

Article Info			
Received: July 17, 2026	Revised: August 27, 2026	Accepted: September 21, 2026	Published: October 30, 2026

Strengthening Community Religious Literacy in Understanding Diverse Contemporary Islamic Thought

Andi Aderus^{1*}, Wardiah Hamid², Andi Jufri³

^{*1, 2, 3}Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar

^{*1}email: andiaderus@uin-alauddin.ac.id

²email: ward006@brin.go.id

³email: andijufri@iaingorontalo.ac.id

Abstract: Contemporary Islamic thought is characterized by increasing diversity in interpretations, approaches, and religious discourses influenced by social, cultural, political, and technological developments. This diversity can enrich community understanding of Islam but may also create confusion, polarization, and misconceptions when religious information is received without adequate literacy and critical analysis. This Community Service (PkM) activity, entitled “Strengthening Community Religious Literacy in Understanding Diverse Contemporary Islamic Thought,” aims to strengthen community members' ability to understand, analyze, and respond critically and constructively to diverse contemporary Islamic perspectives. The program employed a participatory approach involving needs assessment, interactive lectures, group discussions, case studies, religious literacy training, mentoring, and evaluation. The training materials covered the diversity of Islamic thought, traditionalist and modernist perspectives, moderate and contextual approaches to Islamic interpretation, contemporary

Abstrak: Pemikiran Islam kontemporer ditandai oleh semakin beragamnya interpretasi, pendekatan, dan wacana keagamaan yang dipengaruhi oleh perkembangan sosial, budaya, politik, dan teknologi. Keragaman tersebut dapat memperkaya pemahaman masyarakat terhadap Islam, tetapi juga dapat menimbulkan kebingungan, polarisasi, dan kesalahpahaman apabila informasi keagamaan diterima tanpa literasi dan analisis kritis yang memadai. Kegiatan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PkM) berjudul “Strengthening Community Religious Literacy in Understanding Diverse Contemporary Islamic Thought” bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan masyarakat dalam memahami, menganalisis, dan merespons secara kritis dan konstruktif terhadap keragaman pemikiran Islam kontemporer. Kegiatan dilaksanakan melalui pendekatan partisipatif yang meliputi analisis kebutuhan, ceramah interaktif, diskusi kelompok, studi kasus, pelatihan literasi keagamaan, pendampingan, dan evaluasi. Materi pelatihan mencakup keragaman pemikiran Islam, perspektif tradisional

religious issues, digital religious discourse, and strategies for responding to differences in religious understanding. The results indicated that participants developed a better understanding of the diversity of contemporary Islamic thought and demonstrated increased awareness of the importance of distinguishing between legitimate differences of interpretation and religious misinformation. The activity also strengthened participants' critical, dialogical, and tolerant attitudes in responding to differences in Islamic thought. Therefore, strengthening community religious literacy can serve as an effective strategy for developing a moderate, inclusive, and contextually relevant understanding of Islam while reducing the potential for misunderstanding and polarization in contemporary society.

Keywords: Religious Literacy; Contemporary Islamic Thought; Islamic Diversity; Religious Moderation; Critical Understanding; Community Empowerment.

dan modernis, pendekatan moderat dan kontekstual dalam memahami Islam, isu-isu keagamaan kontemporer, wacana keagamaan digital, serta strategi menyikapi perbedaan pemahaman keislaman. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa peserta memiliki pemahaman yang lebih baik mengenai keragaman pemikiran Islam kontemporer serta meningkatnya kesadaran untuk membedakan antara perbedaan interpretasi yang dapat diterima dan informasi keagamaan yang tidak dapat dipertanggungjawabkan. Kegiatan ini juga memperkuat sikap kritis, dialogis, dan toleran peserta dalam merespons perbedaan pemikiran Islam. Dengan demikian, penguatan literasi keagamaan masyarakat dapat menjadi strategi efektif dalam membangun pemahaman Islam yang moderat, inklusif, dan kontekstual sekaligus mengurangi potensi kesalahpahaman dan polarisasi di tengah masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Literasi Keagamaan; Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer; Keragaman Islam; Moderasi Beragama; Pemahaman Kritis; Pemberdayaan Masyarakat.

A. Introduction

The contemporary development of Islamic thought reflects the dynamic relationship between religious traditions and changing social, cultural, political, intellectual, and technological contexts. Islam is not represented by a single uniform intellectual expression; rather, Muslim societies have historically developed diverse approaches to interpreting religious texts and responding to social realities. In contemporary contexts, this diversity can be observed through traditionalist, modernist, reformist, contextualist, progressive, conservative, and moderate orientations. Such

diversity is an important intellectual resource, but it also requires adequate religious literacy so that communities can understand differences constructively rather than interpreting them as sources of conflict.

The diversity of Islamic thought has become increasingly visible in Indonesia, a country characterized by significant cultural, ethnic, and religious plurality. Indonesian Muslims encounter different interpretations of Islam through educational institutions, religious organizations, Islamic boarding schools, mosques, books, television, social media, and digital platforms. The concept of *Islam Nusantara*, for example, has emerged as an important contemporary discourse concerning the relationship between Islamic teachings, local traditions, pluralism, and Indonesian identity (Schäfer, 2021). This illustrates that Islamic thought develops through continuous interaction between religious principles and historical-social contexts.

The plurality of Islamic thought should not necessarily be understood as a problem. Intellectual diversity can contribute to the development of a richer understanding of Islam because different perspectives may provide alternative approaches to religious texts and contemporary problems. However, diversity can become problematic when communities lack the ability to distinguish between legitimate differences of interpretation, differences in methodology, and misinformation or extremist religious narratives. Therefore, strengthening religious literacy is necessary to enable communities to navigate the diversity of Islamic thought with knowledge, critical awareness, and intellectual maturity.

Religious literacy can be understood as the capacity to acquire, understand, evaluate, and communicate religious knowledge responsibly. In the context of contemporary Islamic society, religious literacy involves not only knowledge of religious texts but also the ability to understand the historical and social contexts in which religious interpretations develop. This competency is particularly important because religious understanding is increasingly shaped by information obtained outside formal religious institutions.

The emergence of digital media has fundamentally transformed the production and dissemination of Islamic discourse. Social media platforms allow religious messages to circulate rapidly and reach audiences without geographical limitations. At the same time, digital spaces have weakened some traditional boundaries of religious authority because individuals can produce and distribute religious content without necessarily possessing adequate scholarly qualifications. Recent studies indicate that digital transformation has contributed to the fragmentation of religious authority, identity polarization, religious misinformation, and the commodification of religious discourse (Puspita et al., 2025).

This situation creates a new challenge for community religious literacy. People may encounter short religious videos, quotations, interpretations, and opinions without knowing their intellectual background or methodological basis. Consequently, religious information that appears convincing may not necessarily represent a comprehensive or academically responsible interpretation of Islam. Religious literacy must therefore be accompanied by critical information literacy, allowing community members to identify sources, compare perspectives, examine arguments, and recognize the limits of particular interpretations.

The challenge is particularly significant when contemporary Islamic thought is presented in simplified digital narratives. Complex theological, legal, philosophical, and social questions are frequently reduced to short statements that emphasize certainty and opposition. Such simplification can obscure the diversity of scholarly opinions within Islamic intellectual traditions. Consequently, strengthening religious literacy should involve introducing communities to the methodological foundations behind different Islamic perspectives rather than merely presenting competing conclusions.

One important area of diversity concerns approaches to the interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith. Contemporary Islamic scholarship demonstrates differences between textual and contextual approaches to religious interpretation. Recent research on religious moderation in Indonesia, for instance, identifies contestation between

textualist and contextualist approaches in interpreting issues of tolerance, diversity, and interreligious relations (Saputra et al., 2026). Understanding such differences is important because communities need to recognize that disagreement may emerge from different interpretive methodologies rather than from a simple opposition between “correct” and “incorrect” Islam.

Contextual interpretation is particularly relevant to contemporary Islamic thought because religious teachings are applied within changing social realities. Approaches based on *wasatiyyah*, contextual interpretation, *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, and local Islamic traditions attempt to maintain fidelity to Islamic sources while responding to contemporary circumstances. Recent scholarship highlights contextual interpretation as a potential framework for reconciling commitment to religious sources with Indonesia's multicultural social reality (Jannah & Zulfa, 2026).

Another important dimension of contemporary Islamic thought is the discourse of religious moderation. *Wasatiyyah* emphasizes balanced, fair, and responsible religious attitudes and has increasingly become an important framework for addressing polarization and ideological rigidity. Research on contemporary Islamic thought describes religious moderation as a framework for peaceful coexistence amid diverse intellectual and sociocultural traditions (Pahrudin et al., 2025). Thus, religious moderation should not be understood merely as a slogan but as an intellectual and ethical approach to engaging with differences.

The need to strengthen religious moderation becomes increasingly important in digitally mediated religious environments. Digital platforms can facilitate constructive religious dialogue, but they can also amplify provocative, intolerant, and polarizing narratives. Recent research indicates that digital religious literacy is closely related to the development of religious moderation among students, demonstrating the importance of equipping younger generations with the ability to critically evaluate religious content (Al-Ulya et al., 2025). Similar concerns apply to broader community groups who consume religious information through digital media.

Religious literacy should therefore encourage communities to recognize the distinction between religious diversity and religious relativism. Recognizing diverse Islamic perspectives does not mean assuming that every interpretation is equally authoritative or equally supported by evidence. Rather, religious literacy enables individuals to examine the sources, methodology, arguments, and contexts underlying different perspectives. This distinction is essential for developing a balanced approach that is simultaneously open to diversity and committed to responsible religious scholarship.

The development of community religious literacy also requires an understanding of the relationship between textual fidelity and contextual relevance. Contemporary Islamic thought often emerges from attempts to respond to questions that were not directly encountered in the same form by earlier Muslim communities. Issues such as democracy, human rights, gender relations, religious pluralism, environmental responsibility, technology, artificial intelligence, and digital culture require interpretive engagement. Recent research on Qur'anic interpretation and modernity demonstrates that *tafsir* continues to play an important role in negotiating the relationship between Islamic sources and contemporary realities (Zakka et al., 2026).

From the perspective of community empowerment, strengthening religious literacy is not limited to transferring theoretical knowledge. It should develop practical abilities to identify religious claims, compare interpretations, engage in respectful dialogue, and apply religious principles appropriately in everyday life. Participatory learning is therefore relevant because community members can discuss actual religious issues that they encounter in their families, neighborhoods, workplaces, religious communities, and digital environments.

A community-based approach is also important because religious understanding is shaped by social interaction. Individuals do not develop their religious perspectives in isolation but through conversations with family members, religious leaders, peers, educational institutions, community organizations, and digital networks. Consequently,

religious literacy programs should create spaces where participants can ask questions, express concerns, encounter different perspectives, and develop arguments based on credible religious sources.

The urgency of such programs is further demonstrated by the relationship between digital literacy and religious moderation. Recent research emphasizes that Islamic education in the digital era needs to integrate religious moderation and digital literacy to respond to intolerance, polarization, and problematic religious content circulating online (Nurcahyadi et al., 2026). This finding reinforces the argument that contemporary religious literacy must extend beyond conventional understanding of religious texts toward the ability to navigate complex digital religious environments.

The strengthening of community religious literacy also supports the development of social tolerance. In a pluralistic society, differences in Islamic interpretation may intersect with differences in cultural background, organizational affiliation, educational experience, and social identity. Without adequate literacy, these differences can produce labeling, stereotyping, and exclusion. Conversely, a critical and dialogical understanding of Islamic diversity can encourage communities to recognize legitimate differences while maintaining social cohesion.

In this regard, religious literacy can function as a preventive strategy against polarization. Rather than responding to problematic religious narratives only after conflict has emerged, literacy programs can equip community members with the intellectual tools needed to evaluate information before accepting or disseminating it. Religious moderation, therefore, needs to be accompanied by critical understanding and digital competence. Recent studies argue that digital literacy can provide an important foundation for strengthening moderate and inclusive religious perspectives in Islamic education (Qomaruzzaman et al., 2026).

Based on these conditions, the Community Service (PkM) program entitled “Strengthening Community Religious Literacy in Understanding Diverse Contemporary Islamic Thought” was designed as an educational and empowerment initiative. The

program seeks to introduce participants to the diversity of contemporary Islamic thought while providing them with analytical tools to understand differences in interpretation. The program focuses on developing an understanding of traditionalist, modernist, reformist, contextual, moderate, and other contemporary approaches without reducing the complexity of Islamic intellectual traditions to simplistic categories.

The primary objective of this PkM activity is to strengthen the community's capacity to understand and respond constructively to diverse contemporary Islamic thought. More specifically, the program aims to improve participants' religious literacy, critical thinking, ability to evaluate religious information, awareness of interpretive diversity, and capacity to engage in respectful religious dialogue. Through participatory learning, discussions, case studies, and mentoring, participants are expected to develop a more balanced understanding of Islamic diversity and become more responsible in consuming and disseminating religious information.

Ultimately, strengthening community religious literacy is expected to contribute to the development of a society that is knowledgeable, critical, moderate, inclusive, and capable of managing religious differences constructively. The objective is not to eliminate differences within Islamic thought but to develop the intellectual and ethical capacity to understand those differences responsibly. In an era characterized by rapid digital communication and increasingly diverse religious discourse, such literacy is essential for strengthening social cohesion and promoting an Islamic understanding that remains grounded in credible sources while being responsive to contemporary realities.

B. Method

The Community Service (PkM) program entitled “Strengthening Community Religious Literacy in Understanding Diverse Contemporary Islamic Thought” employed a Participatory Action Learning (PAL) approach. This approach positioned community members as active participants throughout the learning process rather than merely as recipients of information. The selection of a participatory approach was based on its capacity to encourage collaborative learning, critical reflection, dialogue, and practical

engagement with religious issues. Previous community service programs have demonstrated that participatory religious literacy approaches can strengthen participants' understanding of religious moderation and openness to different perspectives (Zuhri et al., 2025).

The program involved community members who actively participated in religious activities and frequently encountered diverse Islamic discourses through religious gatherings, educational institutions, social media, and other digital platforms. Before the training, a needs assessment was conducted to identify participants' initial understanding of contemporary Islamic thought, religious diversity, moderation, and their ability to evaluate religious information. Data were collected through preliminary questionnaires, informal interviews, observation, and group discussions. This stage was important for identifying participants' learning needs and determining the most relevant themes for the training. Similar religious literacy programs have applied needs identification and participatory planning before implementing community-based learning activities (Fahri et al., 2026).

The implementation consisted of five main stages: needs assessment, educational outreach, interactive discussion, practical training and mentoring, and evaluation. The educational outreach stage introduced participants to the concept of contemporary Islamic thought and its various intellectual orientations, including traditionalist, modernist, reformist, contextual, and moderate approaches. Participants were also introduced to the concepts of *wasatiyyah*, tolerance, inclusiveness, justice, and respect for legitimate differences in interpretation. The presentation was conducted through interactive lectures, question-and-answer sessions, and multimedia materials to facilitate participants' understanding of complex religious issues. The integration of religious moderation and digital literacy is increasingly considered important for strengthening critical religious understanding in contemporary Islamic education (Qomaruzzaman et al., 2026).

The discussion and practical learning stage was designed to develop participants' ability to critically analyze differences in Islamic thought. Participants were divided into small groups and provided with selected cases concerning contemporary religious issues, including differences in Islamic interpretation, religious practices, social issues, and religious discourse on digital platforms. Each group was asked to identify the arguments presented, examine the sources used, compare different perspectives, and formulate a constructive response. This process encouraged participants to distinguish between legitimate differences of interpretation, differences arising from methodological approaches, and religious claims that lack adequate evidence. Digital religious literacy has been shown to support information verification, source comparison, critical thinking, and more moderate attitudes toward religious diversity (Al-Ulya et al., 2025).

The mentoring stage was conducted individually and in groups to strengthen participants' ability to apply religious literacy principles in their everyday lives. Facilitators assisted participants in evaluating religious information obtained from social media, identifying credible sources, comparing interpretations, and responding appropriately to controversial religious issues. Particular attention was given to developing respectful dialogue and avoiding labeling, stereotyping, or excessive polarization when encountering different Islamic perspectives. This stage also emphasized the importance of combining religious knowledge with digital literacy because digital platforms can provide broad access to Islamic knowledge while simultaneously exposing users to unreliable or intolerant religious narratives (Wulandini & Ngadimah, 2026).

The effectiveness of the program was evaluated using quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative evaluation was conducted through pretest and posttest instruments measuring participants' understanding of contemporary Islamic thought, religious diversity, religious moderation, and digital religious literacy. Qualitative evaluation involved observation, interviews, group discussions, participant reflections,

and assessment of participants' responses to case studies. Changes in participants' knowledge were determined by comparing pretest and posttest results, while changes in attitudes and critical awareness were identified through observations and reflective discussions. This combination of participatory learning, practical activities, mentoring, and evaluation is consistent with community service models that integrate cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions of religious literacy (Zuhri et al., 2025).

C. Results and Discussion

The Community Service (PkM) program entitled "Strengthening Community Religious Literacy in Understanding Diverse Contemporary Islamic Thought" was implemented as an educational and community empowerment initiative aimed at improving participants' ability to understand the diversity of contemporary Islamic thought critically and constructively. The program was designed in response to the increasingly complex religious discourse encountered by communities through formal religious institutions, social interactions, and digital media. Contemporary religious discourse is no longer produced and disseminated exclusively through conventional religious authorities, but also through social media and other digital platforms, creating both opportunities for learning and challenges related to the reliability and contextualization of religious information.

The results of the initial needs assessment indicated that participants had generally encountered various forms of contemporary Islamic discourse, particularly through lectures, social media, religious study groups, and online platforms. However, their understanding of the intellectual backgrounds underlying different Islamic perspectives was relatively limited. Participants were familiar with differences in religious practices and opinions, but they did not always understand the methodological, historical, and sociocultural factors that contributed to those differences. This finding demonstrates that exposure to religious information does not automatically produce adequate religious literacy.

The needs assessment also showed that participants tended to evaluate religious opinions based on the popularity of speakers, the number of followers, or the frequency with which particular arguments appeared on social media. Such tendencies indicate the importance of strengthening the capacity to assess religious information based on sources, arguments, methodology, and context. Recent research demonstrates that digital religious literacy functions as an important epistemic filter through which individuals distinguish reflective understanding from superficial acceptance of religious narratives (Amirudin et al., 2026).

The first major outcome of the program was an increased understanding of the diversity of contemporary Islamic thought. Participants were introduced to traditionalist, modernist, reformist, contextualist, and moderate approaches to Islamic thought. The objective was not to encourage participants to adopt one particular orientation but to help them understand the intellectual characteristics and methodological assumptions underlying different perspectives. This approach enabled participants to view intellectual diversity as a historical feature of Islamic scholarship rather than automatically interpreting differences as evidence of religious deviation.

The discussion of diversity also helped participants understand that disagreement within Islamic thought can emerge from differences in interpretation, methodology, social context, and approaches to religious texts. Participants gradually recognized that some differences are located at the level of *fiqh*, theology, social interpretation, or contextual application rather than at the fundamental level of Islamic belief. This distinction is important because a failure to differentiate levels of disagreement may transform ordinary intellectual differences into social and religious polarization.

A particularly important finding was the improvement in participants' understanding of religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*). Participants learned that moderation does not mean weakening religious commitment or abandoning Islamic principles. Rather, it involves developing a balanced approach that combines commitment to religious teachings with justice, tolerance, contextual awareness, and

respect for legitimate differences. Contemporary scholarship identifies *wasatiyyah* as an important framework for addressing ideological rigidity and promoting peaceful coexistence in plural societies (Pahrudin et al., 2025).

The training demonstrated that participants initially tended to associate religious moderation primarily with tolerance between different religions. After the discussion, their understanding became broader and included moderation in interpreting religious texts, responding to intra-Muslim differences, communicating religious opinions, and interacting with people holding different perspectives. This broader understanding is important because moderation operates not only in interreligious relations but also within Muslim communities characterized by diverse intellectual and organizational traditions.

The program also strengthened participants' understanding of the relationship between Islamic texts and contemporary contexts. Through case discussions, participants were encouraged to examine how the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic scholarly traditions are interpreted in response to changing social circumstances. The exercise demonstrated that contextual interpretation does not necessarily contradict textual fidelity. Instead, responsible interpretation requires an understanding of both religious sources and the realities to which those sources are applied.

Participants were particularly interested in contemporary issues where different Islamic perspectives are visible, including religious tolerance, cultural traditions, gender relations, social media, democracy, and religious practices. The discussion showed that many disagreements arise because participants encounter different interpretive frameworks without understanding their underlying assumptions. Therefore, religious literacy should provide communities with analytical tools rather than merely presenting lists of "correct" and "incorrect" opinions.

Another important result was the development of critical thinking in evaluating religious information. Participants were trained to ask several questions when encountering religious claims: Who produced the information? What sources are used?

What interpretation is being offered? What methodological approach supports the argument? Is the statement presented within an appropriate context? This procedure helped participants move from passive consumption of religious information toward a more analytical approach.

The importance of this competency becomes more apparent in the digital era. Digital platforms can simplify complex religious ideas into short videos, quotations, images, or statements that are easy to share but may lack sufficient context. Research on digital religious literature shows that digital formats can compress and fragment religious meaning, potentially limiting engagement with historical context and interpretive plurality (Amirudin et al., 2026).

The participants also demonstrated increased awareness of the relationship between digital literacy and religious literacy. They recognized that the ability to operate digital platforms is not sufficient to guarantee responsible religious engagement. Digital religious literacy requires the ability to identify credible sources, compare interpretations, recognize misleading narratives, and understand the limitations of information encountered online. This finding is consistent with recent studies emphasizing the importance of digital literacy for strengthening religious moderation among learners (Al-Ulya et al., 2025).

The case-study component produced particularly positive responses. Participants were presented with examples of controversial religious statements and different interpretations circulating in digital environments. They were asked to analyze the claims collectively rather than immediately accepting or rejecting them. This activity encouraged participants to distinguish between evidence, interpretation, opinion, and emotional responses, thereby strengthening their capacity for reasoned religious dialogue.

Group discussions also revealed that participants had previously experienced difficulty discussing religious differences because they feared being perceived as questioning religious teachings. The participatory learning environment reduced this

hesitation by providing a space for respectful dialogue. Participants could ask questions and express different opinions while being guided to support their arguments with credible sources. This approach helped create an atmosphere of intellectual openness without undermining religious commitment.

The development of dialogical attitudes was another significant outcome. Participants increasingly recognized that differences in Islamic thought do not necessarily require hostility or social separation. They learned to distinguish between disagreeing with an argument and rejecting the dignity of the person who holds that argument. Such an attitude is important for strengthening social cohesion in communities where religious differences intersect with organizational, cultural, and social identities.

The findings are consistent with research that positions religious moderation as a framework for peaceful coexistence amid ideological and sociocultural diversity. Pahrudin et al. (2025) emphasize that moderation provides an intellectual and ethical framework for responding to polarization and ideological rigidity. The present PkM program translates this conceptual framework into a community learning process by providing participants with opportunities to practice critical analysis and constructive dialogue.

Another outcome concerned participants' understanding of religious authority. Before the program, some participants tended to assume that individuals with large digital audiences automatically possessed strong religious authority. Through discussion, participants learned to distinguish popularity from scholarly credibility. They were encouraged to examine educational backgrounds, scholarly references, arguments, and methodological consistency when assessing religious speakers or digital content.

This issue is particularly relevant because digitalization has transformed patterns of religious authority and Islamic discourse. Contemporary digital environments can create new forms of authority while simultaneously fragmenting traditional structures of

religious knowledge. Recent scholarship identifies identity polarization, religious misinformation, and fragmentation of religious authority as important challenges associated with digital disruption (Puspita et al., 2025).

The program also encouraged participants to develop responsible religious communication. Participants were advised to avoid immediately sharing provocative religious content, particularly content that labels other Muslims as misguided or inferior without adequate evidence. Instead, participants were encouraged to verify information, understand its context, and consider its potential social consequences before disseminating it. This principle connects religious literacy with ethical digital citizenship.

The integration of religious moderation with digital literacy was therefore one of the most important contributions of the program. Religious moderation provides ethical and theological foundations, while digital literacy provides practical skills for navigating contemporary information environments. The combination of the two competencies can help communities respond to intolerance, polarization, misinformation, and overly simplistic religious narratives. Recent research similarly argues that religious moderation should become an important foundation for Islamic education in the context of digital transformation (Nurcahyadi et al., 2026).

The mentoring process further strengthened the participants' learning outcomes. Facilitators provided feedback when participants analyzed controversial religious claims or encountered difficulties distinguishing between legitimate scholarly disagreement and problematic religious narratives. Individual and group mentoring allowed participants to connect theoretical concepts with situations they actually encounter in their communities and digital environments.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified during implementation. Participants had different levels of religious knowledge, educational backgrounds, and digital competencies. Some participants were able to analyze religious arguments quickly, while others required additional explanations regarding terminology,

sources, and methodological differences. This variation indicates that future community literacy programs should employ differentiated learning materials and provide sufficient time for guided practice.

Another challenge was the complexity of contemporary Islamic thought itself. Categories such as traditionalist, modernist, reformist, progressive, conservative, and moderate should not be treated as rigid classifications because individual scholars and communities may combine elements from several intellectual orientations. Therefore, the training emphasized these categories as analytical tools rather than absolute labels. This approach helped prevent participants from creating new forms of stereotyping while learning about intellectual diversity.

The evaluation further indicated that participants perceived the program as relevant to their everyday religious experiences. They particularly valued discussions concerning social media, religious disagreement, and contemporary Islamic issues because these topics were directly connected to information they encountered in daily life. The practical relevance of the program strengthened participants' motivation to continue developing their religious and digital literacy beyond the formal training sessions.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the Strengthening Community Religious Literacy in Understanding Diverse Contemporary Islamic Thought program contributed positively to participants' knowledge, critical awareness, digital literacy, and attitudes toward religious diversity. The combination of conceptual instruction, case studies, participatory discussion, mentoring, and reflection enabled participants to develop a more balanced understanding of contemporary Islamic thought. Rather than eliminating differences, the program encouraged participants to manage differences through knowledge, evidence, dialogue, and mutual respect.

The broader implication is that community religious literacy should be understood as a continuous empowerment process rather than a one-time transfer of religious knowledge. In an environment where digital platforms increasingly influence how

people encounter and interpret Islam, communities need sustained opportunities to develop critical religious literacy. Recent research similarly emphasizes that digital transformation requires stronger integration between religious moderation, Islamic education, and digital literacy to address polarization and problematic religious content (Nurcahyadi et al., 2026).

Accordingly, future PkM programs should expand the scope of training to include digital religious literacy, Qur'anic and Hadith interpretation, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, religious misinformation, AI-generated religious content, and conflict-sensitive religious communication. Follow-up mentoring and the establishment of community-based religious literacy groups could also ensure that the knowledge acquired during the program is continuously practiced. Digital platforms can subsequently be utilized not merely as sources of religious information but as spaces for producing and disseminating inclusive, evidence-based, and moderate Islamic narratives.

D. Conclusion

The “Strengthening Community Religious Literacy in Understanding Diverse Contemporary Islamic Thought” Community Service (PkM) program demonstrated that participatory religious literacy activities can strengthen community members’ ability to understand and respond critically to the diversity of contemporary Islamic thought. Through educational sessions, case studies, group discussions, mentoring, and reflection, participants developed a broader understanding of traditionalist, modernist, reformist, contextual, and moderate approaches to Islamic thought. The program also helped participants recognize that differences in Islamic interpretation may arise from differences in methodology, historical context, and approaches to religious sources, and therefore should not automatically become sources of conflict or polarization.

The program further strengthened participants’ critical religious literacy and digital literacy. Participants became more aware of the importance of verifying religious information, identifying credible sources, comparing different interpretations, and

distinguishing scholarly arguments from opinions or misinformation circulating through digital platforms. This finding is particularly relevant because digital media increasingly influences how communities access and interpret religious knowledge, while digital environments may also facilitate misinformation and polarization. The integration of religious moderation, critical thinking, and digital literacy therefore provides an important foundation for developing an inclusive, balanced, and responsible religious understanding.

Based on these results, similar PkM programs should be implemented continuously with broader community participation and more intensive follow-up activities. Future programs can expand the materials to include Qur'anic and Hadith interpretation, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, religious misinformation, AI-generated religious content, digital religious authority, and conflict-sensitive religious communication. Sustainable mentoring and the establishment of community-based religious literacy groups are also recommended so that participants can continuously practice critical and dialogical approaches to religious differences. Such efforts are expected to strengthen *wasatiyyah*, tolerance, social cohesion, and the capacity of communities to navigate increasingly diverse contemporary Islamic discourse responsibly.

E. Bibliography

- Al-Ulya, N. N. S., Jamil, A. N., Qomariyah, N., & Sahri, I. K. (2025). Digital religious literacy and religious moderation among madrasah students in Batu City. *TARBAWY: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education*, 12(2).
- Amirudin, Suyono, Soeprijanto, & Hudri, M. (2026). Digital religious literature and its role in shaping religious moderation among Indonesian university students. *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, 23(2). <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v23i2.1444>
- Handayani, R., & Alfida, A. (2025). Religious moderation discourses on digital platforms: Upholding diversity, rejecting violence, and embracing local wisdom. *Insaniyat: Journal of Islam and Humanities*. <https://doi.org/10.15408/gmqz2712>
- Ilmiah, M., Anwar, K., & Farihah, U. (2026). Digitalization and religious moderation: A new direction for Islamic Religious Education policy in the era of disruption.

Busyro: *Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam*, 7(1).
<https://doi.org/10.55352/kpi.v7i1.2287>

Jannah, S. R., & Zulfa, N. I. (2026). Contextual interpretation of Islamic sources: *Wasatiyyah*, Islam Nusantara, and pluralism in Indonesia. *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.66127/seajis.v1i1.5>

Nur, M. (2024). The concept of Islamic moderation in contemporary thought. *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 10(2), 114–133.
<https://doi.org/10.30651/ah.v10i2.24273>

Nurchayadi, R., Hasfiana, Usman, S., & Ondeng, S. (2026). Religious moderation as the foundation for reconstructing Islamic education in the digital era: A literature review in the context of the digitization of religion. *Al-Hikmah*, 28(1), 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.24252/al-hikmah.v28i01.68230>

Nurchayadi, R., Hasfiana, Usman, S., & Ondeng, S. (2026). Religious moderation as the foundation for reconstructing Islamic education in the digital era: A literature review in the context of the digitization of religion. *Al-Hikmah*, 28(1), 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.24252/al-hikmah.v28i01.68230>

Pahrudin, A., Fachiroh, W., Sahabuddin, S., Shafira, E. B., Rinaldo, A. R., & Najwa, S. (2025). Religious moderation as a framework for peaceful coexistence in contemporary Islamic thought. *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.30983/fuaduna.v9i1.9657>

Puspita, D. M. Q. A., Tofaynudin, J. I., Anwari, M. S., Dahlan, M., & Futaqi, S. (2025). Religious moderation as a paradigm of moderate Islamic thought in the era of digital disruption. *Potret Pemikiran*.

Qomaruzzaman, M. I., Fahmi, M., & Jalil, A. (2026). Mainstreaming religious moderation through digital literacy in Islamic education: A case study of Indonesian boarding schools. *IJoIS: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies*, 7(1), 221–234. <https://doi.org/10.59525/ijois.1565>

Saputra, I., Kurniawan, Ma'mum, N., & Hidayah, Z. (2026). The contestation of religious moderation interpretation in contemporary Indonesian Islamic discourse. *Syahadah: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Keislaman*.
<https://doi.org/10.32520/08htww96>

- Schäfer, S. (2021). Islam Nusantara: The conceptual vocabulary of Indonesian diversity. *Islam Nusantara: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture*, 2(2), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.47776/islamnusantara.v3i1.163>
- Zakka, U., Setyaudin, T., Nurdin, R., & Rahmawati, L. E. (2026). Qur'anic interpretation and modernity: Understanding the role of *tafsir* in contemporary Islamic thought. *Journal of Noesantara Islamic Studies*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.70177/jnis.v3i1.3370>
- Zulfa, S., Defianty, M., & Mulyati, Y. F. (2025). Implementing religious moderation values at Islamic schools in Indonesia. *Muslim Education Review*, 4(1), 88–116. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mer.v4i1.449>