provides a strategic contribution to the discourse on religious moderation by offering a literacy-based pedagogical approach within the *pesantren* system. In light of the proliferation of extremist religious content on social media and the ongoing national literacy crisis, *pesantrens* are uniquely positioned as front-line institutions capable of maintaining equilibrium between textual comprehension and contextual interpretation of religious knowledge. This study also enriches the field of Islamic education by adding a new dimension: how *pesantren* literacy not only enhances academic skills but also cultivates inclusive religious character and ethics. Practically, this research serves as a valuable reference for policymakers, *pesantren* administrators, educators, and the broader *santri* community in designing curricula and literacy strategies grounded in *Islam wasathiyah* values. Furthermore, it lays the groundwork for constructing a model of Islamic critical literacy education responsive to contemporary challenges. By positioning *pesantrens* as key actors in the twin movements of literacy and religious moderation, this study contributes to the development of a visionary, transformative, and

sustainable Islamic educational ecosystem for a peaceful, just, and civilized Indonesian society.

## METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis in this study is the *pesantren* literacy culture practiced by santri and institutional stakeholders at Pesantren Nurul Ummah Kotagede, Yogyakarta. This *pesantren* was selected due to its longstanding reputation as a literacy-oriented institution and its exemplary practices in integrating religious moderation values through written culture. The phenomenon of *pesantren* literacy is significant in light of increasing digital radicalization and religious polarization, positioning *pesantrens* as key agents of moderate Islamic thought. The selection of *pesantrens* literacy culture as the unit of analysis is based on its centrality in shaping student's worldview, religious reasoning, and public engagement. Literacy culture in *pesantren* does not merely serve educational functions but is also instrumental in producing religious discourses that align with the principles of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*. Focusing on this unit allows researchers to critically understand how reading, writing, and religious interpretation are interwoven to cultivate moderate Islamic values. This unit of analysis enables a close examination of the mechanisms through which *pesantren* literacy practices shape students' perspectives and their contribution to countering extremism. It also reveals the cultural strategies that pesantren develop in producing public religious narratives rooted in tolerance, balance, and inclusion.

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a case study approach, focusing on the daily literacy practices and institutional policies of Pesantren Nurul Ummah. The case study approach is appropriate because it allows for in-depth exploration of contextual phenomena where boundaries between literacy culture and the *pesantren* environment are not clearly delineated (Nafisah et al., 2022). The descriptive method helps to reveal patterns and meanings from within the *pesantren's* socioreligious ecosystem. The rationale behind choosing a qualitative case study lies in the need to explore lived experiences and interpretative meanings behind santri literacy practices. Literacy in *pesantren* is deeply embedded in religious tradition, organizational culture, and community interaction. A qualitative lens is essential to trace how literacy serves both as a pedagogical tool and as a form of

identity formation within Islamic educational discourse. The research proceeded by engaging in prolonged field engagement to gain trust and access, enabling the authors to identify institutional routines, texts used, and the motivations behind literacy promotion. This design captures not only observable behaviors but also the symbolic and ideological structures underlying *pesantren* literacy.

The primary sources of information for this study include direct observation, oral interviews, and institutional documentation from *Pesantren* Nurul Ummah. The observation involved immersion in classroom settings, libraries, dormitory activities, and literacy forums to understand how reading and writing are structured in daily routines. Interviews were conducted with *pesantren* leaders, teachers (*ustadz/ustadzah*), and selected *santri* involved in literacy initiatives. These sources were selected due to their complementary nature in providing triangulated data. Interviews captured internal rationales and motivations behind literacy culture, while documents and observation provided material evidence and behavioral confirmation. Institutional records such as curricula, magazines, and student's publications offered textual insight into the *pesantren*'s epistemic construction of moderate Islam.

Data sources were gathered through purposive sampling to ensure that informants were directly involved in literacy activities and policymaking. All interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Documents were collected systematically, including *pesantren* magazines, student's books, official announcements, and syllabi, forming a corpus of literacy artifacts for analysis. Data collection employed three main techniques: structured observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Structured observation was used to identify recurring literacy practices within the *pesantren* environment, such as reading circles, writing competitions, and bulletin editing. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility while ensuring thematic coverage, focusing on experiences, challenges, and aspirations regarding literacy. The chosen techniques reflect the study's aim to uncover both observable behavior and underlying meaning. Observation captured how literacy is embedded in the *pesantren*'s cultural practices, while interviews disclosed the personal narratives of the actors involved. Document analysis further verified institutional commitment to literacy, revealed in the volume

and quality of student-authored publications. Data collection followed an iterative approach. Initial observations informed the interview questions, and interviews, in turn, guided further exploration of texts and practices. The process was conducted over several months to ensure thematic saturation and included member checks to enhance validity. The triangulation of sources was critical in building a coherent and credible data narrative.

The data analysis employed an interpretative approach grounded in qualitative thematic analysis, incorporating three stages: restatement, description, and interpretation (Mezmir, 2020). Restatement involves organizing data excerpts from observations, interviews, and documents. The description sought to identify emerging patterns related to motivations, literacy models, and institutional support structures. Interpretation provided a critical lens to assess the deeper meanings and ideological implications of literacy culture in *pesantren*. The analytical choice reflects the study's concern with understanding literacy not merely as a technical skill but as a meaning-making process that interacts with theology, tradition, and power. Interpretative analysis enables a nuanced understanding of how *pesantren* literacy articulates Islamic moderation, particularly in resisting textual absolutism and ideological rigidity. Data analysis involved open coding using NVivo software to categorize and connect thematic clusters. Analytical memos were written to document evolving interpretations. Research rigor was enhanced through peer debriefing, audit trails, and reflexive journaling to ensure transparency. The process culminated in synthesizing data into coherent findings that reflect the sociocultural complexity of *pesantren* literacy.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of literacy culture for students at the Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School has several motivations that can influence their enthusiasm and perseverance in carrying out writing and reading activities. Some of these motivations can be stated as follows;

*First*, the theological motive of deepening religion is practicing the teachings and mission of Islamiyah da'wah, which is rahmatan lil 'alamin. The aim of the preaching of the Nurul Ummah Islamic boarding school is "amar ma'ruf nahi

munkar" which means commanding goodness and preventing evil (Tim Revisi, Profil PPNU Documentation, 20 September 2023). Apart from that, there is an aim of Islamic boarding school education which reads "Developing the quality of human resources through religious, educational, cultural and scientific approaches, as well as technology as a form of participation in developing the nation" (Tim Revisi, Profil PPNU Documentation, 20 September 2023).

This literacy culture for Nurul Ummah students is a form of high actualization in da'wah both within the scope of the pesantren world and among people outside the pesantren, as a demand from the practice of knowledge that has been obtained in order to become a person who is *Alim* (knowledgeable) and *Amil* (charitable). For the knowledge gained to be helpful and effectively passed on, it is essential to continue the relay of comprehensive, integral, moderate, peaceful, polite, merciful, and compassionate Islamic teachings. It can be achieved by carrying out the mission of Islamic teaching values oriented towards *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah*.

*Second*, carrying out the message and example of the Kyai. When receiving Sorogan and teaching in front of students, the caregiver of Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School KH. Asyhari Marzuqi always advised students to increase learning and *mutala'ah* (studying) books that have yet to be taught in *madrrasah diniyyah* and *pesantren* studies. According to him, *mutala'ah* is very important so that students understand the text/book studied well. *Santri* is encouraged to develop their understanding by enriching reading sources or other relevant contextual references. So Kyai hopes his students' religious understanding of Islam will be more comprehensive.

The Kyai's emphasis on the importance of reading books both in their library, which reaches thousands of titles, and in the higher education library in the city of Yogyakarta is aimed at providing students with a deep understanding of religious science. This understanding enables them to integrate religious science with other social, cultural, economic, political, art, science, and technology fields. Kyai not only gives messages and advice but also sets an example by making written works in books and papers (Anam Muntolib, Ketua Pondok, Interview, 14 Oktober 2023). Some of the books written by Kyai include *Wawasan Islam: Menggapai Kehidupan Qur'ani* (1998), *Risalatul Ummah* (2001), *Tarhibul Khatir-Memikat Hati dengan Al-Qur'an*

(2002), dan Pedoman Ummat (2002) published by Nurma Media, a publication owned by the pesantren itself.

**Third**, carrying out reading books, presenting papers, and Treatises (a final project of Madin students). The learning process involves several stages of learning activities, starting with an opening by the teacher. Students are then asked to read the text material of the book that has been taught before or will be discussed. This approach requires students to prepare themselves to learn and understand the material discussed in each daily lesson. In the next stage, the teacher will provide additional material or explain the material read by the students. In Madrasah Diniyah Nurul Ummah, there is an obligation to make papers for students in several subjects taught, such as Nahwu and Jurisprudence. In addition to reviewing the standard book according to the class schedule and their respective levels, students must also prepare supporting papers that will be presented in front of the class. Furthermore, at the end of the study period, when entering grade 2 at the Ulya level, students must make a *Treatise* (thesis), which will be presented and tested in the Risalah (thesis) examination session by kyai and senior ustad (Jauhari, Kepala Madin, Interview, 11 Oktober 2023).

**Fourth**, hobbies, talents, and entertainment. Some students are passionate about literacy and writing careers because they enjoy reading and writing. It is also driven by their curiosity about various things that are new and interesting, which then become fun habits. When students feel bored with the routine of their learning activities in pesantren, schools, and higher education, they find solace in reading or writing anything that interests them (Baihaqi, Interview, 20 September 2023).

**Fifth**, economic motives. Students eventually realize that their written works can earn them wages or recognition as writers when published in magazines or newspapers. Likewise, when writing a scientific or popular book that is best-selling and read by many people, they will get a reasonably good royalty fee from a publisher as a book author (Baihaqi, Interview, 20 September 2023).

From the explanation of several motivations above, several things can be stated; regarding the theological motivation for deepening religion, practicing the teachings and mission of Islamic da'wah, then the development of theological literacy is in line with the opinion of Steven Prothero, who stated that “*Religious literacy refers*

to the ability to understand use the religious terms, symbols, images, beliefs, practices, scriptures, heroes, themes, and stories that are employed in public life (Prothero, n.d., p. 11).

Regarding motivation for deepening religion, there is the concept of *Iqra* (read), a command from Allah Almighty to his people to constantly "read." *Reading* is a way or intermediary that can lead humans to the degree of perfect humanity in building civilization. In the next verse, there is the verse "*allazi 'allama bil qalam*," meaning who teaches (man) with the medium of *qalam* (pen and writing). This verse affirms that the existence of Islam strongly encourages humans to always carry out reading and writing activities as a means of the process of transforming knowledge and knowledge (Mursyid, 2014, p. 129).

Regarding the motivation to carry out the messages and examples of the Kyai, the influence of Kyai's example is significant in encouraging the literacy spirit of students. According to Ahmad Ali Azim in his thesis "Tradition of Literasi Pesantren," the process of forming a literacy culture in pesantren educational institutions is not limited to reading and writing alone. It also involves preserving the noble traditions of scholars in the world of literacy and passing them on to their students. The method used is cultivating the spirit and habituation of literature in pesantren. According to Azim, the literacy tradition of pesantren is strongly influenced by the example of caregiver figures (*kyai*) and routine educational activities in the pesantren (Ahmad Ali Azim, 2019).

Regarding literacy motivation, because the task of making papers, presenting books, and making treatises is then tested in the Minutes session, this makes the students' literacy skills more developed into complete literacy skills as in the meaning of literacy initiated by Yunus Abidin that literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen (Abidin, 2018), The results of this activity will also give rise to student learning, which is not just about learning about religion but for David Ford and Mike Higton it can involve *learning patterns of fruitful interaction-engaged, conversational, and perhaps argumentative. It involves learning how religious communities argue, and how to join in with those arguments in order to explore agreements and disagreements, and the dynamics by which they can change* (Higton, 2015, p. 52). This kind of active and critical religious literacy also involves important religious language (*which again, is, not of course, to imply offering some kind of assent or credence to any particular religious or theological claims*).

*It also embodies the capacity to locate particular ideas within their historical, ethical, epistemological, and social context* (Conro, 2015). On the other hand, *religious blindness* is not defined as the absence of the elements that make up religious literacy but is sometimes based on misunderstanding, where partial understanding or explanation tends to misrepresentation and misunderstanding. From the explanation above, it is essential to emphasize that good religious literacy can lead to a comprehensive understanding of religious science and an appreciation for the diverse interpretations of existing religious texts among adherents. Such understanding can be achieved through the mastery of religious literacy, enabling individuals to comprehend religious concepts and differences in interpretation.

Barbara Warnick cites Tyner's opinion that “*Critical literacy has been described as a literacy that encourages a reflective, questioning stance toward the forms and content of print and electronic media. This is an overarching term, and its benefit is to include all the forms, modalities, and devices of communication* (Warnick, 2001, p. 6)

Meanwhile, regarding economic motives as one of the reasons for students' enthusiasm for literacy, this explanation of economic motives is in line with Alhumami's opinion, which states that literacy is a form of *cognitive skills*, logical, critical, and analytical thinking; developing science and mastering technology; transformation of productive economic activity for well-being (Alhumami, 2018). Olasehinde added that people with low literacy can decrease their quality of life, socially and economically. Another impact of low community literacy is low self-quality because literacy culture can shape a person's ethics and morals. It is evidenced in Olasehinde's research, which explains that; “a student who does not possess good reading skills tends to grow negative attitude towards learning and this can even lead to having self-esteem problems in later life (Olasehinde, 2015).

#### **Model of literacy development in Pesantren.**

The students' efforts in developing a literacy culture were observed through various activities, which include two development models, namely the group model and the individual model:

*First*, the model for developing a literacy culture as a group carried out by Nurul Ummah students is to create a unit/institution for regular writing habit activities for students, for example, through publishing Tilawah Magazine, Mading

Assibaq (monthly wall magazine), Salaf and Khalaf Book Translation Group, Newspaper Nurma (local Islamic boarding school monthly newspaper). The range of publications for these literacy activities is for local Islamic boarding schools and the general public.

**Second**, the model for developing individual literacy culture for each student includes spontaneous and tentative writing in the form of articles, poetry, news, and translations, which are sent to various social media, both electronic media (Website/internet, Facebook, Instagram) and social media. Print (Newspapers, Magazines, Bulletins). Apart from that, quite a few also create books in various scientific disciplines and translate works through collaboration with publishers and outside pesantren (Anam Muntolib, Interview, 20 September 2023).

The model for strengthening literacy culture carried out by students at the Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School uses the habituation method, which is realized through routine, spontaneous, and exemplary activities. This habit is directed at forming traits and behaviors that are carried out continuously. Theoretically, this habit has three indicators, as mentioned by Maswardi Amin, that something is said to be a habit if it meets the following elements. The first element is routine, namely getting used to doing something well. The second element is spontaneous; the aim is to be able to do something spontaneously, especially in behavior and manners. Third, the exemplary element aims to provide an example to students or children (Amin, 2015).

### **The Role of Pesantren Management in Strengthening Literacy Culture.**

The development of a literacy culture for students is well supported by the management of Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School. The efforts of the pesantren management in encouraging the strengthening of literacy culture for Nurul Ummah students are carried out structurally (formally) and non-structurally (nonformal).

**First**, structurally or formally, pesantren administrators encourage literacy culture through autonomous institutions or supporting activity units. The autonomous institutions include Madarasah Diniyah Nurul Ummah. In this madrasah diniyah, students study classical books (yellow books) and contemporary books (white books) using *Sorogan*, *Bandongan*, *Syawir* (musyawarah/discussion), presentation of papers and *treatises*, *muhafazah* (memorization), *qira'ah* (reading),

*kitabah* (writing) and others. In addition to learning activities at madrasah diniyah, students also study books managed by the management of the pesantren section/department of Curriculum and Student Affairs. The methods used include *Sorogan, Bandongan, and Muhafazah*. This learning activity in Madin and Pesantren requires students to develop their literacy by reading, writing, and understanding the religious subject matter learned by students.

To further support the development of students' interests and talents, the management of Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School established the field/department of Santri Interest and Talent Education Development (P2MBS). The management of this section is tasked with encouraging students to be talented in writing and foreign languages (Arabic and English). This board also encourages and assigns students to actively write in media owned by pesantren, such as *Tilawah Magazine*, Facebook, Instagram, and Nurul Ummah Blo/Website.

The pesantren established a section/department board that manages the *Az-Ziyadah Library* as part of its structure. This library contains scientific and non-scientific books and books, religious and non-religious fields, translated works, thesis research results, theses, and dissertations. This pesantren library is supported by a private library of books owned by the caretaker KH Asyhari Marzuqi, which all students can read. The number of books of kyai Asyahari reached more than 1000 titles of books that he had studied or bought while studying in Baghdad, Iraq.

To further enhance their literacy studies, the management of Pesantren Nurul Ummah appointed an administrator to oversee the *Bahsul Masail Institute (LBM)*. The management of this institution is tasked with creating a program of study and deliberation for students that discusses actual religious issues (*masail ad-diniyyah al-waqi'iyah*) and thematic religious problems (*masail ad-diniyyah al-maudu'iyah*). It is hoped that LBM activities can provide opportunities for students to express their abilities by arguing on actual and thematic discussion themes raised from everyday community problems. The book deliberations held by the *Bahsul Masail Institute* provide opportunities for all members or participants to engage actively in learning books, individually or in groups. Students are encouraged to broaden their horizons on various themes that often arise or are questioned by the community. Students are also encouraged to prepare and explore various references to the book of

*Muktabar* (recognized by pesantren) to *establish* a law, and this process can strengthen the students' absorption of understanding the book's text. Book deliberation activities in the Bahsul Masa>il Institute at Pesantren Nurul Ummah usually coincide with specific moments, such as during the Haul event, Santri day, while routinely held every 2 or 3 months to trigger students to read the yellow book literature.

Finally, the pesantren facilitates documentation of its students' works to be published in the semi-autonomous body of the Nurmedia publishing institution under the management of the Nurul Ummah Islamic boarding school. Student works can refer to scientific books, popular books, translated works, and others (Anam Muntolib Ketua Pondok, Interview, 20 September 2023).

*Second*, non-structurally (informally), administrators and administrators of the curriculum and student affairs always advise students to muthala'ah (study the book) in their spare time to use time outside the routine activities of pesantren. The book or book that is studied contains material that can be related to books in Madin and Pesantren studies and other development materials. This muthalaah activity can be done individually or in groups so that sometimes independent class groups appear to study specific books alternately with the participants' reading and presentation methods.

To ensure that students stay updated on current political, economic, social, cultural, artistic, and sports issues, the management of the Nurul Ummah Islamic boarding school provides regular reading subscriptions to the daily newspaper *Kedaulatan Rakyat* (KR) attached to the wallboard. With this subscription, students can stay updated on current political, economic, social, cultural, artistic, and sports issues. Some rooms in the pesantren complex even have members who hold independent dues for subscribing to the *Jawa Pos*, *Republika*, and *Suara Merdeka* newspapers.

Several administrators of Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School have set an exemplary standard for developing a literacy culture through their passion for reading and writing. The management's writings are also widely published in various local and national magazines and newspapers. Several administrators have also written books published by Nurmamedia (Anam Muntolib, Ketua Pondok, Interview, 20 September 2023).

The management of the Nurul Ummah Islamic boarding school has made efforts to support literacy strengthening by providing facilities such as a library, Islamic boarding school magazines, wall magazines, student bulletins, and daily newspaper subscriptions. Islamic boarding schools also create learning system rules using learning methods and evaluations that can foster and develop the students' literacy skills. Apart from that, the Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School also creates sustainable literacy programs through activities in both the Islamic boarding school curriculum and the Madarasah Diniyah curriculum. The Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School also provides the Nurma Media publishing institution, which allows students to publish their written works in scientific books and famous works such as essays, dictionaries, and literary works such as poetry and short stories.

From the explanation above, the efforts of the Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School Management in organizing and conditioning the development of literacy culture have met the standard steps or concept of increasing literacy, as stated by Ane Permatasari. She explained ways to improve literacy. *First*, improving the quality and equity of education in order to encourage higher literacy levels. Facilities and human resources need to be developed to reach remote areas. *Second*, building many libraries in all regions as comfortable places to read by increasing the number of book collections and offering exciting activities. *Third*, creating sustainable programs to introduce books better and encourage interest in reading books to educational institutions and the community. *Fourth*, encouraging book publishers to increase the number of books published, especially quality books from various fields. *Fifth*, supporting society, government, and all parties to build a civilization of reading books (Permatasari, 2015).

### **Santri's Contribution to Strengthening Religious Moderation**

Nurul Ummah Islamic Boarding School has endeavored to deliver its students to be able to explore religion (*tafaquh fiddin*) by studying and understanding primary texts (Al-Qur'an Hadith), and other supporting texts in the fields of Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, Ushul Fiqh, Akidah, Morals, History, Linguistics, and others. The results of their deepening understanding have also decorated and enriched the Islamic hazanah and scientific discourse of the pesantren world in Indonesia. The contribution of Nurul Ummah students can be seen in their written works as follows;

*First*, the students' written works are routinely accommodated in the *Tilawah* magazine, circulated, and consumed by students throughout Indonesia. The magazine appears in printed and digital versions online, on Facebook, and Internet blogs. The content of this magazine follows its motto, "Distributor of Ummah Aspirations," which channels the aspirations of forming a civil society with the direction of *Ahlussunnah Waljama'ah* by prioritizing the attitude of preaching Islamic values *tasamuh* (tolerant) *tawazun* (balanced) and *tawasuth* (mid), as well as *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* (Glory for all creatures).

Some of the student papers published by MP Tiawah contain the theme of Moderation as the following table;

Table 1. Examples of student writings in MP *Tilawah* edition 19;

NO	Name	Moderation Theme
1	Halim Tri Rejeki	Transformasi Santri dari Zaman Old ke Zaman Now
2	Iqbal H Putra	Santri; Zaman Now Antar Religi dan Teknologi
3	Nuru Azizah	Konsep Dakwah Santri Zaman Now dan Gaya Hidup kekinian
4	Basuki Rahmat	KH. Ahmad Zabidi; Meneladani Kepemimpinan Nabi Ibrahim
5	Syifa Hasna Salsabila	Fenomena Ustad "Dadakan" dan Kaum Didikan Media

*Second*, the writings of Nurul Ummah students have graced various local, national, and international mass media. Their writings are published in various print and electronic media. Student writing is usually published in the rubric of student voices (opinions), teacher voices (opinions), opinions (articles), art, culture, sports, and others. Some students have also written works in the form of scientific books and are famous for their single writings or collaborations with fellow students. Most of their books are published by pesantren publishers such as Nurmamedia, Asna Litera, and Laelamajnun Literacy.

Table 2. Examples of written works of Nurul Ummah students

NO	Santri Name	Heading	Publisher/ Year
1	Fathan Anis	Mengasah Empati Anak dengan Permainan Tradisional	Rumah Kita (2019)
2	Ahmad Karim M	Terapi dan Doa Anti Galau	Asna Litera (2009)

		Mata Air Keikhlasan; Biografi KH Asyhari Marzuqi	Nurma Media (2010)
		Nasehat Sang Kyai	Nurma Media (2011)
3	Aziz Anwar F.	Masa Depan Mesir	Kompas (2012)
		Maulid dan Perlawanan Kultural	Media Indonesia (2013)
		Islam dan Nasionalisme	Media Indonesia (2013)
		Ustad dan Pembela Islam	Koran Tempo (2014)
		Jahiliyah Rasisme	Koran tempo (2014)
		Leaders Should not Fan Sectarians tensions	Jakarta Pos (2014)
		Ramadhan and Lesson of Tolerance	Jakarta Pos (2014)

*Third*, the work of Nurul Ummah's alumnae has also been widely scattered in various print and electronic media. Some newspaper media that accommodate alumnae writings include Kedaulatan Rakyat, Republika, Tempo, Jakarta Pos. Some alumnae have become teachers and lecturers in various universities, so they have been involved in education by teaching students and students. As teachers and lecturers, alumnae are also required to make scientific works, including articles in journals and magazines, textbooks, and other scientific books. So that their written works are read and consumed by students and the general public, Nurul Ummah alumnae have been able to contribute to embedding and spreading ideas by carrying the mission of Islam that is moderate, tolerant, and peaceful in their writings both in the campus community, schools, and the general public. Nurul Ummah alumnae have been involved in the community, filling out various Islamic religious studies as outlined by teachers and kyaidi pesantren in Islamic religious studies in their respective educational institutions such as pesantren, schools/madrasas, campuses, and majlis taklim. Their study of religious books also adorns various channels and electronic media accounts such as Facebook, YouTube, WA Group, Twitter, and Instagram.

*Table 3. Examples of several articles on the theme of religious moderation by alumnae Nurul Ummah that have been published*

No	Name	Publisher/Year
1	Slamet Riyadi	Nurma Media (2019)

No	Name	Publisher/Year
2	Rahmat Kamal	Edukasia Islamika (2021)
		Islamic Studies Journal for Social Transformation (2017)
3	Muhammad Muntahibunnafis	El-Harakah (2019)
		Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam (2017)
		Jurnal Antropologi UI Jakarta (2016)
4	Donny Khoirul Aziz	Jurnal Insania (2020)
5	Ahmad Karim Mustofa	Kedaulatan Rakyat (2019)
6	Aziz Anwar Fachrudin	Jakarta Pos (2013-2023)
		Kedaulatan Rakyat (2014-2023)
		Jawa Pos (2012)
		Kompas (2012)
		Media Indonesia (2013-2014)
		Republika (2013-2014)
		Koran Tempo (2014)
		Ircisod (2021)
7	Umar Sidiq	Jurnal Kodifikasiana (2010)
		Jurnal Istawa (2019)
8	Abdurrahman Kasdi	Jurnal Al-Quds (2021)
		Jurnal Ad-Din (2018)
9	Khamami Zada	Paramadina (2001)
		Teraju (2002)
		Lakpesdam NU (2003)
		Nuansa (2006)
		Gelora Aksara (2008)
		Penamas (2015)
10	Ibnu Burdah	Mitra Pustaka (1997)
		Tiara Wacana (2008)
		Sussex Academic Press (2010)
		Journal of Indonesian Islam (2017)
11	Sigit Purnama	Obsesi (2020)
		Heliyon (2022)

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that *pesantren* plays a crucial role in cultivating a literacy culture that strengthens the values of moderate Islam. Pesantren Nurul Ummah, as a case study, demonstrates how *santri* are motivated to read and write not only by theological imperatives but also by socio-cultural encouragement, academic obligations, and personal interests. The literacy model developed in this *pesantren* is structured through both individual and collective habituation, manifested in routine, spontaneous, and exemplary activities. Through formal and informal

initiatives, *pesantren* promotes a deep engagement with classical and contemporary Islamic texts, enabling *santri* to internalize and disseminate Islamic values of *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), *tawāzun* (balance), and *tawassuṭ* (moderation). These findings highlight the transformative power of literacy in shaping peaceful religious identities and discourses.

This research contributes significantly to the scholarly discourse on Islamic education by illustrating how *pesantren* literacy culture serves as a vehicle for religious moderation and intellectual refinement. Theoretically, it reinforces the proposition that civilization and literacy are interdependent, where the elevation of literacy within Islamic institutions catalyzes socio-religious transformation. It also offers an empirically grounded framework for understanding the epistemological role of *pesantren* in the broader project of Islamic moderation. Practically, the study affirms that the literacy practices embedded in *pesantren* life equip students and alumni with the intellectual tools and communicative competencies to engage constructively in public discourse. Their published works, both print and digital, serve as channels to disseminate peaceful, inclusive, and rational interpretations of Islam across diverse platforms and audiences.

Despite the substantial contributions, this study is limited to a single *pesantren* and therefore, may not capture the full spectrum of literacy dynamics across various *pesantren* in Indonesia. Future research should consider a comparative approach involving multiple *pesantren* with diverse ideological orientations and regional contexts. Investigations into digital literacy practices among *pesantren* alumni and their influence on online religious discourse are also recommended. Moreover, policy stakeholders and educators are encouraged to recognize and institutionalize *pesantren*-based literacy models as a counter radicalization strategy and as a foundation for fostering inclusive Islamic thought. This research ultimately reaffirms that literacy in *pesantren* is not merely a pedagogical tool but a cultural force vital to shaping an enlightened and peaceful Islamic civilization.

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