

A Colonized Islam: *Pesantren*, Resistance, and the Challenge of Religious Moderation in Indonesia

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Abstract

Decoloniality confronts the persistent colonial frameworks and narratives that continue to influence global perceptions, including religious activities. Colonial discourses have frequently mischaracterized Islam, portraying it as intolerant and violent. This colonial heritage has concealed the authentic nature of Islam, especially its potential for moderation and peace. The lack of religious moderation among certain Muslims, influenced by colonial conceptions, has resulted in actions that are antithetical to the fundamental principles of Islam. In response, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia have adopted educational frameworks that prioritize moderation and challenge colonial myths. *Pesantren Bumi Cendekia* in Yogyakarta employs the four academic pillars to cultivate a moderate and progressive comprehension of Islam among its pupils (*santri*). This method promotes religious moderation while simultaneously countering the colonial legacies that have influenced Islamic education. *Bumi Cendekia* encourages students to engage with many religious and cultural traditions through these four pillars, fostering an inclusive and decolonized perspective of Islam. This qualitative study, integrating fieldwork and literature evaluation, examines how *Bumi Cendekia*'s educational method represents a decolonial reaction to global religious discourses, enabling students to adopt a moderate, progressive, and global-engaged Islam.

Keywords: Colonized Islam, *Pesantren*, Resistance, Challenge, and Religious Moderation.

Introduction

Decoloniality critiques the enduring effects of coloniality, which is not merely colonialism's historical event, but the underlying logic of power, control, and knowledge that has persisted long after formal colonial rule ended (Mignolo, 2011). Colonial discourses, in particular, have historically distorted and misrepresented Islam. As argued by Noor (2016), the very idea of "Southeast Asia" was a discursive construction of 19th-century colonial-capitalism, where the region was framed in terms that justified intervention—as a market to be exploited, a land of tyranny, or a den of pirates. Within this framework, Islam was often portrayed as a religion of violence and intolerance. This aligns with the work of Said (1978), who argued

that colonial powers created stereotypical, derogatory representations of non-Western cultures and religions to justify domination. These colonial frameworks not only shaped Western perceptions of Islam but also influenced how Muslims engage with their own faith, often distorting the core values of tolerance and peace.

The image of Islam in the modern world remains deeply impacted by these legacies. Muslims are often portrayed passive in the face of rapid global development, with fundamentalism and extremism frequently associated with the Islamic tradition. This portrayal intensified after the September 11, 2001, attacks, with Western media framing Islam as a “terrorist religion” in the aftermath of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, which were attributed to al-Qaeda. As a result, the image of Islam in the West has been shaped by these sensationalized portrayals. In Indonesia, *pesantren* as major centers of Islamic education, are not immune to this media framing. Waryono (2021) observed that Western media often present *pesantren* as breeding grounds for radicalism in Indonesia.

Moreover, *pesantren* encounter internal difficulties pertaining to their conventional methodologies of Islamic instruction. Classical Islamic traditions, especially those imparted in *pesantren*, frequently conflict with modernity, influenced not just by Western ideologies but also by certain factions within the Muslim community that challenge the pertinence of *pesantren* education in a swiftly advancing technological environment. This doubt regarding the modernization of *pesantren* education contributes to the view of Muslims as lagging behind Western civilization. Moreover, ancient Islamic traditions, particularly those introduced by *pesantren*, frequently conflict with notions of modernity. In addition to Western perspectives, several Muslim groups express skepticism regarding the applicability of *pesantren* education in the context of the extensive advancement of information and digital technologies. Consequently, Muslims are often perceived as “isolated” in regards to Western civilization (Azra, 1999).

Pesantren, in essence, represents a unique form of Islamic education in Indonesia. Rooted in classical and traditional methodologies, it serves as a place to study Islamic sciences and apply them in daily practice. As part of the national educational system, *pesantren* holds a distinct position compared to other formal schools, with a strong connection to local, indigenous traditions that have been shaped since the colonial era. Over time, *pesantren* has transformed into an independent educational institution, possessing its own curriculum and monetary oversight procedures. among the principal objectives of *pesantren* is to cultivate individuals who not only adhere to Islamic beliefs but also integrate them into all facets of life. On a sociological level, *pesantren* aims to cultivate Muslim individuals who contribute to the community, religion, and state institutions, thereby promoting a more active and dynamic position for Islam in modern society (Anshari et al, 2021).

This paper argues that the educational model of Pesantren Bumi Cendekia functions as a direct and strategic act of structural decolonization. It actively works to dismantle the historical legacies of colonial conflict and epistemic violence by reclaiming an authentic, globally-engaged Islamic identity, thereby breaking the cycle of confrontation that has long defined the relationship between Islam and state power in Indonesia.

Pesantren often convey the ideals of tolerance (*tasamuh*), modesty and justice (*tawassuth wa al-i'tidal*), equilibrium between the temporal and the eternal (*tawazun*), and fraternity

(*ukhawah*) (Syawaludin, 2010). Bumi Cendekia Islamic Boarding School in Mlati, Sleman Yogyakarta subsequently embraced these values. Bumi Cendekia upholds the *pesantren* curriculum, rich in ancient literature, while also endeavoring to be relevant to contemporary contexts. This notion is elucidated on Bumi Cendekia website as follows;

First, Bumi Cendekia Yogyakarta is an educational institution with a vision to preserve the traditional classical learning model characteristic of *pesantren* while integrating it with the national curriculum, STEAM-based integrative learning (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics), international competencies, and 21st-century skills. This approach aims to prepare students to become global citizens who contribute positively to the world, embodying the principles of *rahmah* (mercy) for the universe. Bumi Cendekia School and *Pesantren* are under the auspices of Yayasan Bumi Aswaja Yogyakarta, a community-based organization founded in 2018 by alumni of various traditional *pesantren* in Indonesia and universities from multiple countries. These individuals have diverse backgrounds and experiences as social activists, professionals, and academics from various universities in Indonesia.

Second, Bumi Cendekia is a collective effort aimed at preparing a generation of students who can take leading roles in various sectors of life, both nationally and globally, to provide the broadest possible benefits for humanity and the environment, as a manifestation of the Islamic values of *rahmatan lil alamin* (Bumi Cendekia, 2024).

The *pesantren's* stated goals provide insight into how Bumi Cendekia's curriculum fosters students to be open-minded and respectful of other generations. Not only do modern *pesantren* have a responsibility to provide a solid Islamic groundwork for Indonesia's youth, but they must also train Muslim cadres who can thrive in the face of rapid technological change, especially as the new century draws near. In response to the Western media's frequent depiction of Islam as an ideology of terror, moderate Muslim leaders may be nurtured in Islamic boarding schools.

This research addresses the four academic pillars as contributions and approaches of Bumi Cendekia in promoting moderate and literate pupils in line with modernization. In the case of this study, the phrase *pesantren* is equivalent to Islamic Boarding School. The research was conducted at Pesantren Bumi Cendekia. The descriptive-analytical technique was implemented in this investigation. This technique necessitates that researchers comprehend and analyze the acquired data (Cresswell, 2013). This study employs interviews as the primary method for data collection, enriched by a literature review as the secondary source of data.

This study utilizes qualitative methods and incorporates field research techniques. Field research aims to conduct an in-depth examination of the background and interactions among social, individual, community, and institutional factors. The field method necessitates that researchers articulate the circumstances, conditions, and data pertinent to the study (Usman & Akbar, 2006). The author uses interviews, observations, and documentation techniques to gather data. Subsequent to examining these three ways, the author advances through several phases: data reduction, data verification, and data presentation, culminating in a conclusion based on the acquired data (Moleong, 2007). The researcher visited at Pesantren Bumi Cendekia to perform interviews and observations. The researcher selected two respondents for information: the Head of Bumi Cendekia and a teacher at Bumi

Cendekia formal school. This study utilizes technical analysis, commencing with the search procedure, systematically aggregating data from field interviews, field notes, and document collection by categorizing the material as required, condensing it, interpreting, organizing it into structures, selecting, and deriving conclusions (Sugiyono, 2013).

This research examines the impact of modernization on the movement of *pesantren*, which is becoming increasingly rapid and resilient. This study posits that the Bumi Cendekia serves as a catalyst and producer of Muslim cadres who engage confidently with modernization and participate in international discourse. Examining the scholarly principles of Bumi Cendekia is essential to illustrate that the conventional classical education framework is not intrinsically static within its regional milieu, but is also prepared to surpass limitations and engage in global dialogue.

Pesantren and the Decolonial Imperative

Decoloniality must be distinguished from decolonization. While decolonization refers to the historical process of ending formal colonial rule, decoloniality addresses the ongoing “coloniality of power”—the persistent structures of knowledge, culture, and authority that continue to marginalize non-Western ways of being and knowing (Mignolo, 2011).

A clear historical example can be seen in the French attack on Muslim family endowments (*habous*) in Algeria. As documented by Powers (1989), French colonial administrators and orientalist scholars systematically worked to dismantle the *waqf* system because it protected land from being purchased by settlers. *Waqf* is a legal act by an individual or a legal entity (known as a *waqif*) who sets aside a portion of their assets to be utilized in perpetuity or for a specific period for religious purposes and/or public welfare, in accordance with Islamic law (*Sharia*). In essence, the endowed property becomes “the property of God” and cannot be transferred, inherited, or sold by the *waqif* after the *waqf* pledge has been made. They advanced legal and scholarly arguments claiming family endowments were an “illegal” and “unethical” deviation from “true” Islamic law, thus using a distorted interpretation of Islam to serve colonial economic policy. This is a textbook case of epistemic violence, where a colonial power redefines and delegitimizes an indigenous institution to facilitate its own material gain. It is precisely this form of structural and intellectual subjugation that a decolonial approach in education seeks to reverse.

This legacy of conflict is not merely theoretical; it manifested in violent confrontations that positioned Islam as inherently oppositional to state power. A prime example is the Cilegon Peasant’s Revolt of 1888 in Banten. Driven by oppressive colonial taxation and a deep sense of religious duty to resist what they saw as infidel rule, local *kyai* (teacher) and their *santri* (students) of the *pesantren*—led a fierce but ultimately unsuccessful uprising against Dutch authorities (Kartodirdjo, 1966). Similarly, the Padri War (1803-1837) in Minangkabau, while originating from an internal Islamic puritanical movement, was exacerbated and exploited by the Dutch, who intervened to support the traditionalist (*adat*) faction against the Padri reformers (Ricklefs, 2008). By doing so, the colonial power transformed an internal religious dispute into a prolonged, bloody conflict that served its own territorial ambitions (Ricklefs, 2008). These historical cases demonstrate a clear colonial strategy, to frame Islamic

movements as a political threat, thereby justifying violent suppression and cementing a powerful narrative of Islamic identity as a site of political resistance.

This pattern of “state control” over religious life, and the conflict it generated, did not vanish with the independence. The “colonial administrative” logic, which viewed organized Islam as a potential threat to be managed, was inherited and arguably perfected during the New Order era (1966-1998) (Van Bruinessen, 1996). Through policies like the “floating mass” (*massa mengambang*), which aimed to depoliticize rural populations where *pesantren* held significant influence, the Suharto regime effectively continued the colonial project of neutralizing Islam as an independent political force (Van Bruinessen, 1996). This perpetuated the cycle of conflict, where the state, rather than a foreign power, was then seen as suppressing authentic Islamic expression, further entrenching the dichotomy between state-sanctioned religion and grassroots Islamic movements. It is from this long and fraught history of conflict—first with a colonial power and then with a post-colonial state that inherited its logic—that both modern religious extremism and the call for religious moderation emerge.

Decoloniality challenges the Western-centric knowledge systems that have dominated global discourse since the colonial era. It seeks to recover and amplify marginalized epistemologies, including indigenous and non-Western forms of knowledge. According to Mignolo (2011), decoloniality advocates for a “border thinking” that resists the imposition of Western epistemological frameworks, proposing instead a more inclusive approach that recognizes the validity of multiple knowledge systems. This shift is crucial in understanding how non-Western educational systems, such as Islamic education, can resist the colonial legacies embedded within mainstream global knowledge (Mignolo, 2011). Mohamed et al. (2020) identifies “structural decolonization” as the effort to dismantle these colonial mechanisms of power that still influence modern life. This involves critically examining the origins and legitimacy of prevailing forms of knowledge and values.

It aims to dismantle colonial mechanisms of power, economics, language, culture, and thought that influence contemporary life. It involves examining the origins and legitimacy of prevailing forms of knowledge, values, norms, and assumptions. It challenges the prevailing mechanisms of power, economics, language, culture, and thought that still influence modern life. *Pesantren*, by evolving to integrate formal schooling systems, are engaging in a decolonizing act that questions the dominance of Western epistemologies in education. By incorporating both religious and secular curricula, *pesantren* are dismantling the Western-centric view of education that often undermines indigenous knowledge systems (Datta & Starlight, 2024). This reflects an effort to examine and challenge the origins and legitimacy of the knowledge systems that have been shaped by colonial powers, as proposed by Mohamed et al (2020).

In this context, *pesantren* become spaces where alternative epistemologies—rooted in Islamic thought and local wisdom—are not only preserved but actively integrated with modern pedagogical approaches, fostering a more inclusive and diverse educational framework. The decolonialization efforts by *pesantren* serve to deconstruct the longstanding Western narrative that associates Islam with violence—a legacy of colonial discourse that has persistently shaped global perceptions. This paper, therefore, focuses on structural

decolonization, exploring how *pesantren* embodies this process by reconfiguring their educational systems to challenge the historical dominance of Western knowledge, reaffirm indigenous and Islamic epistemologies, and counter the colonial misrepresentations of Islam.

***Pesantren* Classical Tradition and The Challenge of Religious Moderation**

The author identifies literature addressing the role of Islamic boarding schools in promoting values of moderation and responsiveness to the advancement of technology. Dakir and Anwar (2019), in their work “*Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Pesantren Sebagai Core Value; Dalam Menjaga Moderasi Islam di Indonesia*” assess the principles of *pesantren* as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia. *Pesantren* education, by its nature, engages with the surrounding social reality, positioning *pesantren* as a stronghold of moderate Islamic educational paradigms. Awwaliyah (2019) discusses the role of *pesantren* as custodians and disseminators of Islamic moderation values in the contemporary context in her work, “*Pondok Pesantren Sebagai Wadah Moderasi Islam di Era Generasi Millennial*” In light of globalization, Neny’s study delves into the ideas and rites of Islamic boarding schools. Within the *pesantren* setting, she describes the santri’s Islamic nature as a “bulwark” for Muslims. The progression of the millennial generation has led to a transformation in the setting of *pesantren* in Indonesia, which is increasingly marked by a diversity that surpasses conventional and radical factions.

Numerous new *pesantren* have emerged, each presenting distinct characteristics to address the dynamic changes of contemporary society (Awwaliyah, 2019). Afuddin (2022) examined the educational integration systems in Junior High School and Bumi Cendekia Islamic Boarding School. The study identified three distinct patterns of system integration at Bumi Cendekia: an integrated vision and mission, institutional integration, and the integration of curriculum and learning. This encompasses management aspects related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the integration between *pesantren* and formal school in junior high schools, specifically at Bumi Cendekia (Afudin, 2022).

Islam has often been misrepresented and framed as a “violent” religion in colonial discourses. Said (1978) in *orientalism* argues that Western colonial powers constructed the “orient” as the “other”, often positioning Islamic societies as static, intolerant, and backward. This portrayal shaped both Western perceptions of Islam and internal Muslim identity struggles. The colonial legacy has persisted in modern media, particularly after the events of 9/11, where Islam was largely framed as a religion of extremism (e.g., Abu-Lughod, 2002). The decolonial critique targets these misrepresentations, advocating for an understanding of Islam rooted in its own historical context, which includes principles of moderation and peace.

Religious moderation, as understood in the context of Islam, challenges both extremist interpretations and colonial portrayals. Al-Azmeh (1996) argues that Islamic civilization has long embraced moderation and rationalism, but colonial forces distorted this image. In the contemporary context, decolonial scholars call for a re-engagement with these values in a way that rejects both internal radicalism and external misrepresentations. In Indonesia, *pesantren* are increasingly seen as significant venues for promoting moderation. Dakir and Anwar (2019) in their examination of the educational role of *pesantren* emphasize that these institutions have historically served as bastions of moderation, offering a counter-narrative to both Western depictions of Islam and extreme beliefs within Muslim communities.

Within the decolonial framework, religious moderation becomes more than a theological stance; it is a political and intellectual strategy to reclaim Islam from the legacies of conflict. The historical antagonism fostered by colonial and new order (*orde baru*) policies created a fertile ground for extremist ideologies, which thrive on a narrative of perpetual opposition to a corrupt “other” (whether Western or a secular state). Religious moderation directly dismantles this binary. Unlike colonial perspectives that cast Islam as an obstacle to progress, or the repressive state policies that engendered conflict, religious moderation advocates for a balanced and rational approach. It is a direct response to this history of conflict, seeking to reclaim Islam from both extremist insularity and the legacy of state-imposed frameworks. An essential element of religious moderation is receptiveness to diverse sources of knowledge, which aligns with the decolonial objective to deconstruct coloniality in knowledge and reclaim non-Western epistemologies.

Moderation is characterized by an emphasis on proportionality in beliefs, morals, and character, applicable in interactions with individuals and state institutions (Kemenag RI, 2019). The opposite is “excessive” or “extreme”. In religious discourse, the term “excessive” denotes individuals who surpass the boundaries and stipulations established by *shari’a*. The attitude of religious moderation can be understood as the perspective, attitude, and behavior of a Muslim positioned between two extreme viewpoints. Religious extremism represents a viewpoint, disposition, and conduct that surpasses the boundaries of moderation in the comprehension and application of religion (Kemenag RI, 2019).

The idea of *tawassuth* (moderate), according to Said Aqil Siraj, should be taken into account with the concepts of *i’tidal* and *tawazun* (Siraj, 1997). Said Aqil points out that although the three work together as one, they each keep their own focus (Siraj, 1997). When it comes to making decisions in the legal system, the idea of *tawassuth* is crucial (Siraj, 1997). When making decisions (*istinbath*), a Muslim or Muslim organization takes into account both logical factors and textual sources (Siraj, 1997). The responses to various ideologies, religious teachings, and schools of thought always strike a balance between logical analysis and textual interpretation (Siraj, 1997). *Tawazun* denotes a perspective that consistently upholds balance, particularly within the realms of politics, nation, and state (Siraj, 1997). *I’tidal* is characterized by tolerant socio-religious attitudes and behaviors among Muslims, applicable in both intra-religious and inter-religious contexts (Siraj, 1997).

The effort to integrate the values of religious moderation into the formal teaching structure in *pesantren* faces a series of complex challenges, ranging from teaching materials, pedagogical methods, teacher competencies, to institutional resistance. The success of this program heavily depends on the ability to navigate these challenges effectively.

For *salaf* (traditional) *pesantren*, the main curriculum is the *kitab kuning* (yellow book) or *turats* (classical texts). These literatures, with their rich dialectics and diversity of opinions (*ikhtilaf*) among the scholars of various schools of thought (*mazhab*), are inherently a source for learning moderation. Students accustomed to cross-mazhab studies are trained to understand that interpretive truth is not singular, thus fostering a more open and tolerant attitude (Safik, 2015). However, *kitab kuning* can also be a “double-edged sword”. Some classical texts, especially those discussing sensitive topics like *fiqh siyasah* (statecraft) or inter-religious relations, if taught purely textually without contextualization to the pluralistic reality

of Indonesia, have the potential to cultivate rigid, exclusive, and even radical understandings (Salik, 2020).

Meanwhile, in modern *pesantren* or madrasah that use the national curriculum, textbooks published by Kemenag have explicitly included materials on tolerance (*tasamuh*), deliberation (*syura*), and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*) (Aziz et al., 2021). The challenge here shifts to ensuring that this material does not stop at cognitive knowledge or mere memorization but is truly internalized and shapes the students' character. Teaching methods play a vital role in shaping the students' way of thinking. Traditional methods like *sorogan* (where a student reads a book individually before a *kiai*) and *bandongan* (where a *kiai* reads and explains a book to a group of students) are very effective for knowledge transmission and preserving the chain of scholarly transmission. However, these methods can tend to be one-directional, where the *kiai* or *ustadz* becomes the sole authority of truth, which, if not balanced, can hinder the development of critical reasoning.

Recognizing this, the implementation guide for religious moderation suggests the use of more modern and participatory learning methods. Methods such as group discussions, active debate, and jigsaw learning are encouraged to train critical thinking skills, respect for differing opinions, and democratic attitudes. As a case study, the internalization of moderation in *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) learning can be done by not just teaching it as a rigid set of halal-haram rules. Teachers can modify the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP), use a cross-cultural approach to show the flexibility of Islamic law in different social contexts, and integrate local wisdom as proof of the *sharia's* accommodation of good customs (Tanjung, 2022). Similarly, the *Akidah Akhlak* (Islamic creed and ethics) subject becomes the primary vehicle for doctrinally instilling the values of *tasamuh* and *tawassut* (moderation), while *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* (the History of Islamic Civilization) can be used to present historical examples of peaceful interaction and inter-civilizational dialogue, as a counter-narrative to a history that only focuses on conflict.

In the context of religious moderation, the competency challenge becomes more specific. It is not enough for an *ustadz* to merely master the text of the classical text in depth. They must also have a comprehensive understanding of the concept of religious moderation itself, a strong sense of national identity, and the crucial ability to contextualize classical teachings to be relevant to contemporary challenges. Many *ustadz* may be very competent in religious sciences but are not necessarily trained in critical pedagogy or contextual hermeneutics. This is where the biggest gap lies. The trainings organized by Ministry of Religion aim to fill this gap, but their effectiveness and reach still need to be continuously evaluated. Above all, an *ustadz* is a role model (*uswatun hasanah*). The consistency between what is taught in the classroom and the behavior shown outside the classroom becomes a determining factor for credibility and the success of value instillation.

Furthermore, *pesantren* as educational institutions have very strong autonomy. The figure of the *kiai* as the supreme leader holds full control over internal policies. Therefore, any government policy cannot be implemented immediately without going through a process of adaptation, negotiation, and approval from the *pesantren* leadership. Resistance can appear in the form of active rejection or, more commonly, formal acceptance without substantive

implementation on the ground. In extreme cases, some educational institutions deemed to be teaching deviant doctrines have even had to face legal action from the government.

Integrating Religious Moderation and Decolonial Principles: The Four Pillars

Bumi Cendekia is an Islamic boarding school that promotes the principles of religious moderation by carrying out its four educational foundations. The foundations include *Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin*, STEAM-Project Based Learning, Global Citizenship, and Character Education. These four are serving as a strategic framework for the development of moderate and progressive learners. Bumi Cendekia is engaged in efforts to promote an interpretation of Islam that counters religious extremism and challenges colonial narratives that depict Islam as unchanging and regressive. Bumi Cendekia addresses global issues within its curriculum and fosters intercultural dialogue, presenting a distinct counter-narrative to the Islamic extremism commonly portrayed by Western media and certain conservative Muslim factions.

The principle of *Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin* serves as the foundational value of Bumi Cendekia Islamic Boarding School. It is expressed through a *pesantren* learning curriculum. As a decolonial act, it reclaims the core message of Islam from the colonial-era caricature of a violent, intolerant religion. It is a direct counter-narrative to the very justifications used for colonial intervention (Noor, 2016).

STEAM-Project Based Learning represents a pedagogical approach and educational methodology utilized at Bumi Cendekia Islamic Boarding School, particularly within the academic domain. This method is project-based, emphasizing the application of knowledge through projects, with the anticipation that Bumi Cendekia students will utilize this knowledge in real-life situations or after completing their studies. The concept of Global Citizens suggests that Bumi Cendekia learners are expected to serve as agents of Indonesia and Islam on the international stage. *Santri* will acquire knowledge, particularly in English, as a tool for international communication. By embodying the principles of Global Citizenship, *santri* are equipped to engage with global issues, including environmental concerns, human rights, and cross-cultural conversation. Character Education serves as the foundational element of parenting at the *pesantren*.

In addition to the four pillars, Angga Palsewa Putra, the headmaster of Bumi Cendekia, introduced “Self-Development” as the fifth academic pillar. This principle aims to support the passions and skills of students across various disciplines, particularly in non-academic areas like the arts and sports. This concept necessitates student participation in external competitions, including those focused on techniques, Islamic insights, and *Musabaha Tilawatil Quran* (reciting Koran competition), among others.

Bumi Cendekia aims to cultivate open-mindedness in students through its four foundational pillars. This character is essential for developing a moderate disposition, as such an attitude necessitates an inclusive mindset. As opposed to the extreme perspective. This group exhibits tendencies toward closed-mindedness and exclusivity. They appear to disregard all discussions occurring outside their group. This perspective in religious extremism often results in the assessment that other groups are erroneous. Bumi Cendekia simultaneously synthesizes the four fundamentals to cultivate open-mindedness in students.

The four pillars must operate in conjunction to effectively achieve their goals, as they cannot function independently.

Despite their integration, each of the four pillars possesses distinct objectives. A tangible embodiment of the Global Citizens philosophy, for instance, is enhancing the English communication skills of Bumi Cendekia pupils. They must possess sufficient international language proficiency to engage and integrate into the global community. This initiative is significant as global challenges are predominantly addressed in an international language, English. Another initiative by Bumi Cendekia to actualize this philosophy is to invite international guests to serve as resource persons and share their experiences with the pupils at the Islamic Boarding School. Their arrival serves to engage students in direct conversational English interactions with native speakers.

Nonetheless, the presence of these English natives serves purposes beyond merely instructing pupils in English conversation. They arrived to present, introduce, and discuss global topics alongside the students of Bumi Cendekia, including as climate change and environmental catastrophes. The boarding school aims to convey to students the need of refraining from religious discrimination, particularly in the context of acquiring and exchanging ideas, by showcasing these individuals. This inclusive perspective fundamentally emulates the example set by the Prophet Muhammad. A number of Christians from Najran sought out the Prophet to discuss matters of religion. Without the Prophet pressuring any of them to become Muslims, they just conversed (Yaqub, 2000). The degree to which a school welcomes international students and ideas will have a trickle-down effect on the students' unconsciously aligned actions. Learners who are reasonable and *rahmatan lil alamin* are fostered by Bumi Cendekia's continual value imparting.

Bumi Cendekia demonstrated this openness on the social media pages of the Islamic boarding schools by extending greetings for religious festivities to non-Muslims. One of these is an Instagram upload serving as a congratulation's poster to Hindus in observance of *Nyepi* Day at that time. Bumi Cendekia expresses enthusiasm for the International Day of Tolerance in a recent Instagram post. Bumi Cendekia educates its students to not only accept diversity but also to value them. This perspective is essential in countering the exclusivity of extremist groups.

Within the framework of Islam, a contributing cause to the establishment of Bumi Cendekia is the response to Islamic conservative thinking, which is oblivious to global realities, modernization, and diversity. The initiators and custodians of Bumi Cendekia, upon its inception, aimed to address the challenges confronting madrasah and *pesantren* by presenting a tolerant portrayal of Islam and fostering amicable Muslim representatives, while simultaneously ensuring that the understanding remains pertinent to contemporary contexts. This difficulty materializes as parents exhibit diminished interest in madrasah or *pesantren* that solely emphasize Islamic education, neglecting the fundamental idea of nurturing kids' interests and capabilities. In light of these obstacles, Bumi Cendekia is a school that not solely advocates Islam as a faith of *rahmatan lil alamin*, yet also offers excellent formal education.

A hallmark of religious moderation is its accommodation of local culture. In this context, Bumi Cendekia, embodying these academic principles, particularly in character education, organized a regional music festival titled "Musical Distancing" on September 10,

2020. The musical event showcased a range of virtual local musical artworks entitled “*Pertunjukan Musik Jaga Jarak Untuk Santri*”. The school’s principal objective in hosting the event is to enhance students’ awareness and appreciation of indigenous customs and heritage. Consequently, alongside encouraging students to explore the international realm, Bumi Cendekia emphasizes the need of acknowledging local customs and culture, as the *pesantren* is inherently a component of Indonesia’s cultural heritage. Upholding local customs and culture embodies the essence of nationalism of the *pesantren*. This ethos is seen in one of the Nine Bumi Cendekia Values, “Love the Motherland.” Bumi Cendekia promotes national pride and appreciation for cultural variety among its students.

In the realm of religious discourse, Bumi Cendekia’s commitment to religious moderation directly challenges colonial constructions of Islam as a monolithic, backward, or violent religion. Colonial powers framed Islam as an obstacle to modernity, associating it with barbarism and extremism. This view has endured through colonial narratives, persisting even into the post-colonial era and influencing global perceptions of Islam today.

Bumi Cendekia encounters the challenge of balancing the diverse elements of religion, culture, and modernity while maintaining the integrity of each pillar. The effectiveness of this decolonial initiative depends on the school’s capacity to integrate these components while cultivating an educational atmosphere that equips students to interact confidently and respectfully with the global community, all while maintaining awareness of their cultural origins. This necessitates ongoing reflection on the ways in which colonial legacies are reproduced in modern educational systems and proactive efforts to disrupt these patterns, which Bumi Cendekia appears to achieve through its innovative methodology.

Conclusion

Pesantren Bumi Cendekia is guided by four fundamentals that dictate its values and instructional methodology. These four are essential for the curriculum and educational framework at the school to cultivate moderate, progressive, and globally-minded students. This understanding, for instance, involves facilitating the exchange of global narratives and cultural experiences with the pupils at the *pesantren*. It aims to familiarize students with the international landscape while encouraging interaction with individuals of diverse religions, fostering understanding of various faiths, and promoting the appreciation of different cultural traditions.

Bumi Cendekia actively opposes the colonality of knowledge by equipping students with the skills required for global discourse, particularly through the utilization of English as a medium of international communication, thereby preventing non-Western societies from being restricted to narrow, insular knowledge frameworks. Furthermore, the school’s emphasis on tolerance and an open-mindedness corresponds with the decolonial demand for inclusivity and pluralism, repudiating the discriminatory narratives enforced by both Western colonial authorities and reactionary Islamic factions.

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