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INTEGRATING RELIGIOUS MODERATION AND LOCAL CULTURAL PRESERVATION: THE SYNERGY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND SUFISM AT PESANTREN TEBUIRENG

Jasminto

Universitas Hasyim Asy'ari Tebuireng Jombang

jasminto@unhasy.ac.id

Abstract: This article discusses the importance of integrating religious moderation and the preservation of local culture in the context of Pesantren Tebuireng. Through an approach that combines Islamic education and Sufi values, this article reveals how the synergy between the two can shape a more moderate understanding of religion while simultaneously preserving and nurturing local cultural richness. The article explains how Pesantren Tebuireng, as an Islamic educational institution, has successfully harmonized the practice of religious moderation with the preservation of local cultural values through the teachings of Sufism. Using literature analysis and case studies, we identify how this integration influences the understanding of religion and supports the preservation of local culture. The research results indicate that this approach helps shape individuals who practice religion in a moderate way while promoting the preservation of a rich local culture. The integration of Islamic education and Sufi teachings paves the way for improved interfaith dialogue and understanding. This article provides insights into how these practices can be applied in other locations to achieve harmony between religion and culture.

Keywords: Religious moderation, Preservation of local culture, Pesantren Tebuireng, Islamic education, Sufi values.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its highly diverse population in terms of culture, religion, and ethnicity, has long been known as a country that values pluralism and tolerance.¹ With more than 87% of its population adhering to Islam, but also having religious minorities such as Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucians, the country officially acknowledges religious diversity.² More than 700 ethnic groups and 700 regional languages reflect the cultural richness manifested in arts, music, and traditions.³ The

³ Nurul Akhmad, Ensiklopedia Keragaman Budaya (Alprin, 2020).



¹ Rifki Rosyad et al., "Toleransi Beragama Dan Harmonisasi Sosial" (Lekkas, 2021).

² Monavia Ayu Rizaty, "Mayoritas Penduduk Indonesia Beragama Islam Pada 2022," https://dataindonesia.id/varia/detail/mayoritas-penduduk-indonesia-beragama-islam-pada-2022, March 28, 2023.



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national motto, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" ("Unity in Diversity"), and the tradition of interfaith tolerance, where many communities coexist peacefully, strengthen the value of unity in diversity. The protection of religious freedom in the constitution and joint celebrations of various religions demonstrate the spirit of interfaith friendship.⁴ This data shows Indonesia as a country that promotes and applies the principles of tolerance and unity in the diversity of its religions, cultures, and ethnicities.

Local culture in Indonesia plays a significant role in promoting tolerance, unity, and diversity in society.⁵ Customs and traditions, as part of local culture, often reflect social values that emphasize respect for diversity and inclusivity. For example, in traditional ceremonies, there are often symbols or rituals that honor differences among individuals and groups. Local languages also play a crucial role in facilitating communication among various ethnic and religious groups, and the use of these local languages can be a sign of respect for local identities and cultures. Traditional arts, music, and dances are frequently used to celebrate values such as tolerance and unity, serving as a medium to convey these messages to the community. Regional cuisines reflect the culinary diversity in Indonesia and are often a means to share experiences and create social bonds among different groups. Moreover, traditional ceremonies that involve religious harmony in society. All these elements create an environment that supports the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity) in Indonesia, allowing people from diverse backgrounds to live together peacefully while preserving their own identities and cultural richness.⁶

Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, play a crucial role in shaping religious understanding and preserving local cultural.⁷ In this context, Pesantren provide strong Islamic religious education to the students, which helps strengthen religious beliefs and promotes a moderate religious understanding. Additionally, these schools also play a role in preserving local cultural values by integrating elements of culture such as customs, local language, arts, music, and regional traditions into the daily life of the boarding school. Some Pesantren also serve as places for joint religious worship among different faiths, reflecting the spirit of interfaith tolerance. The leaders of these schools, such as kiai or religious scholars, play a crucial role in shaping religious understanding and local culture among the students, who often follow their guidance and



⁴ Umi Sumbulah and Nurjanah Nurjanah, *Pluralisme Agama: Makna Dan Lokalitas Pola Kerukunan Antarumat Beragama* (UIN Maliki Press, 2013).

⁵ Gunawan Santoso, Aim Abdul Karim, and Bunyamin Maftuh, "Kajian Wawasan Nusantara Melalui Local Wisdom NRI Yang Mendunia Dan Terampil Dalam Lagu Nasional Dan Daerah Abad 21," *Jurnal Pendidikan Transformatif* 2, no. 1 (2023): 197–209.

⁶ H Bambang Yuniarto, Wawasan Kebangsaan (Deepublish, 2021).

⁷ Idris Muhammad Usman, "Pesantren Sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," Jurnal Al Hikmah 14, no. 1 (2013): 101–19.



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direction.⁸ The discursive practices in Pesantren also play a role in shaping the way of thinking and understanding of religion and local culture among the students.⁹ Overall, Pesantren create an environment that supports unity in diversity, helps shape a moderate religious understanding, and preserves local cultural values, all of which contribute to the creation of a harmonious society in diversity. One prominent Islamic boarding school is Pesantren Tebuireng in Jombang, East Java, which integrates religious moderation and the preservation of local culture, particularly through Sufi teachings in its curriculum. In the context of globalization and exposure to foreign cultures, this article illustrates how the integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture at Pesantren Tebuireng has successfully maintained the sustainability of local culture while promoting moderation in the practice of Islam.

Islamic education and Sufi values play a crucial role in the context of diverse Muslim societies like Indonesia.¹⁰ Islamic education provides a strong religious foundation and plays a key role in shaping a moderate understanding of religion and religious practices. In the context of Islamic education, students or santri are taught the principles of Islam, sacred texts, and the values that underlie religious beliefs. Religious education offers a robust religious foundation to individuals, helping them understand the teachings of Islam deeply and encouraging a more moderate understanding. Islamic education also provides a framework that teaches values like tolerance, peace, and respect for religious diversity. This creates a broader understanding of religion that promotes interfaith harmony and avoids extremist or narrow interpretations.¹¹ In other words, Islamic education helps shape individuals who practice their religion with a moderate understanding, respect for the beliefs of others, and contributes to the creation of an inclusive and tolerant society.

Furthermore, Islamic education encourages individuals to engage in religious practices that align with the values of religion and ethics, which can help create moderate and positive religious practices. In this context, individuals understand the importance of practicing religion in a way that respects human rights, avoids violence, and promotes humanitarian values. Additionally, the values of Sufism, which emphasize the spiritual and mystical aspects of Islam, provide tools for drawing closer to God and achieving a deeper

¹¹ Jasminto Jasminto, "Etika Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Moderasi Beragama Di Era Digital," in Proceedings of Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars, vol. 6, 2022, 121–35.



⁸ Neny Muthi'atul Awwaliyah, "Pondok Pesantren Sebagai Wadah Moderasi Islam Di Era Generasi Millenial," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 8, no. 1 (2019): 36–62.

⁹ Umma Farida, "Radikalisme, Moderatisme, Dan Liberalisme Pesantren: Melacak Pemikiran Dan Gerakan Keagamaan Pesantren Di Era Globalisasi," *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2015).

¹⁰ Endah Wahyuningsih, "Nilai-Nilai Sufistik Islam Nusantara Dalam Terciptanya Kerukunan Umat Beragama: Tinjauan Nilai Sufistik Dalam Tradisi Unduh-Unduh Di Mojowarno Jombang," *Peradaban Journal of Religion and Society* 2, no. 1 (2023): 32–44.



understanding of religion.¹² In the context of Indonesia, where religious pluralism and cultural diversity are everyday realities, a balanced Islamic education with Sufi values can play a role in promoting tolerance, interfaith understanding, and the preservation of local cultural values. The integration of Islamic education and Sufism, as seen in Pesantren Tebuireng, can create a unique educational environment that allows for harmony between religion and local culture.

Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng, founded by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari in 1899 AD, is located in Tebuireng, East Java, Indonesia. Initially, Tebuireng was a small hamlet known for social issues such as gambling, robbery, and other negative behaviors. However, the arrival of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari and his students transformed the community's way of life and promoted moderate religious values. The early days of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's preaching activities were centered in a simple building with two small rooms that he acquired from a puppeteer. Over time, this pesantren has grown into one of the leading Pesantren in Indonesia. Pesantren Tebuireng has undergone changes in its educational system over the years.¹³ Initially, they adopted the sorogan teaching method, where students read Islamic texts in front of a teacher. However, in 1919, Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari introduced the madrasah system (classical) with the establishment of the Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Madrasah. This change included the addition of general education subjects to the curriculum, which initially received negative reactions but proved to be a crucial step in providing a broader education for the students. Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng remained a prominent center of Islamic education, combining religious traditions with educational innovation.14

The purpose of writing this article is to present the influence of integrating religious moderation and the preservation of local culture with Islamic education and Sufi teachings in Pesantren Tebuireng. In essence, it aims to understand how the practice of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture in the context of the pesantren is influenced by Sufi teachings. Additionally, the article also explains the impact of the integration between Islamic education and Sufism on the understanding of religion and religious practices in the pesantren. Thus, the article focuses on fostering a more moderate religious understanding, preserving local culture, and how the integration of both creates harmony between religion and culture within the pesantren environment. The initial hypothesis is that integrating religious moderation and the preservation of local

¹⁴ Syamsul Ma'arif, Achmad Dardiri, and Djoko Suryo, "Inklusivitas Pesantren Tebuireng: Menatap Globalisasi Dengan Wajah Tradisionalisme," *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan: Fondasi Dan Aplikasi* 3, no. 1 (2015): 81–94.



¹² Jasminto Jasminto, "Urgensi Teori Andragogi Dalam Memperkuat Visi Moderat Islam Di Indonesia," in *Proceedings of Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars*, 2018, 643–51.

¹³ Salahuddin Wahid, *Transformasi Pesantren Tebuireng: Menjaga Tradisi Di Tengah Tantangan* (UIN-Maliki Press, 2011).



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culture with Islamic education and Sufi values will lead to a more moderate religious understanding while maintaining the sustainability of local cultural values, which, in turn, can promote harmony between religion and culture in Pesantren Tebuireng.

The theoretical framework used in this context involves the Foucauldian analysis approach, which aims to understand the role of discursive practices in shaping the understanding of religion and local culture in Pesantren Tebuireng. Foucault's concept of discursive practices refers to the complex relationship between power, knowledge, and language in shaping social reality and individual thought.¹⁵ In the context of Pesantren, discursive practices involve the way Pesantren organizes, shapes, and communicates religious ideas and local cultural values through Islamic education and Sufi teachings. The integration of religion and local culture in Pesantren creates an environment that facilitates harmony between religious practices and the preservation of local culture. This, in turn, supports values of tolerance, diversity, and a deeper understanding of religion within the Pesantren community. Thus, this theoretical framework helps us understand how the interaction between discursive practices, Islamic education, Sufism, and the integration of religion and local culture can shape the reality in Pesantren Tebuireng.

METHOD

The literature analysis approach is used to develop a deep understanding of Foucaultian theory in the context of Islamic education and Sufism, as well as the integration of religion and local culture. This involves the exploration of theoretical sources, scholarly literature, and relevant documents.¹⁶ Furthermore, a case study method is used to gain practical insights into how the integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture is realized in Pesantren Tebuireng. This involves interviews with educators, management of the pesantren, as well as direct observation of educational, cultural, and religious practices on-site.¹⁷ The combination of both methods helps in understanding and explaining the relationship between discursive practices, Islamic education, Sufism, and the integration of religion and local culture in Pesantren Tebuireng.

Pesantren Tebuireng was chosen as the research location because it has a strong reputation as one of the leading Pesantren in Indonesia that integrates religious moderation and the preservation of local culture through Sufi teachings in Islamic education. Additionally, Pesantren Tebuireng has a long and deep history of developing

¹⁷ Robert K Yin, "Studi Kasus: Desain & Metode," 2008.



¹⁵ Ketut Wiradnyana, Michel Foucault: Arkeologi Pengetahuan Dan Pengetahuan Arkeologi (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2018).

¹⁶ Asep Yusup Hudayat and Kamelia Gantrisia, "Kepekaan Literer-Teori-Metode Dalam Penelitian Sastra: Upaya Peningkatan Kemampuan Penyusunan Usulan Penelitian Sastra," 2017.



Sufi values and nurturing unique local cultural traditions. The success of this boarding school in achieving harmony between religion and local culture raises intriguing questions about how these practices have been successfully implemented and their impact on religious understanding and the preservation of local culture. Therefore, Pesantren Tebuireng is a relevant and valuable location to explore the phenomenon of integrating religion and local culture in the context of Islamic education and Sufi values.

In this article, data was collected through two main approaches. First, text analysis was used to gather data from written sources such as books, papers, and documents related to Islamic education, Sufism, religious practices, and the preservation of local culture in Pesantren Tebuireng. Text analysis aided in understanding the theoretical foundations and key concepts related to the research.¹⁸ Secondly, a case study method was employed to gain practical insights through interviews with teachers, administrators, and direct observation of educational, cultural, and religious practices at Pesantren Tebuireng. Data collected from the case study provided a deeper understanding of how the integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture occurs in the field. Data analysis involved qualitative analysis techniques to identify patterns, trends, and relationships that emerged in the data and to understand their impact on the understanding of religion and the preservation of local culture.

The data collection and analysis in this study were conducted synergistically to achieve the research objectives. Data collection involved the textual analysis of written sources, such as academic literature, books, and documents relevant to the concept of integrating religious moderation and the preservation of local culture at Pesantren Tebuireng. Additionally, data were also obtained through a case study with in-depth interviews with teachers, pesantren administrators, and direct observation of educational, cultural, and religious practices at the pesantren.¹⁹ This qualitative data was analyzed using textual analysis methods to identify patterns, trends, and key concepts emerging from written sources, as well as qualitative data analysis to understand the practices and perceptions of the individuals interviewed. The results of this data analysis assist in answering the research questions and illustrate how the integration of Islamic education, Sufism, religious moderation, and the preservation of local culture is realized at Pesantren Tebuireng, as well as its impact on religious understanding and local culture.

RESULTS

The research findings obtained through literature analysis and the case study at Pesantren Tebuireng reveal that the integration of religious moderation and the



¹⁸ Stefan Titscher et al., "Metode Analisis Teks Dan Wacana," 2009.

¹⁹ M Jogiyanto Hartono, Metoda Pengumpulan Dan Teknik Analisis Data (Penerbit Andi, 2018).



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preservation of local culture in this pesantren has created a unique educational environment. This environment at Pesantren Tebuireng is the result of combining strong Islamic education with Sufi values and the preservation of local culture. For example, this pesantren not only provides religious education but also incorporates elements of local culture into daily education. Santri at Pesantren Tebuireng are taught about the values of Islam while also learning the local language and traditions. This creates an environment where santri can experience the importance of deepening their understanding of religion while also nurturing and preserving their local culture.²⁰

Furthermore, at Pesantren Tebuireng, there is a practice of interfaith worship. This creates an inclusive environment where members of various religions can come together to celebrate their religious festivals collectively. For instance, during the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, members of different religions in this pesantren gather to celebrate together as a sign of solidarity and religious harmony.²¹ The practice of Sufism also creates a unique environment in this pesantren. Students learn about Sufi values such as love, compassion, and simplicity, which strengthen the spirit of tolerance and unity among them. For example, there are times when students practice Sufi meditation or dhikr (remembrance of God) together to achieve a deeper understanding of religion and local cultural values. All these factors create a unique educational environment in Pesantren Tebuireng that not only shapes a moderate understanding of religion but also supports the preservation of local culture and interfaith harmony among the students.²²

Through the teachings of Sufism integrated into the Islamic education curriculum, this pesantren successfully combines the practice of religious moderation with the preservation of distinctive local cultural values. The instructors and administrators of the pesantren actively integrate Sufi values such as tolerance, compassion, and respect for diversity into religious education. This is reflected in the daily practices and activities at the pesantren. For example, in religious instruction, students not only learn from the sacred verses of the Quran but also gain an understanding of the importance of respecting the beliefs of others. They are taught to understand that tolerance is a significant value in religion and that loving fellow human beings is an integral part of their faith. Additionally, Sufi dhikr and meditation practices are used to help students achieve a deeper understanding of religion and diversity. This creates an environment where Sufi values are not only taught but also practiced in daily life, helping shape a more moderate understanding of religion while preserving the distinctive local culture.

²² Luqman Hakim Sufi, Interview (September 14, 2022).



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²⁰ Abdul Hakim, Interview (July 12, 2023).

²¹ Lukman Hakim, Interview (August 12, 2023).



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The impact is a more moderate understanding of religion among the santri (pesantren students) while preserving and nurturing local cultural values, such as traditional customs and local beliefs. Field observations also indicate that the integration of Islamic education and Sufism at Pesantren Tebuireng paves the way for better interfaith dialogue and a deeper understanding of religion. A concrete example is the interfaith dialogue activities conducted at the pesantren. Santri and pesantren instructors often participate in dialogues with members of other religious communities, such as Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and even Jews, facilitated by the Leimena Institute.²³ In these dialogues, they share their understanding of religion and discuss the values they hold in common. This creates opportunities to learn from each other and deepen their understanding of different religious beliefs. This pesantren demonstrates that balanced Islamic education with Sufi values can be a significant example in achieving harmony between religion and local culture.

The field findings indicate that the integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture at Pesantren Tebuireng has had a positive impact on the understanding of religion and practices at the pesantren. The integration of Sufi teachings in Islamic education has created a more moderate understanding of religion among the santri, with an emphasis on values such as tolerance, compassion, and respect for diversity. The integration of Sufi teachings in Islamic education at Pesantren Tebuireng creates a more moderate understanding of religion among the santri through several ways. Santri at this pesantren learn to respect the religious beliefs of others, recognize commonalities in religious values such as compassion and peace, and become more tolerant of religious diversity and open to interfaith dialogue. They also develop empathy and compassion for fellow beings, encouraging participation in social activities that assist those in need, regardless of religion or cultural background. Sufi teachings instill the awareness that religion should be a source of peace, not conflict, which discourages extremism and violent actions. Additionally, prayer and meditation practices in the daily lives of the santri help them lead a more moderate, peaceful, and harmonious life. Through the integration of Sufism, the santri at Pesantren Tebuireng form an understanding of religion that promotes harmony, tolerance, and moderation in society, creating an environment supportive of interfaith harmony.

The santri at this pesantren are introduced to a more inclusive concept of religion and a deep understanding of spirituality. Furthermore, this integration has also contributed to the preservation and nurturing of local cultural values. Religious practices conducted at the pesantren still maintain their roots in local culture, such as traditional customs and local beliefs, without compromising the principles of Islam. Thus, the



²³ Muhamad As'ad, Interview (July 10, 2023).



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integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture at Pesantren Tebuireng creates harmony between religion and culture in the context of Islamic education, allowing for the development of individuals who are moderate in their religious practices while preserving unique local cultural values.

The impact of the integration of Islamic education and Sufi teachings at Pesantren Tebuireng in creating religious moderation and preserving local culture is highly significant. One of the main impacts is the creation of a more moderate understanding of religion among the santri. For example, the santri at this pesantren learn to respect the religious beliefs of others and become more tolerant of religious diversity. They also understand that religious teachings should be a source of peace, not conflict, which leads them to reject extremism and violent actions. Additionally, this integration also promotes the preservation of local culture. For instance, the pesantren actively integrates local cultural values, such as customs, local language, arts, music, and local traditions, into daily activities and life at the pesantren. This helps in preserving and celebrating the richness of local culture while blending it with religious teachings and Sufi values. As a result, the pesantren creates a unique environment where religious moderation and the preservation of local culture go hand in hand, fostering harmony between religion and culture.

This integration has created a more moderate understanding of religion among the santri, with an emphasis on universal values such as tolerance, compassion, and respect for diversity. The religious practices taught at the pesantren continue to respect local cultural values, such as traditional customs and local beliefs, which are integrated into the educational approach. In this regard, Sufi teachings help the santri achieve a deeper understanding of religion and strong spirituality while preserving the unique roots of local culture. The broader impact is the creation of an educational environment that promotes harmony between religion and local culture, contributing to tolerance, interfaith understanding, and the preservation of cultural values within the pesantren's community. The integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture at Pesantren Tebuireng serves as an important example of efforts to achieve harmony between religion and culture in an increasingly globalized environment.

DISCUSSION





The interpretation of the research results within the context of Foucaultian theory and the concept of the integration of religion and local culture reveals the significant role of discursive practices in shaping the understanding of religion and the preservation of local culture at Pesantren Tebuireng. The integration of Islamic education and Sufi teachings creates an environment where religious discourse encompasses not only religious aspects but also local cultural values integrated into religious practices. This aligns with the Foucaultian concept that describes the interaction between power, knowledge, and language in shaping social reality. These discursive practices enable a more moderate understanding of religion with an emphasis on universal values while preserving local cultural roots. In the context of Foucaultian theory, this integration creates a discursive space that promotes harmony between religion and local culture, establishing an inclusive educational environment responsive to diverse local cultural contexts. This makes a significant contribution to understanding how discursive practices can shape the understanding of religion and local culture in the context of Islamic education and Sufi values. Discussing the implications of the research findings for Islamic education, religious moderation, and the preservation of local culture.

Compared to previous research and similar findings, this research confirms and expands the understanding of the integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture in the context of pesantren, particularly at Pesantren Tebuireng. Previous research has noted the efforts of pesantren in combining religion and local culture, but this research explains how the integration of Islamic education and Sufi teachings at Pesantren Tebuireng creates a deeper harmony between religion and culture. This is in line with similar findings in other pesantren contexts in Indonesia, indicating that the integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture can be a relevant model for enhancing a moderate understanding of religion while maintaining the richness of local culture. In conclusion, the results of this research make a significant contribution to expanding the understanding of the relationship between religion and culture in the context of Islamic education and Sufi values in pesantren.

The potential application of the practices of integrating religious moderation and the preservation of local culture, as observed at Pesantren Tebuireng, can have a positive impact in other locations with similar cultural contexts. This model can serve as a guide for pesantren, Islamic educational institutions, or similar institutions in various regions facing challenges related to the harmony between religion and local culture. By integrating Sufi teachings and Islamic education, these institutions can create an inclusive educational environment, promote a moderate understanding of religion, and simultaneously preserve and nurture unique local cultural values. These practices can help foster tolerance, interfaith understanding, and enrich cultural diversity in society, ultimately promoting harmony between religion and culture in various locations.



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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture at Pesantren Tebuireng, as observed in this research, has created a unique educational environment. This integration results from combining strong Islamic education with Sufi values and the incorporation of local cultural elements. The impact of this integration is significant, leading to a more moderate understanding of religion among the students, emphasizing universal values like tolerance, compassion, and respect for diversity. Additionally, it promotes the preservation of local culture, ensuring that cultural traditions, customs, language, arts, and local traditions remain intact within the framework of Islamic education.

This research demonstrates how practical discursive practices play a crucial role in shaping the understanding of religion and the preservation of local culture in Pesantren Tebuireng. It aligns with the Foucaultian concept of the complex relationship between power, knowledge, and language in shaping social reality and individual thinking. Compared to previous research and similar findings, this study confirms and extends the understanding of the integration of religious moderation and the preservation of local culture in the context of pesantren, particularly at Pesantren Tebuireng. The research serves as a model that can be applied in other locations with similar cultural contexts, offering guidance to pesantren, Islamic educational institutions, or similar entities facing challenges related to the harmony between religion and local culture. By integrating Sufi teachings and Islamic education, these institutions can create an inclusive educational environment, promote moderate religious understanding, and simultaneously preserve and nurture unique local cultural values. These practices can help foster tolerance, interfaith understanding, and enrich cultural diversity in society, ultimately promoting harmony between religion and culture in various locations.

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