

Moderation, Character, and Pesantren Traditions: Actualization of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Ideas in Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the integration of the thoughts of Hadratussyaikh KH. Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari into the curriculum of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at Hasyim Asy'ari University, Tebuireng. Using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, the research highlights the actualization of pesantren values inherited from KH. Hasyim Asy'ari within the context of contemporary Islamic higher education. The main focus is on three core pillars: religious moderation, character development, and the preservation of pesantren traditions, which form the foundation of a sustainable Islamic education vision. The findings indicate that Hadratussyaikh's ideas—such as the importance of manners (*adab*), sincerity, accessible scholarship, and a moderate religious spirit—have been integrated into both the curriculum and learning practices. These values not only shape a religious and inclusive academic atmosphere but also strengthen students' identities as agents of change rooted in traditional Islamic scholarship. This integration is reflected in course content, teaching methods, as well as students' religious and social activities, all directed toward forming academically excellent individuals with strong morals and adaptability to contemporary challenges. Thus, this study affirms that KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's ideas are both relevant and strategic in formulating a model of Islamic religious education that bridges tradition and modernity. The results are expected to serve as a reference for the development of contextual and transformative pesantren-based curricula.

Keyword: Hasyim Asy'ari; Islamic Religious Education; Pesantren; Curriculum; Religious Moderation.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi integrasi pemikiran Hadratussyaikh KH. Muhamad Hasyim Asy'ari dalam kurikulum Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di Universitas Hasyim Asy'ari Tebuireng. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan studi dokumen, penelitian ini menyoroti aktualisasi nilai-nilai pesantren yang diwariskan oleh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi Islam kontemporer. Fokus utama tertuju pada tiga pilar utama: moderasi beragama, pembentukan karakter, dan pelestarian tradisi pesantren, yang menjadi dasar visi pendidikan Islam berkelanjutan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran Hadratussyaikh—seperti pentingnya *adab*, keikhlasan, keilmuan yang merakyat, dan semangat moderat dalam beragama—telah terintegrasi dalam kurikulum dan praktik pembelajaran. Nilai-nilai ini tidak hanya membentuk suasana akademik yang religius dan inklusif, tetapi juga memperkuat identitas mahasiswa sebagai agen perubahan yang berakar pada warisan keilmuan Islam tradisional. Integrasi tersebut tercermin dalam mata kuliah, metode pengajaran, serta aktivitas religius dan sosial mahasiswa, yang semuanya

diarahkan pada pembentukan insan akademis yang unggul dalam ilmu, kokoh dalam moral, dan adaptif terhadap tantangan zaman. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa gagasan KH. Hasyim Asy'ari relevan dan strategis dalam merumuskan model pendidikan agama Islam yang menjembatani antara tradisi dan modernitas. Hasilnya diharapkan menjadi acuan dalam pengembangan kurikulum berbasis pesantren yang kontekstual dan transformatif.

Kata kunci : *Hasyim Asy'ari; Pendidikan Agama Islam; Pesantren; Kurikulum; Moderasi Beragama.*

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Introduction

Islamic higher education in Indonesia plays a strategic role in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also spiritually mature and morally upright. Amid the challenges of globalization, the rapid flow of digital information, and the growing threats of extremism and intolerance in religious life, the noble values rooted in pesantren (Islamic boarding school) traditions serve as a crucial foundation for maintaining moderation and balance (Hasan, 2024; Muhtarom et al., 2020). In this context, the thoughts of Hadratussyaikh KH. Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari – founder of Nahdlatul Ulama and a central figure in pesantren history – offers a relevant and visionary paradigm for Islamic education. His ideas emphasize the integration of religious and general knowledge, the importance of manners (adab) and ethics in the learning process, and the upholding of national values (Asy'ari, 1924; Rosyidin et al., 2023), making him a key reference in formulating an Islamic education model that bridges tradition and modernity (Muhtarom et al., 2020).

Although numerous studies have extensively explored the role of pesantren values in Islamic education (Muhaimin, 2020; Usman, 2013), there remains a significant gap concerning the concrete implementation of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational principles – particularly the values of religious moderation, character formation, and the preservation of tradition – are within the curriculum and daily academic practices at the higher education level. Existing discussions often emphasize these values at a theoretical level, yet there is limited analysis of how they are operationalized in real academic life. Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to examine the extent to which these principles are authentically integrated into learning processes and student development initiatives, ensuring they move beyond symbolic representation to become an intrinsic part of higher education experiences.

This study is anchored in the educational philosophy of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, as detailed in *Adabul 'Alim wal Muta'allim* (Asy'ari, 1924), emphasizes the ethical and moral responsibilities of both teachers and students in the learning process. This

foundation is further enriched by sociological theories of education proposed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), which shed light on the processes of cultural reproduction and symbolic power within academic institutions, as well as contemporary models of religious moderation articulated by Ali (2023) and Anwar (2023). Methodologically, this research adopts a qualitative approach to deeply explore the lived realities of curriculum development, pedagogical practices, and campus cultural life shaped by pesantren traditions. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, participatory observation of academic and extracurricular activities, and critical document analysis (Ali et al., 2017; Ismanto, 2018). Through this multi-method strategy, the study seeks to uncover how traditional values are meaningfully integrated into modern higher education contexts.

KH. Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized that the essence of Islamic education lies in maintaining a harmonious balance between knowledge and character, intellect and spirituality. In his seminal work *Adabul 'Alim wal Muta'allim*, he argued that education should not be limited to the mechanical transfer of knowledge but must also serve as a transformative process that cultivates *adab* (ethical conduct), sincerity, humility, and a deep sense of social responsibility (Asy'ari, 1924; Ramdoni et al., 2021). According to Hasyim Asy'ari, the true purpose of education is to develop individuals who are intellectually sharp, morally upright, and spiritually steadfast. Knowledge, therefore, is not merely a vehicle for attaining material or worldly success but is fundamentally positioned as a form of devotion and worship, directly linked to one's relationship with God (Azmi & Ardianti, 2023; Zaim, 2020). This holistic educational vision underlines the importance of integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in the formation of a complete Muslim personality.

In practice, pesantren education embodies a holistic integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions, primarily through the intensive study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), the deliberate cultivation of noble character, and the practice of *ta'dzim*—deep reverence and respect toward teachers (Muhaimin, 2020; Azmi & Ardianti, 2023). These educational methods are not merely traditional practices but represent enduring pedagogical strategies that remain highly relevant for contemporary Islamic higher education. Given the increasing complexity of educational demands, the systematic incorporation of pesantren values into the curriculum of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Programs is essential. Such integration would ensure the formation of future educators who are not only intellectually proficient but also spiritually anchored and ethically responsible (Zainab, 2020). By bridging traditional pesantren methodologies with modern academic frameworks, Islamic universities can sustain

the transformative educational ideals envisioned by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and adapt them to contemporary societal needs.

Hasyim Asy'ari University in Tebuireng, deeply rooted in pesantren traditions, occupies a unique position to realize the integration of classical Islamic values with contemporary academic standards. As a higher education institution that has organically emerged from the pesantren milieu, it possesses both the cultural heritage and institutional framework necessary to harmonize traditional Islamic scholarship with the evolving demands of modern education. Strengthening pesantren values within this setting offers significant potential to cultivate students who are not only intellectually capable but also possess strong character, critical thinking skills, and moral resilience (Hermawansyah, 2015). Furthermore, this initiative is closely aligned with the policy direction of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which emphasizes the promotion of religious moderation as a fundamental principle of national religious and educational life (Ali, 2023; Anwar, 2023; Ramdoni et al., 2021). Thus, Hasyim Asy'ari University stands as a strategic model for integrating tradition and modernity in Islamic higher education.

Nonetheless, the implementation of pesantren values at the university level encounters significant challenges. In the current era marked by globalization, rapid digital transformation, and the increasing influence of secular educational paradigms, there is an urgent need for an integration model that moves beyond ceremonial acknowledgment toward a truly systemic and practical application (Hasan, 2024). Addressing this challenge demands the careful design of learning processes, instructional strategies, evaluation systems, and campus environments that holistically reflect the principles of *adab* (ethical conduct), wisdom, and spirituality (Muhaimin, 2020; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Such a model must ensure that pesantren values are not superficially appended to modern education but are deeply embedded within the academic and social fabric of the university. Only through a comprehensive and intentional approach can Islamic higher education institutions sustain their religious and ethical identities while remaining relevant in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to explore the implementation of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational principles – particularly religious moderation, character formation, and the preservation of pesantren traditions – within the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at Hasyim Asy'ari University, Tebuireng. This research aims not only to identify the presence of these values within curriculum documents but also to examine how they are enacted through daily educational activities, including lecturer-student interactions, academic program designs, and the broader academic culture. By investigating both formal structures and lived practices, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive

understanding of how pesantren values are sustained and adapted in a modern university context. Ultimately, the research aspires to offer strategic recommendations for the development of a pesantren-based PAI curriculum that remains faithful to traditional Islamic values while being responsive and adaptive to contemporary global educational challenges (Muhaemin & Yunus, 2023; Usman, 2013).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative case study design to investigate how pesantren values, as articulated by Hadratussyaikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational philosophy is integrated into the curriculum and learning practices of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at Hasyim Asy'ari University, Tebuireng. A qualitative approach was selected to capture the nuanced and dynamic processes through which values are internalized and enacted within academic interactions in a pesantren-based university environment (Emzir, 2014). The case study design, in particular, enables an in-depth exploration of a specific educational context that is deeply rooted in a rich pesantren tradition while simultaneously navigating the challenges posed by contemporary academic and global standards (Yin, 2017). Through this methodological framework, the study aims to reveal the lived realities of integrating classical Islamic educational values into modern higher education structures, offering insights that may be transferable to similar institutional contexts.

Methodologically, this study adopts a critical ethnography framework. This approach allows the researcher not only to document and describe educational practices but also to critically interrogate how pesantren values are preserved, negotiated, and at times challenged within the Islamic higher education context. While theoretical tools such as Freire's critical pedagogy and Bourdieu's concept of habitus are employed, they are applied with caution, acknowledging the need to balance universal theories of power and culture with the particularities of Islamic educational traditions. Rather than imposing Western frameworks uncritically, the study adapts them critically to suit the pesantren milieu. For example, although Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction provides a useful lens to examine the transmission of pesantren values, the unique spiritual dimensions of *adab* (ethical comportment) and *tawadhu'* (humility) necessitate a culturally sensitive interpretation that honors their religious and ethical specificity within Islamic educational settings.

Data for this study were collected through a combination of participatory observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation was conducted during a range of academic and religious activities – including lectures, kitab kuning study sessions, and communal worship

practices—with a focus on how values such as sincerity, humility, and scholarly discipline are embodied in daily academic life (Muhtarom et al., 2020). In-depth interviews were carried out with lecturers, students, curriculum developers, and pesantren leaders to capture diverse perspectives on the interpretation and implementation of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational philosophy in contemporary university settings. Document analysis involved the systematic examination of curriculum guidelines, syllabi, institutional policies, and key primary sources such as KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's *Adabul 'Alim wal Muta'allim* (Muhaimin, 2020). Together, these data collection methods enabled a comprehensive understanding of how pesantren values are sustained, negotiated, and transformed within the academic and cultural environment of Hasyim Asy'ari University.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including source triangulation, methodological triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation across multiple data sources and methods enabled the cross-validation of findings, helping to identify both areas of convergence and points of contradiction within the data. Member checking was conducted to confirm that participants' perspectives were accurately represented, while peer debriefing provided an external review to ensure that the analysis remained anchored in the participants' lived realities rather than the researcher's preconceptions. Throughout the research process, reflexivity was actively maintained by critically examining the researcher's positionality and the interpretive biases that may arise when studying an Islamic educational tradition through theoretical frameworks partially rooted in Western thought, such as Bourdieu's concept of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This reflexive stance was essential to uphold the integrity and cultural sensitivity of the study's findings.

Data analysis in this study followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, encompassing three core stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Codes and themes were developed inductively, allowing key local educational values—such as religious moderation, adab (ethical comportment), and scholarly ethos—to emerge organically from the data rather than being imposed a priori. Particular attention was given to identifying contradictions and tensions, such as the friction between traditional values of deference and contemporary academic expectations for critical thinking, which complicate idealized narratives of seamless integration. This analytic approach highlights that pesantren values within the university setting are not simply preserved statically, but are continually negotiated, reinterpreted, and at times contested within the evolving landscape of Islamic higher education. The analysis seeks to foreground

these dynamic processes to offer a nuanced understanding of tradition's role in modern academic life.

By critically examining the real-world application of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational philosophy, this study moves beyond normative or idealized claims, offering a reflective and grounded account of how pesantren values function within Islamic higher education. It highlights both the resilience of these values and the significant challenges they face in adapting to the demands of contemporary academic environments. In tracing these dynamics, the research does not merely affirm tradition but critically engages with the processes of negotiation, reinterpretation, and transformation that occur in practice. Through this critical lens, the study provides a more nuanced contribution to the ongoing development of educational models that seek to remain deeply anchored in Islamic traditions while being fully responsive to the complexities and expectations of modern academic life. Ultimately, it aspires to inform efforts toward creating Islamic higher education frameworks that are both authentic and adaptive in a globalized world.

Results And Discussion

Results

The findings of this study reveal that the actualization of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational philosophy within the curriculum of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at Hasyim Asy'ari University, Tebuireng, is constructed around three interrelated pillars: religious moderation, character formation, and the preservation of pesantren traditions. These pillars are not limited to the formal structure of the curriculum but are also visibly manifested in pedagogical practices, student activities, and the broader institutional culture. Religious moderation is promoted through both course content and campus initiatives, encouraging tolerance and balanced religious discourse. Character formation is fostered through explicit emphasis on *adab*, integrity, and social responsibility, while the preservation of pesantren traditions is maintained through practices such as *ta'dzim*, *kitab kuning* studies, and communal religious activities. Together, these elements demonstrate a dynamic, living integration of classical Islamic values within the university's modern academic framework.

Religious Moderation

Empirical evidence gathered through interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis indicates that religious moderation is a central value embedded in both formal courses and informal activities. Courses such as Islamic Religious Education and Contemporary Islam explicitly include modules on *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *wasathiyah* (the middle way) (Muhaimin, 2020; Ali, 2023). For instance, during a classroom observation of a Contemporary Islam lecture on April 9, 2024, students were assigned a comparative analysis of Sunni, Shi'a, and

Ibadi schools of thought. The session culminated in an open discussion where differing theological perspectives were debated critically yet respectfully, without descending into polemics. These findings illustrate that the promotion of religious moderation at Hasyim Asy'ari University is not limited to rhetorical commitment but is actively practiced within academic settings, reinforcing the internalization of wasathiyah values through structured pedagogical experiences.

Interview data supports and further nuances this finding. Informant K2 remarked, "We encourage students to be open to differing views," but also observed that "some students initially show resistance when engaging with unfamiliar or controversial Islamic perspectives" (Interview, K2, April 11, 2024). This indicates that although religious moderation is institutionally promoted within the curriculum and campus activities, its internalization among students remains a gradual and complex process rather than an immediate achievement. Students' initial resistance suggests that deeply ingrained cognitive and cultural frameworks must be patiently engaged and transformed over time. The findings imply that fostering wasathiyah (moderation) values requires not only the inclusion of these principles within formal course materials but also the active cultivation of dialogical spaces where critical yet respectful engagement with diverse Islamic traditions is modeled and encouraged. Therefore, while institutional efforts lay a strong foundation, sustained pedagogical strategies and mentoring are essential to deepen students' commitment to religious moderation.

Moreover, extracurricular initiatives further reinforce the institutional emphasis on religious moderation. For example, the Inter-Madhab Forum observed on April 10, 2024, showcased students' efforts to engage practically with theological and socio-cultural differences. A recorded debate among students on the topic of halal tourism policies highlighted how participants applied the principle of i'tidal (justice) to balance economic development goals with the need to respect religious sensitivities. This forum not only provided an opportunity for students to exercise critical thinking and respectful dialogue but also served as a real-world platform for practicing the ideals of moderation taught in formal coursework. Nevertheless, empirical observations suggest that the degree to which students internalize and embody these ideals varies significantly across the student body. While some students demonstrate mature, nuanced engagement with pluralism, others still exhibit hesitation or partial understanding, indicating that the cultivation of wasathiyah remains a formative, ongoing educational process.

Character Formation

Character formation emerges as a cornerstone of the educational model at Hasyim Asy'ari University, with a strong emphasis placed on adab (proper conduct), sincerity, and ta'dzim (reverence toward teachers). Classroom

observations revealed ritualized acts of respect, such as students standing when lecturers enter the room and beginning each academic session with a collective prayer. These practices reflect the pesantren tradition's prioritization of etiquette as an integral part of knowledge acquisition. However, interview evidence reveals underlying complexities in the internalization of these practices. Informant K3 remarked, "Students generally respect their lecturers, but modern influences sometimes make the formality seem mechanical rather than heartfelt" (Interview, K3, April 10, 2024). This suggests that while traditional markers of respect are maintained, their depth of meaning may vary among students, influenced by broader cultural shifts. Thus, character education remains a critical yet evolving aspect of value transmission within the university context.

Document analysis of the Student Character Development Program (Academic Documentation, 2025) highlights the institution's structured efforts to cultivate moral and spiritual values among students. The program outlines key expectations, including weekly Khatmil Qur'an sessions, regular classical Islamic studies, and mandatory participation in community service initiatives. Observations conducted during congregational prayer sessions from April 8 to 12, 2024, revealed consistently high student attendance, suggesting a visible adherence to religious practices as part of campus culture. However, informal conversations with students during these events indicated a diversity of underlying motivations. While some students expressed sincere religious commitment and personal spiritual growth as their reasons for participation, others admitted that compliance was largely driven by a desire to meet institutional expectations. These findings suggest that although ritual practices and community activities are well-integrated into student life, the depth of internalization varies, highlighting the ongoing challenge of embedding genuine character formation beyond formal participation.

Thus, while the institutional structures supporting character formation are robust and deeply rooted in pesantren traditions, actual student engagement with these practices reveals a more complex reality. Rather than reflecting a uniform internalization of character values, student participation embodies a dynamic negotiation between traditional pesantren ideals and contemporary student cultures. Some students demonstrate genuine commitment to *adab*, sincerity, and spiritual discipline, while others approach these practices more as formal obligations than as deeply internalized values. This nuanced reality complicates the idealized assumption that character formation occurs seamlessly across the student body. Instead, it suggests that the cultivation of moral and spiritual character in an Islamic higher education setting is an ongoing, negotiated process, shaped by both institutional expectations and the broader cultural influences that students bring into the academic environment.

Preservation of Pesantren Traditions

Efforts to preserve the pesantren scholarly tradition are evident in both course content and teaching methods at Hasyim Asy'ari University. Observations from Ulum al-Hadith and Ushul al-Fiqh classes conducted on April 11, 2024, demonstrated the use of the halaqah method—a traditional instructional approach characterized by small circles of study focused on memorization, transmission of sanad (chains of narration), and peer-led discussions under the close supervision of lecturers. This method reflects a conscious attempt to maintain classical Islamic educational practices within a modern university framework. The emphasis on direct interaction, oral transmission, and collective learning aligns with the pesantren ethos of scholarly discipline and communal knowledge-building. By incorporating halaqah-style learning into formal coursework, the university not only sustains a vital pedagogical tradition but also adapts it to meet contemporary academic expectations, thereby bridging traditional and modern modes of Islamic scholarship.

Further evidence of efforts to preserve and adapt the pesantren scholarly tradition was provided by Informant K4, who explained, “In Nahwu-Sharaf classes, students still memorize Al-Ajrumiyyah using traditional methods, but we integrate critical commentary sessions afterward to adapt to modern critical standards” (Interview, K4, April 12, 2024). This approach reflects an intentional blending of classical memorization techniques with contemporary demands for analytical engagement. Observational notes corroborated this description, showing that students were not only required to memorize foundational texts but also tasked with presenting case studies that linked classical grammatical rules to contemporary issues in Islamic law and society. Such practices indicate a dynamic effort to sustain the integrity of classical Islamic pedagogy while ensuring its relevance within modern academic contexts. This hybridization of tradition and critical inquiry represents a key strategy in maintaining the vibrancy and adaptability of pesantren educational values at the university level.

Nonetheless, tensions between tradition preservation and modernization were evident. Informal discussions with students revealed frustrations about the challenges of reconciling traditional memorization-focused learning with the faster, discussion-driven styles they had become accustomed to through online education platforms. This resistance highlights the ongoing negotiation and struggle involved in balancing classical pedagogical methods with contemporary student learning preferences. Curriculum documentation further reflects this hybrid model of adaptation. While classical Islamic texts remain central to core courses, assessment methods have evolved to include research papers, digital presentations, and problem-solving projects, aiming to bridge traditional knowledge acquisition with

modern academic competencies (PAI Curriculum Documentation, 2024). These developments illustrate that while Hasyim Asy'ari University remains committed to preserving its pesantren roots, it is also actively engaging in adaptive innovations to remain relevant and responsive to the changing educational landscape, without abandoning the foundational values of Islamic scholarship.

Challenges Encountered

While the university has made considerable progress in integrating pesantren traditions within its academic programs, the process is not without friction. Informant K5 noted, "Preserving tradition is difficult when students demand fast results and immediate practical skills" (Interview, K5, April 11, 2024). This observation highlights a growing tension between traditional modes of deep, reflective scholarship and contemporary student expectations shaped by a fast-paced, outcome-oriented educational culture. Field observations further corroborate this challenge. During a kitab kuning discussion session on April 9, 2024, several students appeared disengaged when lecturers delved into lengthy, detailed commentaries, showing a clear preference for brief summaries and quick takeaways (Field Observation, April 9, 2024). These findings suggest that while institutional efforts to preserve and adapt pesantren traditions are evident, student reception remains uneven, reflecting broader generational shifts in learning habits and academic motivations within Islamic higher education contexts.

Additionally, the impact of digital culture on the preservation of pesantren traditions was clearly observed. Documentation from the Digital Learning Division indicates a growing institutional effort to digitize classical Islamic texts in order to sustain student engagement (Academic Report, 2024). Initiatives such as the introduction of mobile applications for kitab kuning study and the establishment of online halaqah forums are currently underway. However, interviews with faculty and students reveal mixed results regarding the effectiveness of these efforts. While some students expressed enthusiasm for the convenience and accessibility offered by digital platforms, others displayed lower levels of commitment, treating online religious learning as secondary to face-to-face interactions. These findings suggest that while digital innovation offers promising tools for revitalizing classical Islamic education, its success largely depends on how well these technologies are integrated into existing pedagogical frameworks and how effectively they align with the values of sincerity, discipline, and communal learning inherent in pesantren traditions.

Overall, these findings indicate that Hasyim Asy'ari University is actively navigating the complex task of balancing the depth, patience, and communal ethos required by traditional pesantren scholarship with the demands for efficiency, immediacy, and technological integration that characterize modern academic and digital cultures. While religious moderation, character formation, and the

preservation of pesantren traditions remain central pillars, their internalization among students varies depending on individual engagement, broader cultural influences, and the adaptability of instructional methods. The coexistence of traditional practices, such as halaqah, ta'dzim, and classical text study, with innovations like digital kitab applications and modern assessment models reflects the university's strategic efforts to sustain its foundational values while remaining responsive to changing educational landscapes. This dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity suggests that the cultivation of pesantren values in Islamic higher education is an evolving, negotiated process, requiring continuous reflection, adaptation, and commitment from all institutional stakeholders.

The actualization of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational philosophy at Hasyim Asy'ari University is manifested through a multilayered integration of religious moderation, character formation, and the preservation of pesantren traditions. This integration is evident across curriculum structures, pedagogical practices, and campus culture. However, the findings also reveal underlying tensions, compromises, and adaptations that complicate any simplistic or idealized portrayal of this process. Student engagement with these values varies, influenced by broader societal shifts and digital learning cultures, which often demand faster, more pragmatic educational approaches. By carefully distinguishing between formal institutional frameworks, actual pedagogical practices, and students' lived experiences and responses, the study offers a more credible and grounded understanding of how Islamic educational traditions are not simply preserved, but are creatively negotiated, reinterpreted, and adapted within the contemporary higher education context. This dynamic reality underscores the evolving nature of tradition in response to modern academic challenges.

Discussion

This study reveals that the actualization of Hadratussyaikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational thought at Hasyim Asy'ari University, Tebuireng, has contributed to the development of an Islamic educational model that strives to balance the preservation of tradition with the demands of modernity. Empirical findings highlight three main pillars underpinning this model: religious moderation, character formation, and the preservation of pesantren traditions. However, rather than depicting these pillars as static or idealized outcomes, the data expose a more dynamic and, at times, contested process of internalization, negotiation, and adaptation. The implementation of these values occurs within a complex interplay between institutional structures, pedagogical practices, and the broader socio-cultural influences impacting students' learning behaviors. This nuanced reality demonstrates that the integration of Islamic educational traditions within a

contemporary university setting is an evolving, negotiated endeavor rather than a straightforward continuation of historical models.

Religious Moderation: Between Norms and Negotiations

The integration of moderation values—such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice)—was evident both in the curriculum content and pedagogical methods employed at Hasyim Asy'ari University. For instance, in the Contemporary Islam classes, students were observed critically engaging with theological differences among Sunni, Shi'a, and Ibadi traditions during open discussions (Field Observation, April 9, 2024). These classroom practices demonstrate deliberate efforts to foster an ethos of intellectual openness and balanced reasoning. Interview data further support this observation; Informant K2 (Interview, April 11, 2024) affirmed that the institution actively encourages dialogue and exposure to diverse perspectives. However, the same interviews also revealed moments of student resistance when confronting unfamiliar or controversial ideas. This suggests that while moderation is institutionally emphasized, its full internalization among students remains uneven and contingent upon continuous pedagogical effort, reflective mentorship, and the cultivation of critical yet respectful engagement practices.

This finding resonates with Tibi's (2012) conceptualization of moderation as an ongoing process of negotiation rather than a static or inherent attribute. It challenges any assumption that moderation can be fully transmitted through curriculum content alone. Moreover, the empirical results nuance the perspective offered by Muhtarom et al. (2020), who describe *pesantren* as automatic centers of moderation. While *pesantren* traditions provide a strong cultural foundation for moderation, the field data reveal that in contemporary Islamic higher education contexts, cultivating moderation demands more than formal curriculum design. It requires continuous, reflective, and dialogical engagement to help students work through their initial discomforts and resistances to unfamiliar or challenging ideas. This suggests that moderation must be seen as an evolving competency—one that is co-constructed through sustained mentorship, critical discourse, and the creation of academic spaces that support pluralistic inquiry while remaining anchored in Islamic ethical frameworks.

Thus, while the institutional framework for promoting religious moderation at Hasyim Asy'ari University is conceptually robust and systematically integrated into both curricular and extracurricular initiatives, the empirical findings reveal that its application remains partial and contingent. Student engagement with moderation values such as *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *i'tidal* varies widely, shaped by prior educational backgrounds, personal dispositions, and broader socio-cultural influences. This complexity challenges overly linear or idealized depictions of value

internalization, emphasizing instead that the cultivation of religious moderation is an iterative, context-dependent process. The findings underscore the need for sustained, reflective educational practices that recognize the non-uniform nature of student responses and the importance of patience, adaptability, and dialogical mentorship in fostering deeper, more authentic internalization of Islamic moderation principles in higher education settings.

Character Formation: Embodied Practices and Emerging Tensions

Character formation, emphasizing key values such as adab (proper conduct), sincerity, humility, and scholarly discipline, was prominently observable through both formal curriculum structures and daily academic practices at Hasyim Asy'ari University. Ritualized behaviors such as ta'dzim (reverence) toward lecturers and active participation in khatmil Qur'an sessions were consistently documented during field observations conducted from April 8–12, 2024. These practices reflect the university's commitment to embedding character education into the academic and social life of students. However, interview data complicate this seemingly coherent picture. Informant K3 (Interview, April 10, 2024) observed that while students generally perform outward acts of adab, these behaviors are sometimes carried out in a mechanical or perfunctory manner, rather than reflecting genuine internalization of ethical values. This suggests that while the structural reinforcement of character formation is strong, the depth of students' personal engagement with these practices remains variable and influenced by broader cultural shifts.

This finding highlights an important distinction between external compliance and internalized character transformation within the educational process. While ritual behaviors such as ta'dzim and participation in religious activities are consistently observed, they do not always equate to the deeper ethical dispositions that pesantren education seeks to cultivate. In this regard, Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus – the internalization of social structures into embodied practices – offers a useful but incomplete framework. Although students may outwardly embody the expected practices of reverence and discipline, the data suggest that these behaviors sometimes remain at the level of performative habit rather than fully internalized virtue. Therefore, applying habitus in this context requires critical adaptation, recognizing that the cultivation of true adab involves more than social reproduction; it demands sustained ethical reflection, conscious commitment, and spiritual sincerity, elements that cannot be assumed solely from outward conformity.

Consequently, while the educational system at Hasyim Asy'ari University effectively maintains many traditional norms of character formation, it must confront the persistent challenge of ensuring that character education transcends ritualistic formality and fosters genuine ethical internalization. The findings reveal

that outward compliance with practices such as adab and ta'dzim does not automatically translate into deep moral transformation, suggesting a gap between institutional expectations and student experiences. This tension is not sufficiently addressed in earlier studies, such as those by Kokot and Suyadnya (2018), which often emphasize the continuity of cultural practices without critically examining the depth of ethical engagement they produce. The present study thus underscores the need for more nuanced approaches to character education—approaches that move beyond performative behaviors and actively cultivate reflective, spiritually rooted dispositions aligned with the original pesantren ideals of sincerity, humility, and moral resilience.

Preservation of Pesantren Traditions: Continuity through Adaptation

The effort to preserve pesantren traditions at Hasyim Asy'ari University is evident in the consistent use of classical learning models such as halaqah (study circles), kitab kuning (classical text) studies, and sanad (transmission chain) preservation (Field Observation, April 9–11, 2024). These practices reflect a clear institutional commitment to sustaining the pedagogical and epistemological frameworks central to pesantren education. However, alongside this preservation, conscious adaptations are also underway. Initiatives such as the development of digital kitab kuning applications and the incorporation of case study analysis into classical text courses illustrate deliberate attempts to modernize traditional learning modes without compromising their core values (Interview, K4, April 12, 2024). This dual strategy of preservation and innovation reflects an acknowledgment that tradition must be dynamically engaged rather than statically maintained, ensuring that classical Islamic scholarship remains meaningful and accessible in an era of rapid technological and educational change.

Yet, not all adaptation efforts have achieved uniform success. Field observations indicated a noticeable decline in student engagement during lengthy, traditional classical text discussions, with many students displaying a clear preference for shorter, more visually oriented learning formats (Field Notes, April 10, 2024). This shift suggests that while the core traditions remain institutionally valued, student learning preferences are increasingly shaped by contemporary digital and media consumption habits. The finding resonates with Hobsbawm's (1983) notion of "invented traditions," emphasizing that traditional practices must be actively reinterpreted and adapted if they are to retain meaning and relevance in changing socio-cultural contexts. Rather than viewing modernization as a threat to tradition, the data suggest that the vitality of pesantren education depends on its ability to creatively reconstruct its methods and media while safeguarding its foundational ethical and intellectual values.

Thus, the preservation of pesantren traditions at Hasyim Asy'ari University should be understood not as a simple, linear continuity of past practices, but rather as an ongoing process of dynamic reinvention. The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to selectively maintain core elements of classical Islamic scholarship, such as halaqah study models, kitab kuning engagement, and sanad transmission, while simultaneously embracing pedagogical innovations, including digital learning platforms and case-based analytical methods. This dual strategy highlights the university's recognition that tradition must be actively negotiated and adapted to remain meaningful in contemporary academic and cultural contexts. Rather than undermining authenticity, such selective adaptation reflects a deeper commitment to preserving the spirit and ethical foundations of pesantren education while responding thoughtfully to the demands and learning styles of the current generation of students. In this sense, tradition and innovation are positioned not as opposites, but as mutually reinforcing dimensions of Islamic educational renewal.

Emerging Contradictions and Critical Reflections

Importantly, the findings also highlight several internal contradictions that complicate and problematize idealistic claims regarding the smooth integration of tradition and modernity within Islamic higher education. While institutional frameworks strongly promote religious moderation, character formation, and the preservation of pesantren traditions, the empirical data reveal that these values are not always seamlessly internalized by students. Resistance to unfamiliar theological ideas, mechanical rather than heartfelt performances of adab, and declining engagement with traditional learning methods amid digital culture pressures all illustrate the tensions inherent in this integration process. These contradictions suggest that the blending of classical Islamic education with contemporary academic expectations is neither automatic nor uniformly successful. Instead, it requires continuous negotiation, critical reflection, and adaptive innovation. Recognizing these frictions is essential to developing more realistic, context-sensitive models of Islamic higher education that honor tradition while remaining responsive to the complexities of modern student experiences.

For instance:

1. The value of sabr (patience) emphasized in pesantren learning often clashes with students' preference for fast-paced, outcome-driven learning shaped by digital culture (Interview, K5, April 11, 2024).
2. Institutional attempts to modernize, such as digitizing learning materials, sometimes risk diluting the depth and spirit of classical Islamic study.

These tensions further suggest that the integration of pesantren traditions with modern academic frameworks is not a seamless process, but one that is fraught with both practical and ideological challenges. While the institutional commitment to

tradition preservation and modernization is clear, the on-the-ground realities—ranging from student resistance to traditional methods to the mechanical internalization of character values—indicate that adaptation is complex and contested. This nuanced reality is often insufficiently acknowledged in segments of the Islamic education reform literature (e.g., Ali et al., 2017), which tends to assume that alignment between tradition and modernity can be achieved through curriculum revision alone. The findings of this study emphasize that successful integration demands more than structural adjustments; it requires sustained critical reflection, responsive pedagogy, and a willingness to engage with contradictions as integral components of educational transformation rather than as obstacles to be overlooked or minimized.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study offers a critique of the uncritical application of Western educational theories, such as Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Freire's model of critical pedagogy, within Islamic education contexts. While these frameworks help illuminate social dynamics, processes of cultural reproduction, and power relations within academic institutions, they must be carefully adapted rather than directly imposed. For instance, Freire's emphasis on dialogical education is visible in the university's promotion of discussion-based classes and critical engagement with diverse Islamic perspectives. However, unlike Freire's secular liberation pedagogy, dialogue within this context is firmly bound by Islamic ethical norms, reverence for tradition, and a commitment to preserving religious values. Thus, the study highlights the necessity of developing context-sensitive theoretical approaches that respect the epistemological and ethical foundations of Islamic education, rather than assuming a universal applicability of Western models across fundamentally different cultural and religious landscapes.

Practically, the findings of this study offer several important policy implications for Islamic higher education. Curriculum development in Islamic Religious Education programs must move beyond mere value transmission to actively incorporate critical engagement strategies that encourage students to internalize religious and ethical values meaningfully, rather than performing them mechanically. Pedagogical approaches should foster reflective practice, dialogical inquiry, and personal ethical development, ensuring that core values such as adab, sincerity, and moderation are not only taught but truly embodied. Furthermore, balancing the preservation of classical Islamic traditions with the demands of technological and pedagogical innovation requires continuous institutional reflexivity. Universities must remain critically aware of how shifting student cultures, digital learning trends, and broader societal changes influence the efficacy of traditional educational models. Sustaining this balance will require adaptive

leadership, faculty development, and a willingness to reimagine educational practices while remaining anchored in pesantren-based philosophical foundations.

Rather than positioning pesantren-based higher education as a fixed or monolithic model, the findings of this study emphasize the need to view it as a dynamic site of contestation, negotiation, and creative adaptation. Hasyim Asy'ari University demonstrates that preserving Islamic traditions while responding to modern academic, technological, and cultural pressures requires ongoing critical engagement and institutional flexibility. The university's experiences reveal that tensions between tradition and innovation, between ritual formality and meaningful internalization, are not obstacles to be eliminated but realities to be managed thoughtfully and adaptively. Recognizing pesantren-based higher education as an evolving, negotiated space offers valuable lessons for other Islamic institutions seeking to navigate similar challenges. It underscores the importance of maintaining a principled commitment to Islamic educational values while fostering critical reflexivity, pedagogical innovation, and cultural responsiveness in an increasingly complex and globalized educational landscape.

In sum, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's educational philosophy—centered on *adab* (ethical conduct), the pursuit of knowledge, and sincerity—remains profoundly relevant to the mission of contemporary Islamic higher education. However, this study demonstrates that the actualization of these ideals is neither automatic nor free of contradictions. The integration of pesantren values within modern academic settings is revealed as a complex, negotiated process marked by both resilience and tension. Sustaining the spirit of pesantren traditions amidst evolving educational demands requires not only structural preservation but also ongoing critical reflection, dynamic adaptation, and a willingness to confront the inherent frictions between tradition and change. By embracing a nuanced and realistic approach, Islamic educational institutions can move beyond idealized models and instead cultivate deeply rooted, contextually responsive frameworks. Only through such critical engagement can Islamic education fulfill its transformative potential and remain vital in the increasingly complex landscape of the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the educational philosophy of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari has significantly contributed to shaping an Islamic education model at Hasyim Asy'ari University, Tebuireng, centered on three interconnected pillars: religious moderation, character formation, and preservation of pesantren traditions. The integration of values such as *adab* (ethical manners), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *tawadhu'* (humility), and *tasamuh* (tolerance) into both formal curriculum and campus culture reflects deliberate efforts to maintain the pesantren ethos while addressing contemporary higher education demands. However, this integration faces tensions

between traditional pesantren values and modern academic expectations, affecting student engagement and institutional practices, thus requiring continuous reflexivity and adaptive strategies to ensure these values are deeply internalized rather than superficially performed.

The empirical contribution of this research demonstrates how pesantren traditions can be recontextualized and selectively adapted within Islamic higher education to maintain relevance amid global changes. Rather than portraying pesantren education as static or archaic, the findings affirm its potential for dynamic reconstruction when approached with critical awareness and contextual innovation. The integration of classical educational values with modern pedagogical strategies—including digital learning tools, critical discussion-based methods, and contextualized curriculum design—illustrates that tradition and innovation need not oppose each other but can evolve in ways that remain faithful to core missions while addressing contemporary academic and cultural realities.

Based on these insights, the study recommends that integrating pesantren values into Islamic higher education should be accompanied by continuous critical reflection, adaptive pedagogical strategies, and sensitivity to students' evolving needs in a globalizing world. Implementation of this integration model across other Islamic institutions must be carefully contextualized to account for specific socio-cultural, technological, and educational realities of each setting. The study acknowledges its limitations in focusing on a single institutional context that may not fully capture the diverse realities within Islamic higher education across Indonesia, suggesting future comparative research involving multiple Islamic higher education institutions across different regions and longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of pesantren-based curricular models.

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