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Integrating the POAC Framework and Islamic Values in Pesantren: A Pesantren Moderation Leadership Model (PMLM) for Santri

Chikal Anugrah Putra Naisabur[1], Endang Komara[1], Achmad Saefurridjal[1], Wahyu Satya Gumelar[1]

[1] Universitas Islam Nusantara Bandung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how kiai leadership cultivates religious moderation (*wasathiyyah*) among santri amid rising radicalism and intolerance in Indonesia. Using a qualitative phenomenological multiple-case design, it examined two Nahdlatul Ulama-affiliated pesantren in West Java with contrasting characters: the traditional salafiyah Al-Falah and the modern Riyadhul Jannah. Data from 24 informants were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, coded in two cycles, and compared through within- and cross-case matrices structured by the POAC framework (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) and core Islamic leadership values. Both kiai embedded moderation across all four functions, but through different pathways: Al-Falah relied on charismatic, informal, and dialogical practices that favour internalisation yet depend on the kiai's person, whereas Riyadhul Jannah used formal structures and standard operating procedures that favour accountability yet risk mere compliance. Of the national moderation indicators, tolerance and anti-violence were the most consistently enacted, while commitment to nationality remained largely confined to planning. The study proposes the Pesantren Moderation Leadership Model (PMLM), which integrates the POAC cycle, Islamic leadership values, moderation content dimensions, and an enabling ecosystem supporting tolerant and inclusive religious education.

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Corresponding Author:
Chikal Anugrah Putra Naisabur
Universitas Islam Nusantara Bandung, Indonesia; chikalnaisabur@yahoo.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation (*wasathiyyah*) has emerged as one of Indonesia's foremost national strategic priorities, reflecting the recognition that social cohesion in the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy depends on the capacity of religious institutions to cultivate balanced, tolerant, and inclusive attitudes among their constituencies (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Hefni, 2021; Rofiqi et al., 2024). The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has mainstreamed religious moderation across educational policy, embedding it in pesantren governance, *madrasah* curricula, and higher education programmes (K. A. R. Indonesia, 2019). Despite this policy momentum, persistent reports of

intolerance, hate speech, and exclusivist religious interpretation—particularly among youth—underscore the urgency of examining how religious moderation is actually cultivated at the grassroots institutional level ((Al-Ghifari et al., 2024; Nasith, 2024; Parmoko et al., 2024).

Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) occupy a distinctive position in Indonesia's religious education landscape. With over 42,000 institutions nationwide, *pesantren* serve as the primary sites for intensive Islamic formation, character development, and community leadership cultivation (Fathurrohman & Arifi, 2024; Salim et al., 2025). At the heart of *pesantren* governance is the *kiai*—the charismatic spiritual leader whose authority encompasses religious instruction, institutional management, and moral exemplarity (Bakar et al., 2025; Dhofier, 2011). The *kiai*'s leadership is not merely managerial but deeply embedded in Islamic values such as *shura* (deliberative consultation), *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *adl* (justice), which together constitute a distinctive Islamic leadership paradigm (Almoharby & Neal, 2013; S. Arifin et al., 2024; Jamil, 2015).

Despite the rich tradition of *kiai* leadership, three gaps persist in the existing literature. First, most studies describe the *kiai*'s role in general educational or organisational terms without systematically mapping how the full cycle of managerial functions—planning, organising, implementing, and controlling—is enacted for the specific purpose of cultivating religious moderation (Muntoha et al., 2025; Parmoko et al., 2024; Rozaq et al., 2022). Second, few studies integrate classical Islamic leadership values with established management frameworks to produce an analytically coherent account of *pesantren* governance for moderation (J. Arifin & Hanif, 2024; Purwowidodo & Zaini, 2024), even though such frameworks are increasingly used to reform *madrasah* and *pesantren* programmes (Haddade et al., 2024; Rodliyah et al., 2024). Third, comparative studies of *pesantren* with different institutional characters remain scarce, limiting understanding of how institutional context shapes the moderation agenda.

The novelty of this study lies in three areas. First, it examines *kiai* leadership management for religious moderation in two *pesantren* with contrasting characters: Pondok Pesantren Al-Falah (a traditional *salafiyah pesantren* in Bandung Regency) and Pondok Pesantren Modern Riyadhul Jannah (a modern *pesantren* in Subang Regency), both affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama. Second, it applies G. R. Terry's POAC framework as the managerial analytic lens, systematically mapping planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling functions. Third, it advances the *Pesantren* Moderation Leadership Model (PMLM), integrating the POAC cycle with Islamic leadership values and the four national indicators of religious moderation, complemented by two pesantren-specific dimensions.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how *kiai* manage the cultivation of religious moderation among *santri* through Islamic leadership values, across the four POAC functions, and to formulate an integrated leadership model that offers strategic guidance for *pesantren* leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders committed to strengthening tolerant and inclusive religious education. The findings contribute to the intersection of Islamic education management, religious moderation studies, and leadership theory by grounding global moderation discourse in the lived institutional realities of Indonesian *pesantren*.

2. METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). The phenomenological orientation enabled the researchers to capture participants' lived experiences, interpretive accounts, and meaning-making processes regarding religious moderation cultivation, while the case study structure facilitated systematic cross-case comparison between two contrasting *pesantren*. Comparable phenomenological designs have been used to examine value formation in West Java *pesantren* (Komarudin & Anwar, 2024).

The study was conducted between January and June 2025 at two *pesantren* in West Java Province, Indonesia: Pondok Pesantren Al-Falah (hereafter PP-A) in Bandung Regency and Pondok Pesantren Modern Riyadhul Jannah (hereafter PP-B) in Subang Regency. Both sites were purposively selected

because they: (1) are affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, representing the moderate mainstream of Indonesian Islam; (2) operate *madrasah* at multiple levels (MTs, MA, STAI); (3) are situated in communities with strong local beliefs and traditions, providing a rich context for examining moderation; and (4) represent contrasting institutional characters—traditional *salafiyah* (PP-A) and modern administrative (PP-B)—enabling instructive comparison.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Key informants included foundation leaders (*pimpinan yayasan*), *pesantren* directors (*pimpinan pesantren*), student affairs coordinators (*pengurus kesantrian*), senior *asatidz*, and student leaders (*ketua santri putra* and *putri*), together with parents and community representatives as external stakeholders. A total of twenty-four participants were involved. Recruitment continued until data saturation was reached.

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

Code	Informant Category	Role/Position	Pesantren	Number
PY1–PY2	Foundation Leaders	Institutional governance	PP-A & PP-B	2
KI1–KI2	Kiai / Pesantren Directors	Chief spiritual and institutional leader	PP-A & PP-B	2
PK1–PK4	Student Affairs Coordinators	Santri supervision and character programme	PP-A & PP-B	4
US1–US8	Senior Asatidz	Moderation-related instruction	PP-A & PP-B	8
KS1–KS4	Senior Santri Leaders	Ketua santri putra and putri	PP-A & PP-B	4
WS1–WS4	Parents / Community Reps	External stakeholders	PP-A & PP-B	4

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews explored participants' perceptions and experiences across the four POAC functions in cultivating religious moderation (Kallio et al., 2016). Each interview lasted 45–90 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent. Second, participant observation was conducted during religious instruction sessions, thematic *halaqah* discussions, community engagement activities, interfaith dialogue events, and daily *pesantren* routines. Third, document analysis included moderation-related curricula, programme schedules, *pesantren* regulations, evaluation reports, and relevant government instruments .

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2020), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Coding was performed manually, in two cycles. In the first cycle, open coding assigned descriptive codes to meaningful units in transcripts, field notes, and documents, using the four POAC functions and the four Islamic leadership values (*shura*, *uswah hasanah*, *amanah*, and *adl*) as an initial coding frame while allowing new codes to emerge inductively. In the second cycle, axial coding grouped these codes into broader categories, such as exemplarity, dialogical correction, and SOP-based coordination, which thematic synthesis then refined into the overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Naeem et al., 2023). Codes and their definitions were recorded in a codebook, and coding decisions were discussed during peer debriefing.

Cross-case analysis was conducted in three steps (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). First, a within-case matrix was built for each *pesantren*, organising coded evidence by POAC function (rows) and by data source—interviews, observation, and documents (columns)—so that each finding could be traced to its source. Second, the two matrices were combined into a cross-case meta-matrix, summarised in Table 2, in which each POAC function, challenge, and solution was compared side by side and classified as convergent or divergent. Third, the coded evidence was mapped onto the national indicators of religious moderation and two *pesantren*-specific dimensions (Table 3); convergent patterns were abstracted into the layers of the proposed model, whereas divergent patterns were interpreted in light of each institution's character.

Trustworthiness was ensured through source and technique triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing. Research ethics were observed: formal permission, informed consent, anonymisation (PY1, KI1, PK1, US1, KS1, WS1), and confidentiality.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings indicate that both *kiai* systematically enacted the four POAC functions to embed religious moderation into institutional culture. However, the pathways differed: PP-A relied on culturally embedded, personal, and dialogical approaches rooted in *salafiyah* tradition, while PP-B employed more structured, administratively organized, and programme-driven strategies consistent with its modern institutional character. The overall managerial architecture is summarized in Table 2. The sections below first examine each POAC function, then map the findings onto the national indicators of religious moderation, compare the strengths and weaknesses of the two leadership pathways, and finally present the model that synthesises them.

Table 2. Cross-Case Overview of Kiai Leadership Management for Religious Moderation

POAC Function	PP-A (Traditional Salafiyah)	PP-B (Modern Pesantren)
Planning	Collaborative curriculum design integrating moderation; thematic halaqah programmes; resource provision	Functional division-based planning; moderation unit; inter-religious dialogue strategy
Organizing	Collaborative kiai–asatidz–santri structure; informal coordination	Functional organizational chart; moderation division; SOP-based coordination
Actuating	Kiai exemplarity; cultural internalization; daily dialogical engagement	Structured programmes: tolerance training, community service, multicultural projects
Controlling	Daily behavioural observation; dialogical correction; feedback from asatidz and santri	Systematic reporting; programme-based evaluation; moderation behaviour indicators
Challenges	Limited moderation-trained asatidz; conservative external environment	Curriculum explicitness; standardized assessment instruments
Solutions	Asatidz capacity building; moderation-enriched references; community outreach	Curriculum revision; evaluation framework development; external partnerships

Planning: Embedding Moderation into Institutional Strategy

Planning at both *pesantren* was conducted as a collaborative process grounded in *shura* (deliberative consultation). At PP-A, the *kiai* led curriculum design sessions involving senior *asatidz*, student affairs coordinators, and *santri* representatives, ensuring that moderation values—tolerance, respect for diversity, rejection of violence—were explicitly embedded in religious instruction, *halaqah* themes, and extracurricular programmes. The *kiai* explained: "We begin every academic year by asking ourselves: what are the moderation challenges our *santri* will face when they leave these walls? Then we design our teaching to prepare them" (KI1, PP-A). At PP-B, planning was more structurally organized through a dedicated moderation division (*divisi moderasi*) that systematically mapped programme themes, interfaith dialogue schedules, and assessment criteria. Both approaches align with Terry's planning function as systematic goal-setting and action-selection (Noe, 2020; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018) and with Islamic leadership principles of *hikmah* (wisdom) and foresight (Almoharby & Neal, 2013; Jamil, 2015).

Planning was further aligned with national regulatory instruments. Law No. 18 of 2019 on *Pesantren* mandates that *pesantren* education cultivate individuals who are moderate, tolerant, and of noble

character (Republik Indonesia, 2019), while Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 on Character Education Strengthening requires the integration of religious, nationalist, integrity, cooperative, and independent values (Republik Indonesia, 2017), and Ministry of Religious Affairs Decree No. 183 of 2019 emphasises moderate and tolerant Islamic religious education in *madrasah* curricula (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019b). Both *pesantren* demonstrated conscious alignment with these frameworks, translating regulatory mandates into locally contextualised programme designs (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Kosim et al., 2023; Rofiqi et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the planning processes at both *pesantren* resonate with constructivist theories emphasising experiential and socially situated learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and with Islamic educational philosophy that positions education as a holistic endeavour encompassing intellectual, moral, and spiritual development (Miftahuddin et al., 2024; Syifa et al., 2023). The combination of institutional strategic documents, participatory design, and value-driven curricula ensures that moderation is not an add-on but an embedded institutional priority (Asyari, 2022; Intania, 2024).

Organizing: Structural Clarity and Value-Based Role Distribution

Organizing at PP-A reflected the *pesantren*'s collaborative and informal institutional character. The *kiai*, *asatidz*, student affairs coordinators, and *santri* leaders operated within a flat structure where roles were distributed based on trust, competence, and religious authority rather than rigid bureaucratic hierarchy. Male and female *santri* leaders (*ketua santri putra* and *putri*) both took part, consistent with research on the growing role of women in *pesantren* management (Wardiana & Fadli, 2024). Moderation-related activities were coordinated through regular informal consultations and *musyawarah* among *asatidz*. At PP-B, organizing followed a more formalized approach with a functional organizational chart, a dedicated moderation unit, and standard operating procedures (SOPs). A student affairs coordinator noted: "Our SOP ensures that every *ustadz* knows exactly what moderation objectives they are responsible for each semester, and how their work connects to the broader moderation programme" (PK3, PP-B).

Both approaches embody core Islamic organizing principles: *tanzhim* (institutional order), *ta'awun* (cooperation), and *amanah* (trustworthy delegation) (S. Arifin et al., 2024; Rozaq et al., 2022). The *kiai*'s role as the organizing nucleus—distributing authority while maintaining moral and spiritual oversight—mirrors the Prophetic leadership tradition of clear delegation combined with collective accountability. Cross-case comparison reveals that while the specific organizing mechanism differs (informal versus formal), the underlying Islamic values and the managerial outcome—coordinated, accountable moderation programme delivery—are convergent.

Actuating: Exemplary Leadership and Culturally Embedded Pedagogy

The actuating function—the operational heart of moderation cultivation—was enacted through three interconnected mechanisms. First, *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct): both *kiai* modelled moderate attitudes in daily interactions, demonstrating openness to diverse perspectives, respectful dialogue with community members of different beliefs, and consistent rejection of exclusivist or violent rhetoric. A senior *santri* observed: "We learn moderation not mainly from textbooks but from watching how the Kiai treats people—Muslim or non-Muslim—with the same dignity and warmth" (KS2). Second, culturally embedded pedagogy: at PP-A, moderation values were transmitted through traditional pedagogies—*bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *halaqah*—infused with comparative *mazhab* study, Islamic pluralism history, and tolerance ethics, whereas at PP-B structured tolerance training workshops, community service projects, and multicultural engagement activities served as the primary vehicles (Nasith, 2024; Parmoko et al., 2024; Purwowidodo & Zaini, 2024). Third, community engagement: both *pesantren* encouraged *santri* interaction with surrounding communities, reinforcing moderation through lived experience rather than abstract instruction.

The actuating practices resonate with contemporary scholarship demonstrating that effective religious moderation education requires a combination of cognitive instruction, affective modelling,

and experiential engagement rather than didactic transmission alone (Anwar & Umam, 2025; Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Hefni, 2021; Muntoha et al., 2025). The *kiai*'s integration of personal exemplarity with institutional programme delivery represents a distinctive contribution of *pesantren* pedagogy to the broader moderation education literature.

Controlling: Behavioural Monitoring and Reflective Evaluation

Controlling at both *pesantren* combined behavioural observation, reflective feedback, and programme evaluation, but with different emphases. At PP-A, the *kiai* and *asatidz* conducted daily observation of *santri* behaviour—monitoring how they responded to differences in *mazhab*, interacted with community members, and participated in dialogue activities. Correction was dialogical rather than punitive: *santri* displaying exclusivist tendencies were engaged in personal conversations with the *kiai* or senior *asatidz*, guided toward more balanced perspectives through persuasion and Qur'anic evidence. At PP-B, controlling was more systematized through semester-based programme evaluations, moderation behaviour indicators, and reporting mechanisms. A *pesantren* director explained: "We do not only check attendance in moderation programmes; we observe whether *santri* actually demonstrate tolerance in their daily interactions, their dormitory life, their social media posts" (KI2, PP-B).

Both approaches align with Terry's controlling function as continuous comparison of actual performance against planned standards, with corrective action where needed (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). They also reflect the Islamic principle of *muhasabah* (self-accounting) extended to institutional practice (Anwar & Umam, 2020; S. Arifin et al., 2024; Rozaq et al., 2022). Nevertheless, both *pesantren* acknowledged that evaluation instruments specifically designed to measure moderation attitudes—as distinct from general academic or behavioural assessment—remain underdeveloped, indicating an area for future strengthening.

Mapping the Findings onto the National Indicators of Religious Moderation

Describing what each *pesantren* does is not enough to judge what kind of moderation it cultivates. The Ministry of Religious Affairs defines religious moderation through four indicators: commitment to nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019a). Because moderation in *pesantren* is argued from within the Islamic scholarly tradition, the analysis adds two *pesantren*-specific dimensions derived inductively from the coded data rather than from an existing framework: fidelity to authoritative religious texts and continuity of religious tradition. Table 3 maps the empirical findings onto these six dimensions and identifies the POAC function through which each is mainly carried.

Table 3. Mapping of Findings onto the National Moderation Indicators and Pesantren-Specific Dimensions

Dimension	PP-A (charismatic-informal)	PP-B (formal-SOP)	Main POAC carrier	Assessment
Commitment to nationality (MoRA)	Planning aligned with Law No. 18/2019 and Presidential Regulation No. 87/2017	Same regulatory alignment in planning	Planning	Weakest: visible mainly in planning documents, with little evidence of actuation or monitoring
Tolerance (MoRA)	Comparative mazhab study in bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah; observation	Interfaith dialogue; tolerance training; multicultural projects; monitoring	All four functions	Strongest and most consistent in both cases

	of responses to mazhab differences	of dormitory life and social media		
Anti-violence (MoRA)	Rejection of violence embedded in curricula; non-punitive, dialogical correction	Kiai's rejection of violent rhetoric; structured moderation programmes	Actuating, Controlling	Strong as a modelled norm; moderation-specific assessment underdeveloped
Accommodation of local culture (MoRA)	Traditional pedagogies; open pengajian and community activities	Community service projects; open interaction with surrounding communities	Actuating	Strong in practice but rarely named in planning or evaluation
Fidelity to authoritative texts (pesantren-specific)	Correction through persuasion and Qur'anic evidence	Not explicitly reported in the data	Actuating, Controlling	Legitimises moderation from within the tradition, mainly in PP-A
Continuity of religious tradition (pesantren-specific)	Bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah; history of Islamic pluralism	Inter-mazhab dialogue with local leaders; NU affiliation	Actuating	Anchors moderation in the NU scholarly tradition

Three patterns stand out. First, tolerance is the most fully managed indicator: it is planned, assigned, enacted, and monitored in both cases, and at PP-B it is observed even in dormitory life and on social media (KI2, PP-B). Anti-violence is similarly robust, but mainly as a norm modelled by the *kiai* and upheld through non-punitive correction rather than as a separately assessed outcome. Second, accommodation of local culture is lived rather than managed: both *pesantren* engage their surrounding communities intensively, yet local culture is seldom named among planned moderation objectives or evaluation criteria. Third, commitment to nationality is the least developed indicator in daily practice, appearing chiefly at the planning stage through alignment with national regulations, with little evidence of how it is actuated or monitored. This is a notable gap, because commitment to nationality is the first of the Ministry's indicators and central to the policy rationale for religious moderation (Hefni, 2021; Rofiqi et al., 2024).

The two *pesantren*-specific dimensions help explain what makes the *pesantren* approach distinctive. At PP-A, moderation is argued from the Qur'an, comparative *mazhab* study, and the history of Islamic pluralism, so that *santri* encounter it as part of their own tradition rather than as an external state agenda, which may help reduce the resistance shown by *santri* from exclusivist backgrounds. The mapping also shows that the indicators sit in different places in the two cases: PP-A carries them mainly through actuating and dialogical controlling, whereas PP-B makes them explicit in planning and controlling through its moderation division and behaviour indicators. For both, aligning evaluation instruments with the national indicators would make gaps such as commitment to nationality visible and therefore manageable.

Persistent Challenges and Adaptive Solutions

Three principal challenges persisted across both *pesantren*. First, limited human resources: many *asatidz* possess strong *fiqh* or *tafsir* expertise but lack specific training in moderation pedagogy, inclusive teaching methods, or contemporary deradicalization approaches; both *kiai* responded by initiating capacity-building programmes in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, MUI, and

moderate Islamic organizations. Second, insufficient teaching materials: resources explicitly designed for moderation education—comparative *mazhab* studies, interfaith dialogue guides, contemporary pluralism case studies—remain scarce, and both *pesantren* began developing internal references. Third, external socio-cultural influences: some *santri* arrive from families or communities with exclusivist religious interpretations, creating resistance to moderation content, which both *kiai* addressed through community outreach—open *pengajian*, inter-*mazhab* dialogue with local leaders, and social activities bridging *pesantren* and community.

These challenges mirror findings from recent studies of moderation implementation in Indonesian *pesantren* (Al-Ghifari et al., 2024; Nasith, 2024; Parmoko et al., 2024) and underscore that moderation cultivation is not a one-time intervention but a sustained institutional commitment requiring concurrent investment in human capacity, pedagogical resources, and community engagement.

Two Pathways, One Value Core: Why Both Approaches Work and Where Each Falls Short

The cross-case comparison raises a question that description alone cannot answer: why do two very different managerial styles both appear to cultivate moderation, and what does each give up? Three explanations emerge from the data. First, both rest on the same value core. *Shura*, *uswah hasanah*, and *amanah* operate in both cases, and both *kiai* model moderate conduct in daily interaction; the SOPs of PP-B therefore do not replace the *kiai*'s exemplarity but extend its reach, consistent with evidence that relational, value-based leadership underpins character formation in Islamic schools (Suherman et al., 2025). Second, each mechanism fits the authority structure of its institution: in a *salafiyah pesantren*, where authority is personal and *santri* live in close daily contact with the *kiai*, informal coordination and dialogical correction are credible and responsive, whereas in a modern *pesantren* written roles and procedures are the accepted language of coordination. This corresponds to Weber (1978) distinction between charismatic and legal-rational authority and echoes findings that the *kiai*'s charisma is itself a resource for moderation (Al-Ghifari et al., 2024; Nasith, 2024). Third, the two mechanisms are functionally equivalent: each produces the coordination, accountability, and feedback that the POAC cycle requires, by different means.

Each approach nevertheless carries a characteristic weakness (Table 4). The charismatic-informal approach of PP-A depends heavily on the person of the *kiai* and a small circle of trusted *asatidz*. Its key practices—dialogical correction, value-laden *halaqah*, and judgements formed through daily observation—are largely tacit and undocumented, and therefore hard to evaluate, hard to transfer to new *asatidz*, and vulnerable to leadership succession. The shortage of moderation-trained *asatidz* sharpens this weakness: where moderation depends on personal guidance, every gap in teacher capacity becomes a gap in coverage.

The formal-SOP approach of PP-B has the opposite profile. It is transparent, assignable, and evaluable, but it risks reducing moderation to programme compliance, such as attending workshops or completing projects, rather than internalised disposition. The director's insistence that PP-B does not only check attendance (KI2) signals awareness of this risk rather than its absence. Programme-based activities can also become episodic, and PP-B itself identified curriculum explicitness and standardised assessment instruments as unresolved challenges (Table 2).

Table 4. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Two Leadership Pathways

Aspect	Charismatic-informal (PP-A)	Formal-SOP (PP-B)
Basis of authority	Personal, relational authority of the kiai	Legal-rational authority of roles and procedures, anchored in the kiai
Main mechanisms	Exemplarity, informal musyawarah, dialogical correction, daily observation	Moderation division, SOPs, structured programmes, semester evaluation
Why it works	Credible and responsive where santri live in daily contact with the kiai	Makes responsibilities explicit and outcomes traceable

Main weakness	Dependence on the kiai's person; tacit practices; vulnerable to succession	Risk of formal compliance; episodic programmes; less personal mentoring
Evidence in the data	Limited moderation-trained asatidz (Table 2)	Curriculum explicitness and assessment instruments unresolved (Table 2)
Adjustment under PMLM	Codify core practices in light guidelines and records	Embed mentoring and halaqah-style dialogue in programmes

The two approaches are therefore complementary rather than competing, since the strength of one corresponds to the weakness of the other. This suggests two directions of adjustment: codifying the charismatic, by recording PP-A's core practices of dialogical correction and observation in light guidelines that new *asatidz* can learn; and humanising the procedure, by building personal mentoring and *halaqah*-style dialogue into PP-B's programme cycle. It should be noted that effectiveness here rests on informants' accounts, observation, and documents rather than on measured change in *santri* attitudes.

The Pesantren Moderation Leadership Model (PMLM)

Cross-case synthesis of the findings above, including the indicator mapping and the comparison of the two leadership pathways, yields the *Pesantren* Moderation Leadership Model (PMLM) (Figure 1). The model positions the *kiai* as the managerial and spiritual nucleus, operating a POAC-based cycle of collaborative planning, value-based organizing, exemplary actuating, and reflective controlling—all infused with four core Islamic leadership values (*shura*, *uswah hasanah*, *amanah*, *adl*).

PMLM comprises four operational layers: (1) the managerial cycle (POAC), which provides the procedural architecture; (2) Islamic leadership values, which supply the moral and spiritual foundation; (3) moderation content dimensions, aligned with the four national indicators of religious moderation (commitment to nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019a) and two pesantren-specific dimensions (fidelity to authoritative religious texts and continuity of religious tradition); and (4) an enabling ecosystem encompassing *asatidz* capacity, pedagogical resources, and community engagement.

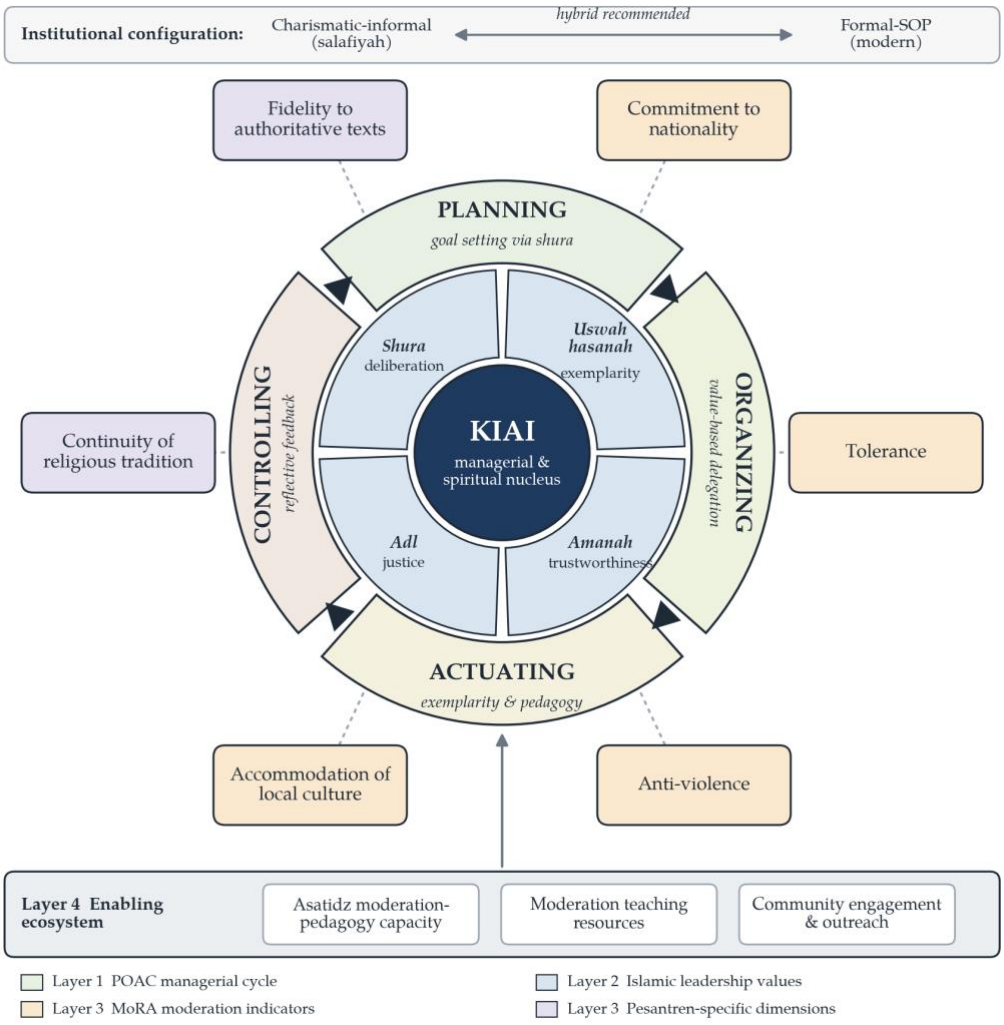


Figure 1. The Pesantren Moderation Leadership Model (PMLM)

The model's central proposition is that sustainable religious moderation in *pesantren* emerges not from any single programme or instruction but from the recursive interaction of managerial functions and Islamic values across all institutional layers. Planning specifies which moderation dimensions are prioritized; organizing distributes responsibility through value-based delegation; actuating operationalizes moderation through exemplarity and culturally embedded pedagogy; and controlling generates reflective feedback that strengthens the next cycle (S. Arifin et al., 2024; Muntoha et al., 2025; Purwowidodo & Zaini, 2024).

Figure 1 also shows that PMLM does not prescribe a single institutional form. The same four layers can be configured along a continuum from charismatic-informal to formal-SOP, as the two cases illustrate. The model recommends a hybrid position: *salafiyah pesantren* can keep the credibility of personal guidance while documenting their core moderation practices, and modern *pesantren* can keep procedural clarity while restoring the personal mentoring that turns programme participation into internalised moderation.

PMLM extends the literature in two ways. Theoretically, it bridges Islamic leadership studies and educational management by demonstrating how classical Islamic values can be operationalized within a modern management framework for a specific strategic outcome. Practically, it offers *kiai*, *pesantren* managers, and policymakers a diagnostic blueprint: leaders can assess their institution's moderation maturity across the POAC functions, identify which Islamic leadership value needs strengthening, and design targeted interventions. Concretely, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the *Majelis Masyayikh*, which sets quality-assurance standards for *pesantren* education under Law No. 18 of 2019, can use

PMLM to (1) include moderation pedagogy in the competency standards and training of *asatidz*; (2) align *pesantren* evaluation instruments with the national moderation indicators, giving particular attention to commitment to nationality; and (3) recognise both charismatic and procedural pathways in quality assurance rather than requiring every *pesantren* to adopt the same administrative format. These measures are consistent with Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2023 on Strengthening Religious Moderation (Indonesia, 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *kiai* leadership management at Pondok Pesantren Al-Falah and Pondok Pesantren Modern Riyadhul Jannah has been systematically enacted across the four POAC functions to cultivate religious moderation among *santri* through Islamic leadership values. Planning embedded moderation into curricula and programmes; organizing distributed roles through value-based delegation; actuating deployed *kiai* exemplarity, culturally embedded pedagogy, and community engagement; and controlling combined behavioural observation with reflective evaluation. The two cases also show that moderation can be cultivated through different pathways: the charismatic-informal pathway of Al-Falah favours internalisation but depends on the *kiai*'s person, whereas the formal-SOP pathway of Riyadhul Jannah favours accountability but risks formal compliance. Across both, tolerance and anti-violence were the most consistently enacted national indicators, while commitment to nationality remained largely at the planning level.

The principal contribution is the Pesantren Moderation Leadership Model (PMLM), which integrates the POAC managerial cycle with four core Islamic leadership values, the four national indicators of religious moderation, two *pesantren*-specific dimensions, and an enabling ecosystem. For the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the *Majelis Masyayikh*, the findings point to three priorities: moderation-pedagogy standards and training for *asatidz*, evaluation instruments aligned with the national moderation indicators, and quality-assurance policies that recognise both charismatic and procedural pathways rather than imposing a single template. This study has several limitations. It covers only two Nahdlatul Ulama-affiliated *pesantren* in West Java, so its findings cannot be generalised to *pesantren* of other affiliations or regions. Its evidence of effectiveness rests on informants' accounts, observation, and documents rather than on measured change in *santri* attitudes, and the six-month fieldwork period could not capture long-term outcomes or the effects of leadership succession. Most informants also hold positions within the *pesantren* hierarchy, which may have favoured positive accounts. Future research should test the model across *pesantren* of different affiliations, regions, and scales, and employ mixed-methods designs to measure the impact of PMLM-guided interventions on *santri* moderation attitudes and behaviours.

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