

## Strengthening Religious Moderation through Revitalizing Ma'had al-Jami'ah: A Case Study in the State Islamic Higher Education

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### Abstract

This article aims to describe and discuss (1) the phenomenon of religious extremism on the campus and (2) institutional responses of the state Islamic higher education to it in the form of (3) strengthening religious moderation through the revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah (Pesantren of University). With a case study research design and the religious moderation concept of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as a theoretical framework, this study found relatively the same facts about the phenomenon of religious extremism in the three state Islamic universities. Their institutional responses also tend to be similar; they rely on the belief that religious extremism harms the spirit of Islam's rahmatan li al-'alamīn and the movement of extreme religious elements has threatened the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. The biggest difference is the way the three campuses foster moderate religiosity of students through the revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah. However, the various strengthening strategies they do are relatively in line with the strategy of strengthening religious moderation of the Ministry and therefore have productive values for the national program. These results contribute to enriching the discourse on religious extremism and can also be used as a reference for state Islamic universities in strengthening the early warning system, especially through the revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah.

### Abstrak

Artikel hasil riset ini bermaksud untuk mendeskripsikan sekaligus membahas (1) fenomena ekstremisme religius di dunia kampus dan (2) respons institusional Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN) terhadapnya dalam bentuk (3) penguatan moderasi beragama melalui revitalisasi Ma'had al-Jami'ah (Pesantren Universitas). Dengan desain riset studi kasus dan penerapan konsep moderasi beragama ala Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (Kemenag RI) sebagai kerangka teoretik, studi ini menjumpai fakta yang relatif sama tentang fenomena ekstremisme religius di tiga perguruan tinggi Islam negeri terpilih. Respons institusionalnya juga cenderung senada; ketiganya bersandar pada keyakinan bahwa ekstremisme religius itu mencederai spirit Islam rahmatan li al-'alamīn dan pergerakan anasirnya potensial mengancam keutuhan NKRI (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia). Yang paling membedakan ialah cara ketiga kampus dalam menumbuhkan keberagaman moderat mahasiswa melalui revitalisasi Ma'had al-Jami'ah. Namun, secara umum, berbagai strategi penguatan yang mereka lakukan relatif sejalan dengan strategi penguatan moderasi beragama Kemenag RI dan karena itu bernilai produktif bagi kepentingan program nasional tersebut. Hasil ini, selain berkontribusi bagi pemerayaan diskursus ekstremisme religius, juga dapat dijadikan rujukan perguruan tinggi Islam dalam memperkuat sistem peringatan dini di lingkungan kampus, khususnya melalui revitalisasi ma'had al-Jami'ah.

### Keywords

Religious Extremism; Religious Moderation; Revitalization; Ma'had al-Jami'ah; State Islamic Universities



## Introduction

The phenomena of religious extremism have continued to grow since the 1998 Reformation and have penetrated almost all dimensions of life in Indonesia, including education. Several studies confirm that religious extremism is not only growing in secondary education institutions<sup>1</sup> but also in higher education.<sup>2</sup> For higher education, many universities have strong indications of being infiltrated by religious extremism.<sup>3</sup> The findings of Setara Institute's research on the typology of student religiosity in 10 state universities (eight general universities and two Islamic-based universities) are reported here. The universities are Universitas Indonesia, Institut Pertanian Bogor, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Universitas Brawijaya, Universitas Airlangga, Universitas Mataram, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, and Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. They are exhibiting a marked tendency towards the reinforcement of sentiments of exclusivism, conservatism, and the formalisation of religion within the context of state universities.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that campus residents have been implicated in acts of physical violence. One such example is that of a lecturer at a public university, who has been known to engage in the manufacture of explosive devices for terrorist activities.<sup>5</sup>

Several institutional initiatives have been carried out to prevent its spread, for example, the Declaration of Nationality of Universities throughout Indonesia by the leaders of universities throughout Indonesia in Bali on September 26, 2017, which contains a firm rejection of the infiltration of all extreme ideologies that are anti-NKRI (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia; Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) and diversity into the campus.<sup>6</sup> The same thing was also done in the State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN), such as the Aceh Charter declaration by the Leaders Forum of the State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) in Banda Aceh (04/26/2017),<sup>7</sup> the Declaration of Moderate Islam by the Deans Forum and the Study Program of Ushuluddin Faculty throughout Indonesia in Bandung

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<sup>1</sup> Tempo, 'Liputan Khusus Konservatisme: Menyemai Radikalisme Di Sekolah', *Tempo*, 2017, pp. 49–53; Tim Peneliti Wahid Foundation, *Laporan Riset Potensi Radikalisme Di Kalangan Aktivis Rohani Islam Sekolah-Sekolah Negeri* (Jakarta, 2016); Miftahur Rohman, Muhammad Akmansyah, and Mukhibat Mukhibat, 'Mainstreaming Strategies of Religious Moderation in Madrasah', *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 22.1 (2022), 95–118 <<https://doi.org/10.21154/altahrir.v22i1.3806>>.

<sup>2</sup> M. Imdadun Rahmat, *Arus Baru Islam Radikal: Transmisi Revivalisme Islam Timur Tengah Ke Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> 'Ada Ancaman Radikalisme Di Dalam Kampus, Kemenristek Dikti Ingatkan Rektor', *Jawapos.Com*, 2017 <[www.jawapos.com/read/2017/05/18/130967/ada-ancaman-radikalisme-di-dalam-kampus-kemenristek-dikti-ingatkan-rektor](http://www.jawapos.com/read/2017/05/18/130967/ada-ancaman-radikalisme-di-dalam-kampus-kemenristek-dikti-ingatkan-rektor)>.

<sup>4</sup> SETARA Institute, *Tipologi Keberagamaan Mahasiswa: Survei Di 10 Perguruan Tinggi Negeri*, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Achmad Fardiansyah, 'Ini Kata Pengamat Terorisme Soal Dosen IPB Simpan Bom Molotov', *Nasional Okezone* <<https://nasional.okezone.com/read/2019/10/01/337/2111307/ini-kata-pengamat-terorisme-soal-dosen-ipb-simpan-bom-molotov>> [accessed 22 April 2025].

<sup>6</sup> 'Deradikalisasi – Presiden: Waspada Penyusupan Ideologi Di Kampus', *Kompas*, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> '50 Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri Tolak Paham Radikal', *Tempo*.

(06-08/08/2017),<sup>8</sup> and the Sunan Ampel Charter by PTKIN leaders who are members of the Sunan Ampel Commonwealth in Tulungagung, East Java (08/04/2017).<sup>9</sup>

Responding to these phenomena, some State Islamic Universities (UIN) organized Ma'had al-Jami'ah, a *pesantren* of the university for students. One of the institutional goals is to stem the development of religious extremism while fostering moderate religiosity on campus.<sup>10</sup> Its existence is in line with the interests of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs in strengthening religious moderation as one of the seven priority programs of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the current period (2019-2024) as well as the official state agenda.<sup>11</sup> The Ministry of Religious Affairs itself urges this program not only as a scientific discourse but also as an ideologization effort to moderate people's perspectives and religious models to avoid religious extremism.<sup>12</sup> In this case, religious moderation is put forward as a cultural strategy to maintain Indonesianness amid religious plurality where all forms of religious extremism are believed to push Indonesia into destruction.<sup>13</sup>

All intellectual concerns and institutional efforts to counter religious extremism become the background context why this research is interesting, important and urgent to do. The study focuses on the phenomenon of religious extremism in PTKIN and its response strategies in strengthening religious moderation through Ma'had al-Jami'ah in three PTKINs, namely UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, and UIN Mataram.

The three UINs were chosen in addition to purposively having non-religious faculties and study programs that are believed to be potential centres for the growth of religious extremism,<sup>14</sup> they also have Ma'had al-Jami'ah which is intended to counteract the penetration of religious extremism while fostering moderate Islam, especially among students. It is also due to the strategic location of the three, both sociologically, politically, and demographically; UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung is located in the capital city of West Java Province, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya is in the capital city of East Java Province, and UIN Mataram in Mataram City which is the capital of West Nusa Tenggara Province. Metropolitan cities and/or large cities such as these three in general always have more complex socio-political-cultural problems and are therefore considered to be the most likely areas for the proliferation

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<sup>8</sup> 'Fak.Ushuluddin UIN Alauddin Mengikuti Forum Dekan Fakultas Ushuluddin Se-Indonesia 2017' <[www.uin-alauddin.ac.id/uin-5298-fak-ushuluddin-uin-alauddin-mengikuti-forum-%0Adekan-fakultas-ushuluddin-seindonesia-2017-.html%0A](http://www.uin-alauddin.ac.id/uin-5298-fak-ushuluddin-uin-alauddin-mengikuti-forum-%0Adekan-fakultas-ushuluddin-seindonesia-2017-.html%0A)>.

<sup>9</sup> 'Aktivitas Berfaham Anti-Pancasila Dilarang Di PTKIN'.

<sup>10</sup> Dirjend Pendis Kemenag, *Surat Edaran Instruksi Penyelenggaraan Pesantren Kampus (Ma'had Al-Jami'ah)* (Jakarta, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> *Peraturan Menteri Agama RI Nomor 18 Tahun 2020 Tentang Rencana Strategis Kementerian Agama RI Tahun 2020-2024*, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Dkk. Alissa Wahid, *Modul Pelatihan Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Bagi Aparatur Sipil Negara Kementerian Agama RI, Versi 4*, ed. by Pokja Moderasi Beragama Kemenag (Jakarta, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Tanya Jawab Moderasi Beragam* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Fawaizul Umam and Khoiril Faizin, 'The Institutional Responses of State Islamic Universities to Islamism: Lessons Learned from Three Campuses', *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 10.2 SE-Articles (2020), 252–82 <<https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2020.10.2.253-283>>.

of ideas of religious extremism such as Islamism, radicalism, fundamentalism, and puritanism than small towns and/or villages.

To answer and discuss this focus, this study methodologically uses a case study with a collective case study design. All data collected through observations, interviews, and document reviews were analyzed descriptively with the religious moderation concept of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a perspective; data was also enriched through focused group discussions (FGDs).<sup>15</sup> This descriptive analysis specifically applies a comparative step between cases with an inductive logic to enrich the details of each case.<sup>16</sup>

## **Discussion**

So far, there have been quite several scientific works that review the phenomenon of religious extremism with its various ideological variants, both in local and global contexts. Some important works are mentioned because they are used as the basis for establishing the theoretical framework in this research, namely the works of Roy,<sup>17</sup> van Bruinessen,<sup>18</sup> Meijer,<sup>19</sup> Esposito,<sup>20</sup> Azra,<sup>21</sup> and Hasan.<sup>22</sup> All of these works mention how variants of religious extremism, such as radical-oriented Islamism, in many parts of the world often metamorphose into many forms even though their ideological bases and orientations practically do not change.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, there are many studies of religious extremism in the local-national context. Some are worth mentioning because they are relatively complete in revealing the genealogy, configuration and dynamics of various variants of these extreme groups in Indonesia. Six of them are the works of Mubarak,<sup>24</sup> Machmudi,<sup>25</sup> and Hilmy,<sup>26</sup> and two books by Rahmat,<sup>27</sup> as well as several articles such as Fannani's, et al.<sup>28</sup> These works discuss the movements of various religious extremist groups that have long permeated Indonesia and have become stronger since the New Order regime passed in 1998.

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<sup>15</sup> John W. Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset: Memilih Di Antara Lima Pendekatan*, Terj. Ahmad Lintang Lazuardi (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 277-278, 329-334.

<sup>17</sup> Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Harvard University Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Ahmad Hamidi, Asasriwarni Asasriwarni, and Ikhwan Matondang, 'The Relationship Between Religion and The State in Indonesia, and Its Relation to Islamic Law', 2.1 (2022), 1 <<https://doi.org/10.29240/negrei.v2i1.3783>>.

<sup>19</sup> Roel Meijer, *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pergolakan Politik Islam: Dari Fundamentalisme, Modernisme Hingga Post- Modernisme* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militansi, Dan Pencarian Identitas Di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Fawaizul Umam, 'Ideological Involution of the Islamists', *Jurnal Ulul Albab UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang*, 20.1 (2019), 25-45.

<sup>24</sup> M. Zaki Mubarak, *Genealogi Islam Radikal Di Indonesia: Gerakan, Pemikiran, Dan Prospek Demokrasi* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Yon Machmudi, *Islamising Indonesia: The Rise of Jamaah Tarbiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Masdar Hilmy, *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia: Piety and Pragmatism* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Rahmat, *Ideologi Politik PKS: Dari Masjid Kampus Ke Parlemen* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2008); M. Imdadun Rahmat.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad Fuad Fanani, 'Fenomena Radikalisme Di Kalangan Kaum Muda', *Maarif: Arus Pemikiran Islam Dan Sosial*, 8.1 (2013), 4-13.

Some of those Islamist organs choose to play in the democratic space by forming political parties such as the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and some remain “outside” as supporting mass organizations while maintaining purist ideologies, Islamist ideology and radical militancy<sup>29</sup> such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Ikhwanul Muslimin (IM), Tarbiyah, Laskar Jihad, Laskar Jundullah, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Hammas, Dakwah Salafi, Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), and the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI).<sup>30</sup> They used the momentum of the regime change to strengthen their existential mode along with the euphoria of Reformasi and the opening of the post-1998 freedom of speech and association. And the world of education, including higher education institutions, is the most promising intellectual space to be used to spread their extreme ideological ideas.

There are also relatively many books or research works that review the movement of religious extremism in the world of education, especially in state universities. While those that study it specifically for the context of PTKI or PTKIN there are several, for example, research by Suharto and Assagaf<sup>31</sup> and Saifuddin<sup>32</sup> which question the current movement of religious extremism among PTKIN students while emphasizing the importance of religious moderation such as the work of Zuhri, et al.<sup>33</sup> In short, there are not many studies that focus on studying the movement of extremists in PTKIN. The fact that there is still little research on the dynamics of religious extremism on PTKIN campuses may be because PTKIN is already claimed as an institution that develops moderate Islam; this seems to need to be reconsidered considering the massive penetration of religious extremism on PTKIN campuses lately has shown a stronger trend.

Meanwhile, research works that reviewed the institutional dynamics of Ma'had al-Jami'ah at PTKIN are quite a lot, from undergraduate theses to postgraduate theses and dissertations, and research reports. However, all of these studies focus more on the role and development strategies of Ma'had al-Jami'ah in the context of learning strategies and patterns.<sup>34</sup> As for research that focuses on the strategy of strengthening religious moderation through the revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah is still very little found. One of the few is Berizi's thesis research,<sup>35</sup> but it focuses more on the existence of Ma'had al-

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<sup>29</sup> M. Syafi'i Anwar, 'Memetakan Teologi Politik Dan Anatomi Gerakan Salafi Militan Di Indonesia'', in *Genealogi Islam Radikal Di Indonesia: Gerakan, Pemikiran, Dan Prospek Demokrasi* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2008), pp. xii–xxxvii.

<sup>30</sup>Rahmat, *Arus Baru...*, 73.

<sup>31</sup> Toto Suharto dan Ja'far Assagaf, 'Membendung Arus Paham Keagamaan Radikal Di Kalangan Mahasiswa PTKIN', *Al-Tahrir*, 14.1 (2014), 157–80.

<sup>32</sup> Saifuddin, 'Radikalisme Islam Di Kalangan Mahasiswa', *Jurnal Analisis*, IX.1 (2011), 17–31.

<sup>33</sup> Barsihannor Zuhri and others, 'Religious Moderation of Millennial Generation at Islamic Higher Education in Eastern Indonesia', *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 23.2 (2023), 293–325 <<https://doi.org/10.21154/altahrir.v23i2.6911>>.

<sup>34</sup> Fathor Rahman, Muhammad Saiful Anam, and Ali Sodiq, 'Pattern of PTKIN Ma'had Al-Jami'ah Education Management System in East Java and Its Role in Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Indonesia', in *Acie UIN KHAS Jember* (Atlantis Press SARL, 2023), II, 135–54 <[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-044-2\\_15](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-044-2_15)>.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmad Berizi, 'Eksistensi Ma'had Al-Jami'ah Dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Pada Kalangan Millennial (Studi Analisis Kualitatif Di Ma'had Al-Jami'ah IAIN Pontianak)' (Institut PTIQ Jakarta, 2023).

Jami'ah itself in the context of strengthening religious moderation; instead, our research focuses on strengthening religious moderation in the context of Ma'had al-Jami'ah's revitalization.

The propagation of the concept of religious moderation is a multifaceted process that emphasises educational approaches, policy institutionalisation, the utilisation of social media, and the development of an inclusive theology. The process of socialisation, in conjunction with character-based education, serves to instil moderation as a comprehensive perspective within the individual.<sup>36</sup> This approach precludes the misinterpretation of moderation as religious liberalisation.<sup>37</sup> The utilisation of social media for the dissemination of values of tolerance is to be commended; however, judicious use must be employed to circumvent the propagation of radicalism and disinformation.<sup>38</sup> This commitment is reinforced by the incorporation of religious moderation within national policies, as evidenced by the RPJMN 2020-2024.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, an inclusive theological approach is adopted, emphasising human values and fostering interfaith dialogue.<sup>40</sup> The overarching objective of this strategy is to cultivate a tolerant, dialogical and respectful society that embraces diversity.

Of the few, not a single research has placed the agenda of counteracting the infiltration of religious extremism as an integral part of strengthening religious moderation through the revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah in the PTKIN. It is in that space that this study places its significance among previous studies with similar topics.

### **The Religious Extremism Phenomenon at Three UINs**

The phenomenon of religious extremism on campuses is not new, including at the three UINs where we conducted our research, namely UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, and UIN Mataram. Although in 2017 the government officially banned two extremist organizations, i.e. FPI and HTI, the phenomenon continues in different scales, forms, and patterns.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the phenomenon of extremism in the three UINs post-2017 has not disappeared completely. It's just that now it tends to decrease and no longer appears openly; these groups still exist even though they no longer openly show their identity as before.

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<sup>36</sup> Ala'i Najib Ali Muhtarom, Mahnan Marbawi, *Integrasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Thobib Al-Asyhar, 'Implementasi Moderasi Beragama (MB) Melalui Pendekatan Kognitif Berbasis Karakter', *Jurnal Bimas Islam*, 16.1 (2023), 241–76.

<sup>38</sup> Wildani Hefni, 'Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ruang Digital: Studi Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama Di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri', *Jurnal Bimas Islam*, 13.1 (2020), 1–22 <<https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v13i1.182>>; Chintya Pradilla and others, 'Moderasi Beragama Dalam Era Digital : Dampak Media Sosial Terhadap Toleransi Beragama Di Desa Medang Baru', *JAHE - Jurnal Akuntansi Hukum Dan Edukasi*, 1.2 (2024), 512–18.

<sup>39</sup> Hapsi Alawi and Muhammad Anas Ma'arif, 'Analisis Kebijakan Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam Tinjauan Mendalam Terhadap Implikasi Dan Tantangan', *JRTIE: Journal of Research and Thought on Islamic Education*, 4.2 (2021), 214–30.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Asyhar.

At UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, for example, such a phenomenon takes place as stated by Bakhtiar Rifa'i (BR),<sup>41</sup> one of the managers of Ma'had al-Jami'ah:

“Now it is very minimal, not as vulgar as before. There used to be a certain movement that entered the youth structure of the mosque, but now it is no longer there. We ensure that such activities are closely monitored. Those identified are the Gema Pembebasan group, one of HTI's ideological groups. Then there is also a community of alumni of a pesantren educational institution that does have a radical Islamic understanding.”

BR said that the symptoms that come to the surface tend to be symbols of certain religiosity, such as the way they dress, look, and behave. He admitted that he often encounters certain symbols that indicate the potential for extremism, such as a certain way of dressing, a distinctive appearance model, as well as an exclusive mindset in some scientific forums on campus.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, the Director of Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and the Chairman of the National Association of Ma'had's Mudirs (AMMAN; Asosiasi Mudir Ma'had Nasional), Abdul Hadi (AH) revealed that although the phenomenon of religious extremism still exists, its spread can be controlled through moderation efforts, especially through government interventions, such as the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs through a program to strengthen religious moderation. “The existence of social media that offers freedom and abundance of information as one of the public media has the potential to worsen the situation if it is not monitored,” AH said.<sup>43</sup>

According to AH, the success of controlling the symptoms of extremism on campus is causally related to the strengthening of moderate groups that are ideologically affiliated with moderate social organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. Unlike in previous times, the influence of moderate groups in campus life is now getting stronger. He said that currently, campus officials have moderate religious affiliations, about 60% are ideologically affiliated with NU, and the rest are affiliated with another moderate group such as Muhammadiyah. Likewise, at the student level, students with moderate religious backgrounds hold strategic positions in campus student organizations. “Indeed, there are still some lecturers who have extreme thoughts. However, if they are in a moderate environment, they usually do not last long, do not reveal themselves or even adjust,” he said.<sup>44</sup>

Director of the Religious Moderation House at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Usep Dedi Rostadi (UDR), also identified symptoms of exposure to extremism, both through social media and non-formal activities, such as organizing *halaqahs* on campus. The phenomenon of extremism is also

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<sup>41</sup>BR, *interview*, Surabaya, November 29, 2024.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>AH, *interview*, Bandung, November 28, 2024.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

indicated by informal interactions, such as comments in WhatsApp groups of lecturers. Although formally no extremist activities were found on campus, he highlighted the institution's limitations in monitoring activities outside the campus. According to him, social media is the main channel for spreading the influence of extremism among students and lecturers. "We the Religious Moderation House play a supervisory and liaison function with relevant national agencies, such as the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT; Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme), as a form of systematic efforts to mitigate the spread of extremism through an institutional approach," he said regarding the role of the institution he leads in efforts to mitigate religious extremism among the academic community on campus.<sup>45</sup>

The same thing was also conveyed by the managers (*musyrif* and *musyrifah*) and students of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah.<sup>46</sup> According to them, the phenomenon of extremism on the campus of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung can be seen from the existence of some students who in their daily activities on campus, such as in teaching and learning, feel self-righteous and consider other people's views to be all wrong. "We have also found this kind of behaviour in Ma'had Al Jami'ah students. This behaviour is shown by criticizing the practices that they consider wrong, *bid'ah*, and heretical, not following what was guided by the Prophet Muhammad," VA (a *musyrifah*) said. FFA (a *musyrif*), her colleague, confirmed this.<sup>47</sup>

They also confirmed that the phenomenon of extremism on the campus of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung refers more to certain individuals, not in the form of an organized movement. "There is no real indication of a structured movement of political extremism or systematic efforts to change the state system. However, continuous monitoring is needed to ensure that the campus remains conducive and inclusive," DJ and IZ, two Ma'had students, said.<sup>48</sup> They also confirmed that organizations such as the HTI-affiliated Gema Pembebasan, which previously diligently promoted the idea of the *Khilafah*, are no longer active. This assertion is in line with the conclusion of UDR, Director of the House of Religious Moderation. "This could be an indication of the success of efforts to strengthen religious moderation on campus so that extremist activities slowly weaken," he said.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of religious extremism also takes place at UIN Mataram, but on a very minimal scale, it can even be said that there are no movements or groups that intersect with Islamist or extremist organs. This trend has been going on, especially since 2017, when two extremist Islamic organizations were officially banned by the government. "Before that, there was. Groups supporting

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<sup>45</sup>UDR, *interview*, Bandung, November 27, 2024.

<sup>46</sup>Via Amalia (VA), Fattah Fadhila Abulkhair (FFA), Dimas Januar (DJ), and Iskandar Zulkarnaen (IZ), *interview*, Bandung, November 28, 2024.

<sup>47</sup>VA and FFA, *interview*, Bandung, November 28, 2024.

<sup>48</sup>DJ and IZ, *interview*, November 28, 2024.

<sup>49</sup>UDR, *interview*, Bandung, November 27, 2024.

Islamism had appeared in the past but did not develop. Their political ideas do not sell on this campus (UIN Mataram). Maybe it's because our students and lecturers are mostly from traditional *pesantren* backgrounds," Vice Rector I of UIN Mataram, Adi Fadly (AF),<sup>50</sup> said. More or less the same thing was also emphasized by Vice Rector III, Subhan Abdullah Acim (SAA), "Now there are no more real symptoms of extremism, both among lecturers and students."<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, SAA also revealed the following interesting conjecture:<sup>52</sup>

"Alhamdulillah, so far we have not found any symptoms of extremism on campus. The majority of our study programs are religious-based, while general study programs are still relatively new. Perhaps in non-religious-based universities with students who tend to understand Islam superficially, extremism could more easily emerge and develop. They often see everything in a rigid *halal* and *haram* frame. However, here (UIN Mataram), like other UINs, the majority of students are still moderate. So, we are grateful that so far there are no students who have been exposed to extremism".

That is an overview of the phenomenon of religious extremism in the three selected UINs; the description more or less represents a similar description in many PTKINs. Now there is no longer any indication of the movement of religious extremism factors in the campuses in the form of organized movements, either openly or secretly. This is different from the phenomena before 2017 when several extremist organs, such as HTI, actively infiltrated campus life through its under bow organization called Gema Pembebasan. What remains now are only sparks of extreme thoughts or attitudes that appear in scientific forums; no longer organized, they tend to be sporadic. However, vigilance over them is still necessary. Therefore, the three UINs actively provide some institutional responses to it, including strengthening religious moderation through the revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah.

### **Institutional Responses**

The institutional responses of the three UINs to religious extremism are basically in line with the campus leaders' views on religious extremism. Based on the informants' confessions, there are at least five things that reveal the attitudes and views of campus leaders regarding religious extremism. First, they view Islam as a *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn* entity, bringing a message of love and peace to the universe and therefore rejecting any extreme religious expressions.<sup>53</sup>

Second, they believe that religious extremism is a logical consequence of exclusive religious understanding, so they see critical and contextual religious literacy as a solution to prevent people from

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<sup>50</sup>AF, *interview*, Mataram, November 28, 2024.

<sup>51</sup>SAA, *interview*, Mataram, November 28, 2024.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>AH, *interview*, Bandung, November 29, 2024.

being influenced by intolerant and destructive religious ideologies.<sup>54</sup>

Third, according to them, the phenomena of religious extremism pose a serious threat to the integrity of the NKRI which is democratic and upholds plurality based on the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). “Understanding and expressing religion moderately in the context of Indonesia, which is so heterogeneous, is very important to prevent people from religious conflicts to create peace and social cohesion,” Hasan Machfudz (HM),<sup>55</sup> Head of the Center for Religious Moderation at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, said.

Fourth, the leaders of the three campuses have the view that extremism not only threatens relations between religious communities but also damages relations between Muslims themselves. The intolerant attitude born from extremism tarnishes the essence of Islam as a religion of compassion and respect for differences.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, fifth, extremism is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that requires a holistic approach to handling it. In the Indonesian context, a collaborative approach between the government, civil society, and religious organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah is needed. “These social organizations play an important role in maintaining the balance between Islamic and national values. They can be at the forefront of building a merciful Islamic narrative during a pluralistic Indonesian society,” AH said, quoting the attitude of his campus leaders.<sup>57</sup>

Based on such views, the three UINs carry out some structured agendas as an institutional response to religious extremism while fostering moderate religiosity on campus. In addition to launching various statements of rejection of religious extremism and organizing various scientific forums on the phenomenon, the three UINs as well as other PTKINs institutionalize religious moderation in the form of Moderation Houses and also revitalize the existence of Ma'had al-Jami'ah that they have to strengthen the moderation campaign on campus with the main target of students, lecturers, and education staff.<sup>58</sup>

This Moderation House is not only a place to build awareness of religious moderation but also a platform to counter the narrative of extremism through academic studies and cross-sector dialogue. Regarding its existence, the Rector of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Akh. Muzakki (AM) emphasized that UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya is the only campus that explicitly declares itself as a “counter-terrorism campus”. This statement shows UINSA's courage in taking a firm position on issues of extremism,

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<sup>54</sup>UDR, *interview*, Bandung, November 29, 2024.

<sup>55</sup>HM, *interview*, Surabaya, November 29, 2024.

<sup>56</sup>SAA and UDR, *interview*, Mataram and Bandung, November 28 and 27, 2024.

<sup>57</sup>AH, *interview*, Bandung, November 29, 2024.

<sup>58</sup>Nur Hayati, “Launching Rumah Moderasi Dan Kontra Terorisme, Rektor Tegaskan Pentingnya Redefinisi Keikhlasan Dan Redefining Diri,” <<https://uinsa.ac.id/blog/launching-rumah-moderasi->> [accessed 26 November 2024].

radicalism and terrorism, which are often a challenge in higher education.<sup>59</sup>

UIN Mataram and UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung have also shown similar counterattitudes and institutional resistance. UIN Mataram since 2018 has officially affirmed its support for the Government Regulation in place of Law (Perpu; Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-undang) on Anti-Terrorism on May 14, 2018.<sup>60</sup> The Rector of UIN Mataram, Masnun Tahir (MT), emphasized that strengthening moderate religious literacy among students and lecturers is an important agenda in shaping the spirit of inclusiveness amid differences; in this case, promoting Islam as *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn* systematically and continuously becomes an integral part of the agenda.<sup>61</sup> In line with AF and SAA, Vice Rectors I and III of UIN Mataram, emphasized that campuses need to take an approach that is not only reactive to the threat of extremism but must also be proactive in building a moderate and tolerant Islamic ideology.<sup>62</sup> "That is what we have been working on since the last few years, for example through the institutionalization of the Moderation House and the strengthening of Ma'had al-Jami'ah," MT said.<sup>63</sup>

The same response thing also took place at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Since a few years ago, the best national PTKIN campus has institutionally expressed a firm stance and serious commitment to counteracting radicalism and religious extremism by building productive collaborations with some state institutions such as the Indonesian Police and BNPT.<sup>64</sup> At UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya and UIN Mataram, the campus whose main address is on AH Nasution Street, in addition to institutionalizing the Moderation House, also established Ma'had al-Jami'ah which aims to stem the flow of extremism while fostering moderate religiosity among lecturers, education staff, and students.

### **Ma'had al-Jami'ah and the Strengthening of Religious Moderation**

The establishment of Ma'had al-Jami'ah in PTKIN is an instruction from the Ministry of Religious Affairs through the 2014 Ministry of Religious Affairs Instruction Circular Letter regarding the establishment of Ma'had al-Jami'ah in PTKIN. The instruction states that one of the functions of Ma'had al-Jami'ah is character building. "And a moderate religious paradigm is the most ideal character in the context of the Indonesian state and nation. Expressing religion in a moderate expression is an authentic way of religion

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<sup>59</sup>AM, *interview*, Surabaya, November 26, 2024.

<sup>60</sup> Humas UIN Mataram, "'Rektor UIN Mataram Dukung Perpu Antiterorisme,'" <<https://uinmataram.ac.id/rektor-uin-mataram-dukung-perpu-anti-terorisme>> [accessed 25 November 2024].

<sup>61</sup>MT, *interview*, Mataram, November 30, 2024.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>UDR, *interview*, Bandung, 27 November 2024.

because it is in line with the way the Prophet Muhammad practised," AH, the chairman of AMMAN, said.<sup>65</sup>

Likewise, the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 1595/2021 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Ma'had al-Jami'ah at State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) makes religious moderation one of the objectives and functions of managing Ma'had Al-Jami'ah. The module of guidelines is part of and based on the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 7272/2019 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education. Thus, learning and character building in the learning process at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah is targeted to realize scientific integration and religious moderation. Likewise, in-depth learning of the Islamic treasures of the classical era and the formative period is also directed to enrich the values of religious moderation, which is very useful as a provision for students' future lives in a pluralistic Indonesian society.

To implement religious moderation in PTKINs, Decree Number 7272/2019 stated that Ma'had al-Jami'ah is one of the loci in implementing religious moderation. Even in some applicable regulations regarding the implementation of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah Ma'had Aly and Ma'had Takmiliah, there is a confluence regarding the implementation of education and mainstreaming of religious moderation in educational institutions, especially religious educational institutions such as PTKIN.

In line with the implementation, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs also published a Religious Moderation book in 2019 which contains conceptual studies on religious moderation, empirical experiences of manifestations of religious moderation in various spaces and times, as well as illustrations of strategies for strengthening and implementing religious moderation in PTKINs.<sup>66</sup> As also briefly described in the Decree Number 7272/2019, the book also presents the principles of religious moderation, such as *tawasut* (moderate), *tawāzun* (balanced), *i' tidāl* (fair), and *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance). It also contains an explanation of the indicators of religious moderation, namely national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for local culture.

"We make the book the main reference for learning and strengthening religious moderation in Ma'had al-Jami'ah while enriching it with the study of the Islamic classical books in the style of traditional pesantren," AH<sup>67</sup> explained who was also agreed by Saiful Jazil (SJ), director (*mudir*) of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya,<sup>68</sup> and Wirawan Jamhuri (WJ), secretary of Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Mataram.<sup>69</sup> The study of Asy'ariyah's *'aqidah*, *fiqh* of four *madzhabs*, and *taṣawwuf*, which is

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<sup>65</sup>AH, *interview*, Bandung, 27 November 2024.

<sup>66</sup> Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

<sup>67</sup>AH, *interview*, Bandung, November 27, 2024.

<sup>68</sup>SJ, *interview*, Surabaya, November 29, 2024.

<sup>69</sup>WJ, *interview*, Mataram, November 25, 2024.

generally moderate, delivered with an inclusive spirit and tolerating diversity contributes productively to the growth of inclusivism, moderatism, and the ability of students to live amid the diversity of society.

Materials and sources of religious moderation values in Ma'had Al-Jami'ah at the three UINs can also be seen in their vision and mission. UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, for example, has a vision of "Becoming a superior and competitive Islamic university with international standards".<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, the vision of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung emphasizes its commitment to become "A superior, competitive, and innovative state Islamic university based on *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn* in Southeast Asia in 2029".<sup>71</sup> UIN Mataram emphasizes its commitment to "become an internationally competitive university with scientific integration in building a pious, moderate, intelligent, and superior society".<sup>72</sup> To achieve this vision, the three UINs then formulate strategic missions that include improving the quality of education and teaching, research productivity and scientific publications, and community service which are relevant to solving social problems while strengthening religious moderation. This big vision is the main basis for the development of Ma'had al-Jami'ah at the three UINs.

At UIN Mataram, Ma'had al-Jami'ah was officially established in 2013 and institutionally under the coordination of LP2M (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat; Institute for Research and Community Service). Its institutionalization is getting stronger after being formalized as a separate unit in 2017.<sup>73</sup> In that year, Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Mataram began to develop a stronger Islamic identity through typical pesantren religious programs. Structured activities such as *wirid* and *dhikr* are carried out regularly as an effort to strengthen the character of students while maintaining the *pesantren's* values of moderatism.<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile, Ma'had Al-Jāmi'ah UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung was established earlier, precisely in 2010. It has the vision of creating human resources that soothe the eyes (*qurrata a'yun*) and has *Ulul Albāb* character who excels in language skills, has a noble character, and has broad insight.<sup>75</sup> With this vision, this institution supports off-campus learning by offering additional learning programs, especially in the field of language and moral development through teaching *kutub al-turāth* (Islamic classical books).<sup>76</sup>

As for Ma'had Al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya was established in 2005, earlier than the previous two ma'had. Along with the change in status from the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) to UIN in

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<sup>70</sup> Humas UINSA, "Visi, Misi, & Tagline UINSA," <<https://uinsa.ac.id/visi-misi-tagline>>.

<sup>71</sup> Humas UIN SGD Bandung, 'Visi Dan Misi UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung' <<https://uinsgd.ac.id/tentang-uin-sgd/visi-misi/#visi-misi>>.

<sup>72</sup> Humas UIN Mataram, "Visi Dan Misi UIN Mataram," <<https://uinmataram.ac.id/visi-dan-misi-2/>>.

<sup>73</sup>WJ, *interview*, Mataram, November 25, 2024.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> "Profil Ma'had Dan Pengelola Ma'had Al Jamiah UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung," <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwGw1QDBNc8&t=46s>>.

<sup>76</sup>AH, *interview*, Bandung, November 28, 2024.

2013, the role and function of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah was further strengthened through the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation Number 13/2013 concerning Organization and Work Procedures of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, making it a structural part of the campus.<sup>77</sup> Almost in line with the two previous ma'hads, this ma'had has the vision to become a learning centre for students of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya in the fields of Arabic, English, Islamic insight, and moral development, including *Tahfīzh al-Qur'ān*, and to produce a generation of *mahsantri* who have religious and linguistic insights and moral character. To realize this vision, various excellent facilities and programs are designed and realized to support the development of student competencies.<sup>78</sup> As one of the campus's units, ma'had not only functions as a coaching institution but also as a centre for developing student competencies oriented towards academic and moral excellence that is highly competitive, has a global outlook and Islamic character.<sup>79</sup>

Referring to document data and interview results with informants, the three Ma'had al-Jami'ah carry out several management aspects that are more or less the same, which include aspects of managing (1) human resources, (2) material resources, (3) financial resources, and (4) symbolic resources. The first aspect is done by involving lecturers who have a pesantren educational background and moderate religious character; likewise in recruiting administrators and caregivers. The second aspect, resources in the form of facilities are managed and fully utilized to maximize students' activities. The third aspect, financial resources, management is focused on student character-building programs in the form of student mentoring activities in dormitories, strengthening religious knowledge, and increasing general insight.

Furthermore, the fourth aspect, symbolic resources, is managed towards building students' religious knowledge and paradigm; this manifests in the determination of materials, presenters, and methods in learning activities at the ma'had. In this case, the selected materials that are prioritized in the ma'had of the three UINs in this study are learning the Qur'an; from basic to high level, including *tahfīdh al-Qur'ān*, *qira'ah*, and others. In addition, *fiqh* learning is also provided, starting from the introductory level to the expert level whose classes are adjusted to the results of the placement test conducted since the beginning of entering the ma'had. Fiqh learning is directed at enriching *fiqhiyah* opinions across *madhhabs* to shape students' religious understanding and attitudes to be inclusive.

All resources are managed and utilized to support each other in mainstreaming religious moderation in the revitalization process of Ma'had al-Jami'ah. From the perspective of strategic

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<sup>77</sup>BR, *interview*, Surabaya, November 29, 2024.

<sup>78</sup>The data are processed from the book of Guidelines for Implementing the Program of Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya; Inventory Data of Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya; Document of the Activity Schedule of Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*

management aspect, the management of Ma'had al-Jami'ah can be said to have run or implemented efforts to mainstream religious moderation. This can be seen from several aspects, namely (1) the orientation or purpose of an organization which generally reflects the interests of growing moderate religiousness of students; (2) seriousness in terms of strengthening the system through the imposition of a moderate paradigm and related rules, the provision of teaching materials that are productive for strengthening religious moderation; (3) the implementation of structured efforts for the achievement of ma'had goals and campus vision which can be seen from the management of four aspects, ranging from diversifying activity programs to strengthening cooperation with parties.

At Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, religious moderation is introduced and strengthened not only through the mechanism of insertion into learning materials but also in separate sessions that specifically review and discuss religious moderation.<sup>80</sup> To a certain extent, this also happens at Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya<sup>81</sup> and Ma'had al-Jami'ah UIN Mataram.<sup>82</sup> Some things are indeed different, for example in the provision of different numbers of teaching hours between the three ma'hads. However, in general, the objectives and descriptions of religious moderation materials are relatively the same because they use the discourse of religious moderation officially conceptualized by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In line with the interests of strengthening moderate religiosity behind the establishment of Ma'had al-Jami'ah, the three UINs also established a campus institutional unit called the Rumah Moderasi Beragama (Religious Moderation House)—following the determination of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs as the leading sector for the national program of strengthening religious moderation. The main interest is of course to strengthen the efforts of religious moderation that have been initiated by Ma'had al-Jami'ah. The institutional collaboration between the two campus units is certainly expected to not only strengthen students' scientific competence but also strengthen their moderate understanding and expression of religion.

The Moderation House or Religious Moderation House at PTKINs, including at the three UINs, was established and managed based on the Circular Letter of the Director General of Islamic Education Number B-3663.1/Dj.I/BA.02/10/2019 dated October 29, 2019, concerning the Religious Moderation House as a response to the rise of religious extremism, including in higher education institutions. The circular letter asked the Rector or Head of PTKIN to establish a Religious Moderation House on their respective campuses. In that year (2019), the Ministry of Religion also published a book entitled Religious Moderation which contains an in-depth explanation of the concept of religious moderation

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<sup>80</sup>AH, *interview*, Bandung, November 28, 2024.

<sup>81</sup>SJ, *interview*, Surabaya, November 29, 2024.

<sup>82</sup>MT, *interview*, Mataram, November 30, 2024.

and its relevance in the context of contemporary Indonesia. In the following year, 2020, the agenda for strengthening religious moderation was integrated into the "Mental Revolution and Cultural Development" program in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN; Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional), making it one of the main priorities for national development.

The Religious Moderation House at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung was inaugurated on November 26, 2019, by the Minister of Religious Affairs Fachrul Razi and became the first Religious Moderation House to be established in the PTKIN.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, the establishment of the Religious Moderation House at UIN Mataram was carried out in 2021.<sup>84</sup> A similar institution at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya was established a year later, precisely on December 6, 2023.<sup>85</sup>

Referring to the informants, the existence of the Religious Moderation House is expected to become a centre for learning and developing a deep understanding of religious moderation. It is a strategic step in supporting the religious moderation program, especially in the campuses of Islamic religious higher education, as well as in building a society that inclusive, tolerant, and harmonious amidst religious diversity.<sup>86</sup> Through the existence of the Religious Moderation House, the three UINs are committed to becoming institutions that play an active role in mainstreaming the values of moderation in Indonesia. For the sake of mainstreaming at the student level, this commitment is realized through collaborative efforts between the Religious Moderation House and Ma'had al-Jami'ah, including by integrating the values of religious moderation into academic programs and student development at Ma'had al-Jami'ah.<sup>87</sup>

Such seriousness is the result of the commitment of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs to revitalize, collaborate, and increase the capacity of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah and the Religious Moderation House through the stipulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation concerning the Statutes and Organization and Work Procedures of State Religious Higher Education Institutions. One strategic point concerning the integration of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah and the Religious Moderation House into the legal framework through the Statute. This integration aims to strengthen the function of both as agents of dissemination of moderate religious values (*wasathiyah*) in the ecosystem of Islamic higher education in Indonesia.<sup>88</sup> This can be a catalyst for the transformation of religious higher education towards

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<sup>83</sup> Humas UIN Bandung, 'Menag Resmikan Rumah Moderasi Beragama Pertama Di UIN Bandung' <<https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/menag-resmikan-rumah-moderasi-beragama-pertama-di-uin-bandung-lmc07n>>.

<sup>84</sup>MT, *interview*, Mataram, November 30, 2024.

<sup>85</sup>SJ, *interview*, Surabaya, November 29, 2024.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> 'Ma'had Al-Jamiah & Rumah Moderasi Masuk Dalam PMA Statuta PTKN' <<https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/mahad-al-jamiah-rumah-moderasi-masuk-dalam-pma-statuta-ptkn-vdvvz9>>.

strengthening the values of religious moderation while still prioritizing the efficiency and sustainability of organizational governance.<sup>89</sup>

The commitment and spirit of revitalization for increasing the institutional capacity of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah is also manifested through the initiative of the directors of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah themselves to establish the forum *mudir* (director) Ma'had Al-Jami'ah PTKIN as a medium of communication, coordination, and friendship between Ma'hads of PTKIN to be able to strengthen each other. "This forum was then agreed to change its name to the National Association of Ma'had's Mudirs (AMMAN) at the National Conference of Ma'had's Mudirs at UIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon in August 2024," AH, the general chairman of AMMAN, said.<sup>90</sup>

Strengthening religious moderation in the PTKIN has become one of the strategic focuses in efforts to create an inclusive and tolerant academic culture, where Ma'had al-Jami'ah is one of the spearheads. Ma'had al-Jami'ah as an integral institution in the PTKIN's ecosystem plays a central role in supporting the religious moderation program initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. According to AH, AMMAN which houses 50 Ma'hads of PTKINs functions as the main coordination platform in ensuring the success of this program on each campus;<sup>91</sup> its collaboration with the Religious Moderation House has enabled the strengthening of religious moderation at the student level to continue.<sup>92</sup>

One of the important achievements of the existence of the association of directors of Ma'had al-Jami'ah is the agreement to establish religious moderation as a special course at Ma'had al-Jami'ah, not only as additional material on campus. The agreement between the directors of Ma'had al-Jami'ah reflects a shared determination to make religious moderation an integral part of religious higher education. In addition, the support of the Ministry of Religion in providing modules as teaching guides and structured collaboration with the House of Religious Moderation is a productive combination in the implementation of this national program. This certainly helps each Ma'had al-Jami'ah to have uniform, relevant, and adaptive teaching materials to the challenges of contemporary religiosity.<sup>93</sup>

In the implementation of strengthening religious moderation in the three UINs, Ma'had Al-Jami'ah and the House of Religious Moderation always collaborate. To a certain extent, they are almost in line. The Religious Moderation House acts as a conceptor and manager in mainstreaming religious moderation in universities, while Ma'had Al-Jami'ah acts as an implementer of the concept of religious

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<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup>AH, *interview*, Bandung, November 29, 2024.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.* Interview with UDR, Bandung, November 27, 2024.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*

moderation and provides enrichment from the perspective of Islamic studies and the development of a moderate Islamic paradigm for students in Ma'had.

At UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, for example, one form of concrete collaboration is the collaboration between the Religious Moderation House and Ma'had al-Jami'ah in reviewing and aligning Ma'had Al-Jami'ah teaching materials where the discourse of religious moderation is the main perspective. This review process not only includes technical evaluation of teaching materials but also emphasizes the relevance of the current social context and religious dynamics. Thus, the teaching materials produced are expected to be able to provide students with in-depth insight into the importance of moderate expression in religion and in responding to complex religious issues. Through the association, Ma'had al-Jami'ah is committed to continuing to adjust its curriculum to the needs of the times and the national program of religious moderation.<sup>94</sup> The association is also a strategic step to strengthen the competence of tutors in delivering religious moderation material.<sup>95</sup> It is certainly productive in the interests of producing students who are intellectually intelligent and have a moderate attitude toward religion.<sup>96</sup>

According to the informants, the productive collaboration efforts between Ma'had al-Jami'ah and the Moderation House in three UINs, in general, have provided at least four benefits. These efforts have (1) increased the opportunity to optimize the growth of moderate, inclusive, and tolerant religious awareness; (2) helped prevent the spread and/or eliminate the potential for students to be exposed to extreme religious thinking; (3) the scheme of establishing religious moderation into the guidance system, although somewhat different between the three Ma'hads, has further narrowed the possibility of students or new students being exposed to extreme religious thinking while being more aware of the importance of being moderately religious and skilled at campaigning for it in the public sphere; in the long term, these collaborative efforts have great potential to strengthen social harmony among campus communities, especially regarding the differences in understanding and ideological religious affiliations.

So that the claims of benefits are truly realized, five strategic agendas need to be carried out by Ma'had al-Jami'ah with the full support of the campus. First, revitalize the Ma'had al-Jamiah curriculum. This needs to be continuously done by integrating religious moderation material into the curriculum and programs at the Ma'had; the integration scheme should focus on contemporary religious issues such as tolerance, interfaith dialogue, national commitment, Indonesian *fiqh*, *fiqh* of

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<sup>94</sup> Humas UINSA, 'Ma'had Al-Jami'ah Pertegas (Kembali) Moderasi Beragama' <<https://uinsa.ac.id/blog/mahad-al-jamiah-pertegas-kembali-moderasi-beragama>> [accessed 12 December 2024].

<sup>95</sup>SJ, *interview*, Surabaya, November 29, 2024.

<sup>96</sup>BR, *interview*, Surabaya, November 29, 2024.

civilization, deradicalization, etc. Its implementation should use an experiential learning approach that involves cross-religious and cultural discussions.

Furthermore, second, increase and strengthen the quality of training to strengthen the competence of Ma'had al-Jami'ah's managers. This strategy can be taken by (1) providing training to Ma'had's managers, including training related to strengthening religious moderation, such as training of trainers, orientation, and socialization; also (2) forming a teaching team consisting of academics, moderate *ulama*, and national practitioners across religions and cultures.

Third, develop and routinely implement interfaith and cultural dialogue programs. This can be done by (1) holding interfaith and cultural discussions for students as part of learning about religious moderation; (2) conducting dialogical visits to religious institutions and cultural communities; and (3) developing a digital platform based on information technology for online learning about religious moderation while expanding its accessibility to the public; the platform can also be developed to monitor student activities on social media to prevent the spread of extreme narratives in cyberspace.

Fourth, expanding collaboration with external parties to build cooperation across religions and cultures. This can be done by (1) involving moderate religious mass organizations as strategic partners while (2) establishing productive cooperation with *pesantren*, campuses, BNPT, National Commission on Human Rights Indonesia, and other institutions to strengthen strategies for preventing religious extremism, both within campuses and in society.

Fifth, evaluating and monitoring the programs. This can be started by (1) compiling indicators of program success and its monitoring scheme and (2) conducting regular surveys to monitor the impact of the program on students' understanding of religion and their literacy on religious moderation. The compilation of indicators of success refers to at least four things, namely (1) a decrease in indications of extremism; (2) post-program monitoring shows that students are more tolerant of differences and the extremism tendency is starting to decrease; (3) there is an increase in religious moderation competency, both knowledge, behaviour, and skills in conducting dialogue between religions or beliefs; and (4) increasing participation of students and stakeholders in interfaith and cultural activities.

Finally, sixth, the management of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah activities and arrangements at UIN SGD Bandung is distinctive. The cultivation of a moderate religious paradigm is achieved through the integration of students and administrators from diverse Islamic religious groups or organisations. The seeding process functions naturally, resulting in the perception of a moderate attitude towards religion. The composition of the student body and administrative personnel reflects a considerable degree of diversity, with individuals hailing from three prominent Islamic mass organisations in Indonesia: the Persatuan Islam (Persis), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah. This diversity is indicative of plurality in religious practice, which frequently manifests in variations in worship practices, such as the

performance of prayers. Despite the evident variations in these worship rituals, tension or conflict is absent among the Santri and administrators.

In our humble opinion, the revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah is a strategic step to encourage the strengthening of religious moderation in the PTKINs; collaboration with the Religious Moderation House is one of the right choices to accelerate the process. PTKIN through Ma'had al-Jami'ah must utilize this national policy of strengthening religious moderation as a momentum to become a pioneer in strengthening the ideals of Islam as *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn* as well as preventing religious extremism in society, especially in the PTKIN campuses.

### **Conclusion**

The phenomena of religious extremism in society with its various variants tend to continue to strengthen, including in the world of campuses, including in PTKIN. To respond to this, the state through the Ministry of Religious Affairs as the leading sector has presented a national program to strengthen religious moderation that places the world of education as one of the seven strategic targets of its mainstreaming.

The existence of Ma'had al-Jami'ah in PTKIN as a dormitory-based student development institution has become a strategic platform for fostering moderate religious awareness while preventing religious extremism on the campus, especially in the three UINs. This finding is closely related to its main function as an informal boarding education centre on campus that allows for the development and formation of moderate Islamic character more easily and in a more focused manner than in the faculties; Ma'had al-Jami'ah has a strategic opportunity to build the foundation of new students' moderate religiousness.

The factual conditions make the revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah more comprehensive in the framework of strengthening religious moderation very urgent to be carried out by the Government, especially the Ministry of Religious Affairs as the leading sector of the program as well as the public institution that coordinates PTKINs. This is also to ensure that PTKIN remains at the forefront of promoting religious moderation.

The revitalization of Ma'had al-Jami'ah is a strategic step to prevent the spread of religious extremism on the campus while forming moderate students. With the right policies, systematic programs, support from all parties, and integration of students, Ma'had al-Jami'ah can become a pioneer in strengthening religious moderation as well as an academic institution that fights against extreme and destructive religious ideologies.

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