

New Dynamics of Conservative Islamic Education Institutions: Current issue in Indonesia and Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This research will examine the recent developments in conservative Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia. The issues of terrorism and mainstreaming religious moderation influence the dynamics of conservative Islamic educational institutions. This dynamic focuses on two things: the formation and shift of Islamic educational institutions after the issue of terrorism and the policy of religious moderation. This research was conducted at several conservative Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia. This research uses a phenomenological qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation and in-depth interviews to understand the meaning and experiences of the informants in the field. Research findings indicate that the recent development of Islamic educational institutions managed by conservative Islamic groups such as the Salafis has become more inclusive, tolerant, and moderate following the issues of terrorism and religious moderation. This is due to the counter-terrorism and religious moderation programs implemented over the past two decades. This formation of inclusive understanding then encourages a shift in understanding and practice of diversity toward being more tolerant and inclusive.

KEYWORDS: Terrorism, Moderation, Conservative, Islam, Education.

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INTRODUCTION

As countries with a strong Islamic cultural heritage and the largest Muslim population in Southeast Asia (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024), Indonesia and Malaysia are welcoming environments for the development of various types of Islamic educational institutions. Islamic educational institutions aim to serve the educational needs of the Muslim community at various levels. Indonesia and Malaysia share a similar history of Islamic education, which began with the pondok pesantren system several centuries ago and led to the formation of the madrasah system (Mas'ud et al., 2019). Despite their similarities, the differences in the orientation and status of Islamic educational institutions between Indonesia and Malaysia reflect how Islam has developed in both countries according to the dynamics of the local political context and international pressures. In the last two decades, the development of Islamic educational institutions in both countries has been influenced by local and global political dynamics. The local and global political issues that have intensified are the issues of combating terrorism and mainstreaming religious moderation.

Initially, the development of Islamic educational institutions in both countries was influenced by the understanding of Islam with Sufism (Aziz & Shamsul, 2004). In Malaysia, for example, both pesantren and madrasah play an important role in preserving the Islamic identity of the Malays and providing the core of Islamic education for Malay Muslims (Aziz & Shamsul, 2004). Such as Madrasah al-Hamidiyyah in Limbong Kapal, Alor Setar, and Kedah, which was established in 1906. The same thing is happening in Indonesia, where the presence of Islamic education is generally characterized by tolerance and inclusivity, as popularized by large Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah through the establishment of thousands of pesantren and madrasahs (Hefner, 2018; Malik, 2024). Even according to Jeremy Menchik, these two major Islamic organizations have become the leading sector of civil democracy and promote moderate religious understanding (Menchik, 2019). Similarly, Pohl (2006) states:

that traditional Islamic education can and does make significant contributions to the empowerment of democratic civil society and that Indonesia's long-established Islamic boarding schools in particular are not inimical to such "modern" concerns as women's empowerment and good interfaith relations in a plural society (Pohl, 2006).

This then allowed for the development of Islam with a moderate, tolerant, and traditionalist character. This pattern of Islam then colored the values and system of Islamic education in Malaysia and Indonesia. However, in subsequent developments, especially in

the last two decades, the view of Islamic education has undergone a significant shift. Following the September 11th incident, many Islamic educational institutions, such as pesantren and madrasahs, experienced stigmatization and stereotyping to such an extent (Malik, 2017; Shaleh, Zamroni, Mukminan, Zakaria, et al., 2020). In Indonesia, the stigmatization of Islamic education has become increasingly widespread since the 2002 Bali bombing (Raihani, 2012). According to Azra et al. (2017), as cited by Malik (2020), the Bali bombing case marked the beginning of the potential involvement of pesantren in promoting radical Islamic understanding (Malik, Tamjidillah, 2020). Although in reality, only a small number of pesantren are suspected of being linked to radical Islamic groups (Raihani, 2012). Some of these pesantren are considered theologically conservative (Woodward et al., 2010). However, the issue of global terrorism in a broader spectrum not only impacts the identification of individuals labeled as terrorists and conservative Islamic groups but also affects Islamic educational institutions (Pesantren and madrasah). The issue of combating global terrorism in a broader spectrum has strengthened the stigmatization of all types of Islamic educational institutions (Pesantren and madrasah) worldwide, including in Indonesia and Malaysia. This radical stigmatization then influences many things, including public perception and government policies toward Pesantren labeled as conservative. One such policy is the mainstreaming of religious moderation (Wildan & Muttaqin, 2022). Religious moderation is considered capable of curbing the flow of radical thought (Faisal et al., 2022) while also fostering social harmony (Muhammad Miftah et al., 2023). The impact of this policy then spurred new dynamics within conservative Islamic educational institutions. Previously, Islamic educational institutions were often questioned as to whether they were a force for political moderation or extremism (Hefner, 2015).

The new dynamics of conservative Islamic educational institutions need to be widely known, considering that since the issue of terrorism arose, many pesantren and madrasahs have experienced radical stigmatization (Malik, 2017) and faced pressure, persecution, marginalization, and prejudice from various parties. However, since the widespread mainstreaming of religious moderation, this situation has changed significantly, as key proponents have abandoned their radical ideologies (Chernov-hwang & Schulze, 2018; Hwang, 2018). Until now, the transformation of conservative Islamic groups into moderate, inclusive, and tolerant ones has not been widely researched or known to the public. This change then became the beginning of a new internal transformation for conservative Islamic educational institutions. Therefore, the level of moderation in pesantren and madrasahs affiliated with Salafism today is the same as in Islamic educational institutions affiliated with NU and Muhammadiyah, which are already known for their tolerance and inclusiveness (Qoumas et al., 2024; Sirry, 2010; Tolchah, 2014).

In the last two decades, Indonesia and Malaysia have generally faced some of the same global, regional, and local issues. Among the issues mentioned is the issue of global terrorism, as Wildan views it: "In the last two decades, Religious-Violent Extremism (RVE) has been a focal point for world scholars, observers, and the media." The 9/11 tragedy of the World Trade Center (WTC) attack was not the ultimate act of terrorism, but it was triggered by and inspired the rise of RVE in other countries. The Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT) asserts that radical Islam has increased significantly around the globe in the last two decades (Wildan & Muttaqin, 2022). The issue of global terrorism has been a very massive one over the past two decades, and this has had a significant impact on Islam in general and Islamic educational institutions in particular worldwide, including in Asia (Arifin, 2016).

The issue of terrorism has become quite complex, posing numerous threats to societies worldwide, including countries in Southeast Asia. Adding to this is the flow of globalization, which has led to increasingly modern technological developments, making it increasingly difficult to control the distribution and recruitment of terrorist groups. Therefore, many new radical groups have emerged, leading to acts of terrorism that are concerning for the global community, particularly in Southeast Asia. Several cases of terrorism have occurred in this region, prompting a superpower like the United States to take action and launch a campaign to combat the terrorist groups flourishing in Southeast Asia.

Another issue that forms the basis for the development of the religious moderation discourse is the diversity of society in both countries. Both Indonesian and Malaysian societies face several issues related to ethnic and religious diversity. One of those issues is intolerance. Furthermore, diversity is often seen as creating tension in society, leading to cases of violence, discrimination, and conflict in the name of religion. Based on research by Muhajarah et al., it was found that "some social conflicts occur due to religious diversity, such as the destruction of certain religious places of worship. The CRCS (Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies) report states that there are at least three significant events related to social conflicts caused by religious differences (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024). This condition then prompted the governments of both countries to attempt to formulate more harmonious and peaceful ideas and practices of religious diversity through the mainstreaming of religious moderation.

One of the goals of mainstreaming religious moderation undertaken by the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia is Islamic educational institutions. Pesantren is one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions. Indonesia is home to thousands of pesantren institutions with diverse typologies and affiliations. One type of pesantren that exists in Indonesia is the conservative typology pesantren. The conservative typology of Islamic education has been considered to be linked to radical religious understanding. As stated by Dina (2012), there is still debate about whether Islamic educational institutions contribute to or play a role in spreading radical and conservative teachings. However, since there have been several bombing incidents, it has been used again by some parties to support the assumption that Islamic educational institutions do contribute to radicalism and conservatism among Muslims (Afrianty, 2012).

To this day, the existence of conservative pesantren is a topic of research for various academics and social-religious researchers, which is due to the fact that conservative pesantren are often associated with issues of religious radicalism. Since the issue of religious radicalism in education has spread worldwide, there has been a growing suspicion that conservative pesantren contribute to the development and spread of radical understanding within pesantren (Malik, 2017). Conservative pesantren have long been considered to teach an exclusive understanding, which is believed to lead to intolerance and violence in the name of religion (Malik, 2024). Based on this assumption, this study aims to examine how the formation and shifting of discourse and religious practices (religiosity) within conservative pesantren occur after the mainstreaming of religious moderation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSING

Indonesia, Malaysia, and Islamic Conservative Group

The term "Islamic conservative" has been discussed again since the spread of the issue of terrorism in the last two decades. The conservatism referred to is a more puritanical and literal understanding of religion (Bruinessen, 2013). In Indonesia, the development of this conservatism is represented by the presence of a number of conservative Islamic groups such as JI, JAT, and others (Bruinessen, 2016; Malik, 2017). While there are several conservative Islamic groups in Malaysia, one of them is the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM). Some Malaysian people believe that this group is considered the largest radical extremist group in Malaysia (Mujib et al., 2022). According to Mujib et al., the KMM was founded with the aim of opposing the Malaysian authorities. Referring to Azyumardi Azra's view, conservative Islam is a rigid view of Islam regarding the holy book, teachings, orthodoxy, and traditions considered to be the most correct (Azra et al., 2010).

This kind of understanding is considered an early symptom of violent extremism. As previously explained, based on the data on violent extremism, extremist actions are not only carried out by men but also by women, children, and families. The involvement of several family members in the context of this research is termed "family extremism" (Malik, 2018). The ideology of this group is believed to refer to the Wahhabism group. Furthermore, Jan Strak (2014) stated that;

"The threat of Islamic radicalism has become the central issue of the post-September 11 debate. In Malaysia, signs of growing Islamic militancy had already emerged in the late 1990s, when terms like "jihad" began to penetrate the political debate in the wake of the reformasi movement" (Stark *, 2004).

Based on the above views, Malaysia faces the same situation as Indonesia, namely the presence of militant groups considered to have a conservative understanding of religion. Since the events of September 11, conservative Islamic groups, both in Indonesia and Malaysia, have tended to be stigmatized as radical (Malik, 2017). In fact, the increasing interest in Islam and Muslims in the West is often based on a (mis)understanding of the image of Muslims in the media, which has created a new series of problems of ignorance and misunderstanding regarding terrorism and the Islamic world (Göl, 2011). This perspective then spread throughout the world, including in Asia.

In general, the discourse of conservative Islamic groups in various countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia, is fundamentally based on global political developments, particularly the cases of terrorism and extremism in the name of religion that have emerged in the last two decades. In the Asian region, particularly Indonesia, this discourse emerged due to the alleged involvement of citizens from both countries in the ISIS group in Syria. Additionally, Malaysia is often used as a transit point for suspected terrorists operating in Asia (Wahyuni, 2022). Based on these findings, the phenomenon of the rise of conservative Islamic groups in Malaysia is similar to that in Indonesia. Nevertheless, there are some differences; for example, based on previous research, in Indonesia, it is not only used as a transit point for suspected radical and conservative groups, but Indonesia has also become a place of hiding and dissemination (Malik, 2018). From the perspective of both countries, conservative Islamic groups are often seen as disagreeing with the majority Islamic groups, in this case Sunni Islam, and even as being in conflict with the state. Among the views of conservative groups that are frequently highlighted by both countries are that they are considered to promote the ideology of the caliphate, intolerance, and exclusivity; are seen as being prone to using violence in spreading their religious beliefs; and are against the current state system. So far, the allegation has not been proven true, which is why it is widely opposed by conservative Islamic groups themselves.

The development of conservative Islamic groups in both Indonesia and Malaysia is believed to be influenced by Islamic movements that have developed in the Middle East, such as Jamaah Islamiyah, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Hezbollah, and Al-Qaeda, etc. Some of these Islamic groups are often presented as hardline Islamic groups by the West. As a result, this stigmatization became a common belief and shaped negative perceptions toward the group. In fact, the presence of these groups represents movements that seek to establish a kind of Islamic order—a religious state, Sharia law, and a moral code within society and the Muslim community itself (Bayat, 2022; Baytiyeh, 2018). However, movements like these are often interpreted as representing the radical and conservative thinking of Islamic groups. As Fealy assessed the phenomenon of Islamic groups/FPI rejecting Christians from leading Jakarta (Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2018). In reality, however, the rejection was purely a political issue, not an ideological one related to the movement.

Contrary to the above view, the presence of conservative Islamic groups in various countries over the past two decades, according to Bayat, is due to fear, a sense of inferiority toward globalists, coupled with colonialism, social injustice, and decades of defeat.

This fear has fueled hatred and anger, leading to the emergence of extremism and terrorism (Bayat, 2022). Despite these differences in perspective, both Indonesia and Malaysia recognize that the presence of conservative Islamic groups can pose a threat to social harmony and peace. Based on this research, both countries firmly reject the potential for the emergence of Islamic groups affiliated with violent ideologies in the name of religion, such as terrorism and radicalism, which have developed over the past twenty years. Nevertheless, the two countries have significant differences when looking at the exclusion and intensity of the phenomenon of radicalism as a representation of conservative Islamic groups. In this context, Indonesia has many more cases of radicalism and terrorism (Wildan & Muttaqin, 2022) compared to Malaysia.

The term "Islamic conservative" itself actually has problems with its meaning (Antúñez & Tellidis, 2013; Carlos & Moreno, 2017). So far, the term has been used loosely and with bias. The majority of Islamic scholars and terrorism studies (Azra et al., 2010; Hefner, 2018) associate Islamic conservative groups with all forms of terrorist acts and actions that have occurred in various parts of the world. Although it cannot be factually denied that the majority of terrorist individuals involved in various terrorism cases in different places have been conservative Muslims. Some Muslim individuals involved in this case of terrorism and radicalism are believed to be influenced by many factors, one of which is the misquoting, misinterpreting, and quoting out of context of Islamic teachings. The rest are global political factors that are not easily understood by the general public.

Regardless of the debate, the involvement of an individual or group of Muslims in the issue of terrorism and the issue of conservative Islamic group identity has become increasingly crystallized since the spread of the issue of terrorism and radicalism in both Indonesia and Malaysia. One form of the strengthening of the identity of conservative Islamic groups is the development of several Islamic educational institutions affiliated with these groups. Such as pesantren with Salafi Wahabi, Salafi Haraki, and Salafi Jihadi characteristics (Malik, 2024; Pohl, 2006; Saparudin & Emawati, 2023). Some of these terms are not always pejorative, although from the outset they were constructed with a strong prejudice that pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that are pro-violence extremism on one hand and anti-globalization and modernism on the other (Baytiyeh, 2018).

So far, the stigmatization of Islamic educational institutions has occurred because there are allegations that pesantren in both countries are used as a vehicle for the formation and dissemination of conservative religious understanding. This assumption, although contradictory to the genuine pesantren culture that has long been known for its inclusivity, is even today, the majority of Islamic educational institutions in both countries still represent the values of modernity, tolerance, and human values (Charlene Tan, 2011; Fahmi, 2015). This view is consistent with the findings of this research, where the majority of Muslims in both countries believe that Islamic educational institutions have absolutely no connection to the increase in extremist acts in the name of religion, as has been alleged.

Islamic Education and Conservative Islamic Groups

Specifically, Islamic education has undergone a shift in interpretation and meaning since the terrorist incidents in 2001. Specifically, Islamic education is practiced in pesantren educational institutions. This shift in the interpretation and meaning of Islamic education originated from the view of the majority of Islamic scholars, who see Islamic education as part of the political strength of Islamic extremism (Kholis et al., 2020). As a political force of religious extremism, pesantren are suspected of being involved in promoting narratives of intolerance, extremism, radicalism, and exclusivism (Shaleh, Zamroni, Mukminan, Zakaria, et al., 2020). These phenomena are even seen to be widespread in several Islamic schools (Shaleh, Zamroni, Mukminan, Ashadi, et al., 2020). In this context, Islamic education is believed to play a role in changing a person's attitude toward others (the other) to become more exclusive, intolerant, and rejecting of diversity (Saeed, 2007).

Furthermore, Islam is often seen as a non-Western religion that seeks to forcibly change Western culture, thus being viewed as a threat to Western values, which is why Islam should not be given space in public education (Poulter et al., 2016). Based on this pejorative view, Islamic education, whether practiced in formal (pesantren), informal (family), or non-formal (community) settings, is often associated with cases of extremism. This means that every act of violent extremism that occurs is considered a product of Islamic education. This assumption, although contrary to the generally accepted concept of Islamic education, is nevertheless recognized as having undergone radical changes since the issue of global terrorism. In formal educational institutions, for example, there are at least 3 (three) new variants of Islamic education currently developing, including Salafi Wahabi, Salafi Jihadi, and Salafi Haraki. These three variants of Islamic education have different concepts, although they are all conservative (Abubakar, Irfan, Malik, 2020). These conservative Islamic educational values can also occur in informal education (family), where the husband or wife acts as an agent or pioneer.

Based on the above description and perspectives, mainstreaming religious moderation is considered relevant for the present time as a way to achieve harmonious life in a multicultural society. To support this, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has created several values as indicators of religious moderation. The indicators in question include national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and respect for local culture. Although these four indicators are still considered to have weaknesses, they have become the standard for assessing understanding and practice of religious diversity taught in conservative pesantren.

The Dynamics of Islamic Education Post-Religious Moderation and the Issue of Terrorism in Malaysia and Indonesia

As previously explained, the mainstreaming of religious moderation in several countries, both in Indonesia and Malaysia, currently shares a similar background: the issues of radicalism, intolerance, and diversity. For this reason, the discourse and mainstreaming of religious moderation in both countries then experienced significant development. The mainstreaming of religious moderation in Indonesia began with the policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, as outlined in the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) number 18 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for the years 2020-2024 (Suryadi, 2024). Religious moderation has now been adopted as the mainstream framework for building an integrated Indonesia, integrated into the national development planning system for both the medium and long term. This grounding of perspective is not without reason. Cases of violence or conflict in Indonesia are largely rooted in identity issues, and one of the underlying problems is the complexity of identity differences simplified into general generic classifications such as conflict in the name of religion (Mahyudin dkk, 2022).

The implementation program for religious moderation is currently receiving serious attention from the government, especially from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Specifically, through the Directorate General of Islamic Education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has implemented various strategic programs in the development and strengthening of religious moderation. Through the Working Group (Pokja) for the implementation of religious moderation of the Directorate General of Islamic Education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has produced various products, including books and videos/films, and has incorporated several religious moderation activities into the activities of work units within the Directorate General of Islamic Education. Among the examples of specific programs related to strengthening religious moderation is the National Instructor Training for Religious Moderation (PIN-MB) for PTKIN lecturers and students throughout Indonesia, which was held at the end of 2019. The government's efforts in strengthening and developing religious moderation have a very important goal, which is to maintain national and state integrity and to create harmonious coexistence among people of different religions or beliefs (Nur'aini, 2021).

Conceptually, religious moderation is a noble concept highly encouraged by Allah SWT, and Allah SWT even refers to this religious moderation as Wasathiyah. There are good principles of wasathiyah/moderation that are beneficial for the continuation of a peaceful and loving life. These principles include Tawazzun (balance), I'tidal (straight and firm), Tasamuh (tolerance), Tawassuth (taking the middle path), Syura (consultation), Ishlah (reform), Tahadhdhur (civilization), Musawah (egalitarianism), Aulawiyah (prioritizing), and Tathawwur wa Ibtikar (dynamic and innovative) (Muaz & Ruswandi, 2022). Based on this research, some of these principles of religious moderation are considered fundamental religious values in Islamic teachings. This basic concept is generally accepted, but at the implementation level of religious moderation, there are differences of opinion and even rejection by some groups.

Strengthening religious moderation is one of the main indicators in efforts to build inclusive Islamic educational institutions. Religious moderation is also one of the priorities in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. With religious moderation, a person is not extreme or excessive when practicing their religious teachings. Religious moderation is a creative effort to develop an attitude of diversity amidst various pressures and tensions (constraints), such as claims of absolute truth and subjectivity, between literal interpretation and arrogant rejection of religious teachings, and between radicalism and secularism (Faisal et al., 2022).

As an implementation of the RPJMN, this was then followed up by the Ministry of Religious Affairs with the issuance of the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) number 18 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for the years 2020-2024, which emphasizes that religious moderation is a top priority for programs of institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Suryadi, 2024). To date, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has carried out various activities and programs related to mainstreaming religious moderation, such as establishing religious moderation houses of moderation units at PTKIN and recruiting and training national facilitators and instructors for strengthening religious moderation. Then, seminars, workshops, and FGDs on religious moderation were held at various levels and types of educational institutions. Based on the findings of this research, the implementation of moderation policies in Indonesia is not only widespread but also highly systematic. This is evident from several measured and holistic implementations of religious moderation policies. Such as the socialization stage of the concept of religious moderation through seminars, workshops, and FGDs in various communities. To support the program, the Indonesian government is recruiting moderate religious trainers and instructors. In addition, the form of religious moderation currently implemented is the establishment of religious moderation house units in all PTKINs as agents for socializing religious moderation (Interview with the Head of the Religious Moderation House, 2024).

Meanwhile, the mainstreaming of religious moderation in Malaysia is evidenced by several activities. Among the activities found in the field is community service titled "Promoting Religious Moderation Values for Young People in Malaysia on August 28, 2023." This activity received strong support from the leadership of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), and participants showed high enthusiasm in attending the event. Enthusiastic participation from the attendees is expected to provide additional knowledge about religious moderation. Students from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), as participants, showed particular

interest in the explanation of the material regarding the concept of religious moderation values. In their view, religious moderation is considered the main solution for strengthening unity and cohesion in a diverse and multiethnic society.

The concept of *wasatiyyah* in Malaysia encompasses aspects of "moderate thinking," moderation, equality, and balance, which are applied in government and public administration. Malaysia also has ethnic and religious diversity, with the majority of its population being Muslim (Asyadily, 2023). The Malaysian government has long promoted the concept of *wasatiyyah*, which means moderation in religion. However, some issues, such as religious tension and identity politics, often pose challenges in implementing religious moderation in this country (Dewi, 2024).

This research maps Islamic education in Malaysia into three main areas: an overview of Islamic education in Malaysia, its types and levels, and education policies and objectives. The implementation of the Islamic education system in various countries with Muslim populations has different characteristics and systems, sometimes with differences between them. This is not only determined by the number of Muslims in the country but also by the education system in place (Aslindah, 2015). In Malaysia, where the majority of the population is Muslim, the society appears very heterogeneous, especially when considering their ethnicity, tribes, and races. As a result, one can find a number of Indo-Malay Muslim communities in Malaysia, including the Bugis and Makassar tribes. This creates a different atmosphere compared to countries that are relatively balanced in terms of their religious followers. For example, if a country has religious pluralism, it will certainly have a significant impact on the nature and system of its education (Mas'ud et al., 2019).

Little is known about the image of Islam in Malaysia and how Islamic education is in Malaysia. Although composed of various mixed ethnicities and tribes, Malaysia has managed to make Islam the official religion and implement Islamic education well. Even what's most visible from Malaysia is its strong Islamic nuances. Although Malaysia is considered a Muslim country that declares Islam as its official religion, a minority of its population is non-Muslim. The implementation of the Islamic education curriculum in Malaysia is not significantly different from Islamic education in Indonesia; namely, the Islamic education curriculum contains two core curricula as the operational framework for curriculum development, namely, *tawhid* as the main element that cannot be changed and the command to read verses of the Quran (Aslindah, 2015).

Education in Indonesia and Malaysia aims to develop individuals' potential comprehensively and integrally to create balanced and harmonious individuals intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, based on belief and obedience to God. This objective is intended to produce Malaysians who are knowledgeable, skilled, of noble character, and responsible toward society and the country. Meanwhile, the levels of Islamic education in Indonesia and Malaysia are types of education consisting of *pesantren* schools, *madrasah* schools, and other Islamic religious schools. Therefore, it could be argued that the re-emergence of political Islam in the 1980s and 1990s after an intermission of a few decades only reconfirms that similar patterns of Islamic discourses are developing in the two neighboring countries. To mention but a few examples, the years 1998/99 have been a watershed marking the transition of state-imposed Islamization towards more democratization, where calls for *reformasi* have been clad in the terms of both an Islamic civil society and an Islamic state (Stark *, 2004).

Islamic education is perfect because it encompasses education related to life in this world and education related to the afterlife. The term "Islamic education" in Malaysia is a developing educational term. The Malaysian government has developed two education systems for its citizens. The two types are traditional education and modern education. Some Islamic education is conducted using the *pondok pesantren* system, while others use the *madrasah* system. This education system is now also implemented in public schools and in higher education institutions, both institutes and universities. Modern education systems were introduced from Western sources (Saliyo, 2018).

Simply put, traditional Islamic education, according to Dhofier (2015), is Islamic education that is still strongly connected to the ideas of jurists (Islamic law), *hadith*, *tafsir*, *tawhid/aqidah* (Islamic theology), and Sufism that developed between the 7th and 13th centuries. This type of religious understanding then colored Islamic education in *pesantren* throughout history until now, although modern *pesantren* are now emerging. Dhofier, in this case, does not explain in detail the indicators referred to as "traditionalist" and "modernist." On the other hand, the use of traditional terms has been assumed to be negative, such as old-fashioned, stagnant, backward, resistant to change, and primitive. Meanwhile, modern terms are interpreted as advanced, innovative, and progressive. Both terms are always present in any context in a dichotomous, antithetical, dialectical, and opposing form to each other. If the terminological difference between the two terms is used in this study, particularly in the context of the *pesantren* educational culture, it is simply a continuation of the definitions and interpretations of previous *pesantren* researchers (Malik et al., 2016). The formation and shift of conservative Islamic education, both in Malaysia and Indonesia, are generally heavily influenced by the deradicalization processes carried out by the government. There are at least two commonly used models of deradicalization. First, deradicalization through a hard approach, and second, a soft approach. Some of these approaches have so far had a significant impact on the shift and formation of conservative Islamic education. After the mainstreaming of religious moderation in both countries, significant changes occurred regarding the patterns of religious formation and the shifting of religious understanding and behavior. This indicator of shift and formation is seen from the changes in religious understanding taught at Islamic educational institutions (*pesantren*). So far, several Islamic educational institutions that were initially suspected of being exclusive, radical, and conservative

have undergone deradicalization programs (Primadi Bagus Saputro et al., 2024) through several religious moderation programs, resulting in a shift and the formation of a more moderate religious understanding. Among the observable shifts are, first, the group's acceptance of the state as a legitimate government. Second, the openness of conservative Islamic groups to interact with people of different religious understandings. Third, the increasing sense of tolerance toward different groups. This shift then influenced the development of Islamic education. Conservative Islamic educational institutions are currently undergoing the formation of new values, where the curriculum content and educational culture being developed are oriented toward the curriculum and educational culture already established by the government. Conservative Islamic education today is no longer trapped by the understanding and attitude of claiming truth and exclusivity. Therefore, some Islamic educational institutions that are currently considered conservative have begun to implement the government's more open and democratic education curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The development of the moderation discourse in Islamic education in Indonesia has been ongoing for the past twenty years, especially since the issue of violence in the name of religion or the issue of intolerance emerged after the global terrorism cases. Similarly, regarding the history of the development of Islamic educational moderation in Malaysia, it was agreed that strengthening religious moderation should be one of the country's policy focuses in an effort to realize a united, harmonious, peaceful, and tolerant religious and national life. Because of the diversity of religions, ethnicities, cultures, and beliefs in Indonesia's pluralistic society, strengthening religious moderation is very important. This is because the diversity associated with fiqh, in particular, necessitates many different interpretations. Extreme diversity in religious interpretation can lead to friction or conflict within religious communities, between people of different faiths, and between religious people and the government if not managed well. A roadmap explaining the stages and strategic steps for strengthening religious moderation is needed to achieve the goals of the religious moderation strengthening movement. Clear parameters can be used to measure success. The findings of this study indicate that religious moderation is an attitude and effort to make religion the foundation and principle for always avoiding extreme attitudes (radicalism) and constantly seeking a middle ground to unite all elements of society, nation, and state. The Dynamics of Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Societal Development: This research concludes that religious moderation is now gaining momentum in various sectors, including the digital realm, through virtual institutions within government agencies. Not only that, but this is further strengthened by the presence of communities that support pluralism, multiculturalism, and tolerance, which promote and prioritize the interests of justice and peace through mutual support and respect as a tribute to the dignity of life.

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