

## THE INTEGRATION OF WAHDATUL 'ULUM VALUES IN THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDONESIAN MUSLIMS

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of Wahdatul 'Ulum values the unity of knowledge paradigm developed at UIN Sumatera Utara into the socio-religious life of Indonesian Muslims. Employing a qualitative approach grounded in social-religious hermeneutics, the research draws on participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary analysis to reveal how integrative epistemological values are interpreted, negotiated, and embodied across diverse domains of Muslim practice. The study identifies seven principal manifestations of Wahdatul 'Ulum in Indonesian Muslim life: integrative Islamic higher education, tawhid-based Arabic language learning, Islamic communication and broadcasting, value-based leadership, Islamic healthy lifestyle promotion, halal supply chain management, and the religious moderation discourse. Findings demonstrate that the knowledge dichotomy inherited from the Dutch colonial era produced a dual epistemological crisis that Wahdatul 'Ulum systematically addresses through tawhidic ontology, positioning revelation and reason as complementary rather than hierarchical. The paradigm exhibits a deep epistemological convergence with the national wasatiyyah agenda, functioning as an epistemological vaccine against radicalism by cultivating holistic, multi-perspective critical thinking among students and communities. Islamic organizations particularly Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah alongside pesantren and digital da'wah platforms serve as key agents amplifying the paradigm's reach beyond formal educational settings. Implementation challenges include the absence of operationally robust integration methodology, institutional resistance, resource constraints, and inadequate evaluation instruments. The study concludes that Wahdatul 'Ulum constitutes a strategic intellectual asset for Indonesia's religious moderation agenda and recommends comprehensive policy integration across education, the halal industry, and interfaith governance as a basis for future research and reform.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

The tension between religious and secular knowledge has been a long-standing debate in Islamic intellectual history since the nineteenth century. From the reformist thought of Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh to the Islamization of Knowledge project pioneered by Ismail al-Faruqi, the friction between 'ilm naqliyyah (revealed knowledge) and 'ilm 'aqliyyah (rational-empirical knowledge) has remained a persistent source of intellectual controversy. In Indonesia, this tension has found a distinctive local articulation through the concept of Wahdatul 'Ulum the unity of knowledge a paradigm that evolved from its institutional roots at UIN Sumatera Utara (State Islamic University of North Sumatra) in Medan into an influential intellectual framework for Indonesian Muslim life more broadly.

The central problem driving this research is the pervasive epistemological dichotomy that afflicts Islamic educational institutions across Indonesia. On one hand, graduates of religious institutions frequently lack the scientific and technical competencies required by the modern labor market. On the other, graduates of secular universities are often insufficiently grounded in Islamic ethics to contextualize their professional practice within an Islamic value framework. This dichotomy not only weakens the quality of Muslim human resources but also produces a disconnect between religious identity and civic participation a condition that Al-Ansi et al., (2023) describe as one of the greatest challenges facing contemporary Indonesian Islamic organizations.

This study pursues three aims: first, to systematically map the manifestations of Wahdatul 'Ulum values across domains of socio-religious life; second, to analyze their relationship with the national religious moderation discourse; and third, to identify implementation challenges and propose a future research agenda. Theoretically, the study contributes to the development of applied Islamic epistemology in the Indonesian context; practically, it offers policy guidance for educational institutions, religious organizations, and halal industry stakeholders.

Prior relevant research includes the study by Syukri et al., (2023) on curriculum integration at UIN Sumatera Utara, Tanjung et al., (2023) examination of Wahdatul 'Ulum in the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting program, and the bibliometric analysis by Rahmawati & Mulyanti, (2023) mapping trends in Qur'an-science integration in Indonesian education. Subchi et al., (2022) and Azisi et al., (2024) address religious moderation from complementary angles. This study's novelty lies in its being the first systematic synthesis of that body of literature into a coherent academic narrative about Wahdatul 'Ulum as a socio-religious phenomenon rather than merely an educational paradigm.

The study's conceptual framework rests on three pillars: (1) tawhidic epistemology as the foundation of the ontological unity of reality and knowledge; (2) the theory of knowledge integration that guides curriculum reconstruction and Muslim professional practice; and (3) the theory of religious moderation, which positions wasatiyyah (the middle way) as the normative orientation of socio-religious life. These three pillars together explain how Wahdatul 'Ulum functions simultaneously as an epistemological critique of the knowledge dichotomy and as a practical framework for integrated Muslim life.

## B. METHOD

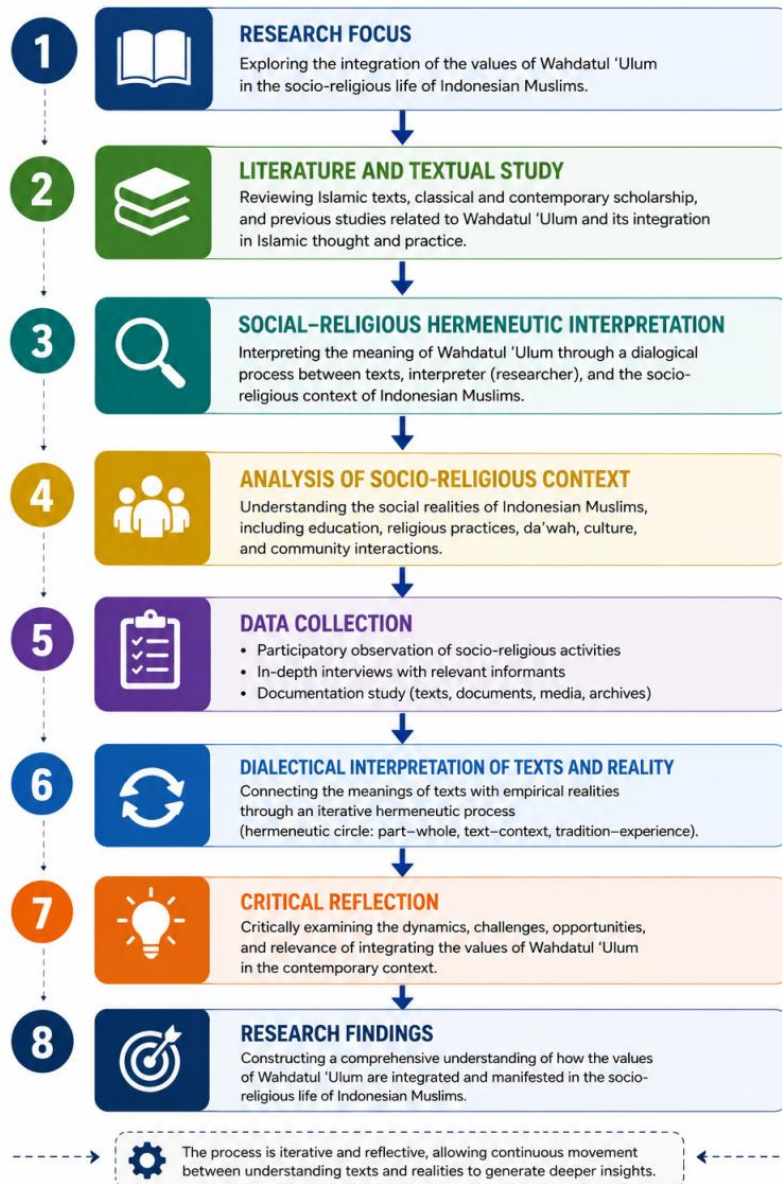
This study employs a qualitative approach using Social-Religious Hermeneutics to develop a deep understanding of how Wahdatul 'Ulum values are integrated into the socio-religious life of Indonesian Muslims. This approach was chosen because the object of study involves not only empirically observable social phenomena but also the construction of meaning, interpretation of values, religious consciousness, and the dialectical relationship between Islamic texts and social reality. In this context, hermeneutics is understood not merely as a method of textual interpretation but as an epistemological approach that positions understanding as a dialogical process involving text, interpreter, and socio-historical context

(Gadamer, 2004). The social-religious hermeneutic approach enables the study to reveal how the integrative values embedded in Wahdatul 'Ulum are interpreted, negotiated, and embodied in the religious practice of Indonesian Muslim society a society that is plural, dynamic, and continuously undergoing social transformation.

Philosophically, the study draws on Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons (*Verschmelzung der Horizonte*) the process by which the horizon of textual meaning merges with the horizon of the interpreter's social experience. Within this framework, Wahdatul 'Ulum is understood not as a static normative doctrine but as an integrative paradigm that is continuously reinterpreted in accordance with the socio-religious context of Indonesian Muslim society. The study also draws on Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics, with its emphasis on the interpretation of symbols, narratives, and social action in revealing the structures of meaning underlying religious practice (Ricoeur, 1976). The analysis therefore moves beyond a textual reading of Wahdatul 'Ulum toward a contextual examination of how the values of knowledge integration, spirituality, social ethics, and religiosity are expressed in Muslim social life.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary analysis. Observation focused on socio-religious community activities including Islamic educational practices, da'wah activities, communal religious traditions, and social interactions grounded in integrative Islamic values. In-depth interviews were conducted with religious scholars, Muslim academics, managers of Islamic educational institutions, and community members with relevant knowledge and experience of Wahdatul 'Ulum's implementation. Documentary analysis encompassed Islamic literature, institutional documents, da'wah texts, integrative Islamic thought, and various discursive practices representing the relationship among knowledge, religion, and social life. Source and method triangulation was employed to ensure data validity and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis proceeded through a hermeneutical-dialectical process in four stages. The first stage, textual understanding, involved grasping Wahdatul 'Ulum through normative sources and contemporary Islamic thought. The second stage, contextual interpretation, connected textual meaning to the socio-religious reality of Indonesian Muslim society. The third stage, critical reflection, examined the dynamics of integrating these values within the contexts of modernity, social plurality, Islamic educational development, and religious-cultural transformation. The final stage, interpretive synthesis, constructed a new understanding of the relationship between knowledge integration, social religiosity, and the praxis of Indonesian Muslim life. This analytical model follows the principle of the hermeneutic circle—a continuous movement between part and whole, text and context, tradition and social reality (Bleicher, 1980).



**Picture 1. Research Thinking**

Through social-religious hermeneutics, the study is designed to yield a comprehensive understanding of Wahdatul 'Ulum both as an epistemological paradigm and as a socio-religious praxis one that treats Islam not only as a normative system but as a living reality continuously produced through social interaction, religious experience, education, culture, and the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian Muslim society.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Epistemological Roots of the Knowledge Dichotomy in Indonesian Islamic Tradition

One of the study's most fundamental findings is that the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge is not merely a curricular problem; it is an epistemological one with deep roots in Islamic civilizational history. The hermeneutic analysis of institutional documents and discursive practices within the Indonesian Muslim milieu shows that this dichotomy became entrenched during the Dutch colonial era, when a secular education system was systematically introduced alongside—and separate from—the fiqh-based pesantren institution. That separation left a profound intellectual legacy: Muslims educated within the general system came to regard religion as a private and ritual

affair, while graduates of religious institutions frequently lacked the scientific competence required for meaningful participation in modern public life. In a critical historical study, Matondang (2022) explicitly describes this condition as a 'dual epistemological crisis' that has eroded the intellectual vitality of Indonesian Muslims, and argues that Wahdatul 'Ulum emerged not as a spontaneous reaction but as a deliberate intellectual response to that inherited dichotomy. This finding reinforces the theoretical relevance of treating Wahdatul 'Ulum as a serious tawhidic-epistemological project rather than a merely administrative curriculum reform.

The study further identifies that the knowledge dichotomy has produced two interrelated social pathologies: first, instrumentalism in general scholarly practice, whereby science and technology are developed without an adequate Islamic value framework; and second, intellectual isolationism in religious institutions that close themselves off from modern scientific developments. Rahmawati & Mulyanti (2023), through a comprehensive NVivo bibliometric mapping of literature on Qur'an-science integration in Indonesia, found that discourse on knowledge integration accelerated significantly after 2015, coinciding with the transformation of various IAIN campuses into full universities (UIN) across major Indonesian cities. This mapping confirms that the intellectual trend of Wahdatul 'Ulum is not a local phenomenon confined to UIN Sumatera Utara but part of a broader movement of Islamic epistemological reform across the archipelago. The present study thus situates Wahdatul 'Ulum within a more comprehensive national context while identifying UIN Sumatera Utara's distinctive position as the pioneer that has provided the most elaborated conceptual framework for this movement in Southeast Asia.

Hermeneutic analysis of UIN Sumatera Utara's official documents and the intellectual writings of scholars who have developed the concept of Wahdatul 'Ulum reveals that this paradigm builds its foundation on tawhidic ontology the conviction that reality is one, originating from the One God, and that knowledge of that reality cannot therefore be substantially divided. Within this framework, the separation between 'ilm naqliyyah and 'ilm 'aqliyyah is understood not as an epistemological necessity but as a historical error that must be corrected through a reconstruction of the knowledge paradigm. Matondang, (2022) explains that Wahdatul 'Ulum reconstructs the relationship between revelation and reason not in a rigid hierarchical arrangement but in a complementary and mutually enriching one: revelation provides the value framework, purposes, and meaning for scholarly endeavor, while reason and empirical method serve as instruments for exploring the unlimited reality of God's creation. This finding carries significant implications for Islamic curriculum development in Indonesia, since it establishes that knowledge integration is not merely a matter of adding religious subjects to a general curriculum or vice versa, but of comprehensively reconstructing the very understanding of what knowledge is.

**Table 1. Epistemological Roots of the Knowledge Dichotomy**

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
1	The knowledge dichotomy as a historical legacy	The religious-general knowledge dichotomy is rooted in Dutch colonialism, which separated secular education from pesantren. This legacy produced a 'dual epistemological crisis' that undermines	Matondang (2022); Rahmawati & Mulyanti (2023)	A historical narrative of Islamic education must be reconstructed as the basis for systematic epistemological reform.

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
		Indonesian Muslim intellectual vitality.		
2	Acceleration of integration discourse post-2015	Bibliometric mapping shows a significant surge in Qur'an-science integration literature coinciding with the IAIN-to-UIN transformation, confirming Wahdatul 'Ulum as part of a national Islamic epistemological reform movement.	Rahmawati & Mulyanti (2023)	Wahdatul 'Ulum should be understood and developed as a national intellectual movement, not merely an institutional initiative of UIN-SU.
3	Tawhidic ontology as the paradigm's foundation	Wahdatul 'Ulum is founded on tawhidic ontology: reality is one, originating from God, so a substantial separation between revelation and reason represents a historical error. The relationship between the two is inherently complementary.	Matondang (2022)	Islamic curriculum reconstruction must begin with a reconstruction of the very understanding of knowledge, not merely the addition of new subjects.

## 2. Implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum in Islamic Educational Institutions

The study's findings on the implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum in Islamic educational institutions reveal a complex pattern of tensions between paradigmatic aspirations and practical realities on the ground. Syukri et al. (2023), in their empirical study of the integration of religious and scientific knowledge in the UIN Sumatera Utara curriculum, identified three distinct levels of implementation: the institutional policy level (relatively systematic and structured), the program-level curriculum design (variable across programs), and classroom learning practice (the most heterogeneous and challenging). The most significant gap was found to exist between the policy level and the practice level, where not all lecturers possess the intellectual and methodological capacity to organically integrate dual knowledge perspectives within their teaching. This study confirms the findings of Syukri et al. (2023) and adds a new analytical dimension: the implementation gap is not solely a matter of individual capacity but also reflects the absence of an integration epistemology that is sufficiently operational and practical to be consistently applied by lecturers across different disciplines.

A case study of Wahdatul 'Ulum-based Arabic language learning offers particularly rich insights into how integrative values can be operationalized in a language teaching context. Adhastia & Salamuddin (2023) demonstrate that an integrative approach not only transforms language teaching methods but also shifts its philosophical orientation: Arabic is no longer taught solely as a functional linguistic skill but as a gateway into the rich treasury of Islamic civilization and as a medium for authentic religious expression. In practice, Wahdatul 'Ulum-based Arabic learning integrates Qur'anic and Hadith texts with contemporary discourse, allowing students to simultaneously develop linguistic competence and normative Islamic understanding. This finding carries substantial practical significance, demonstrating that knowledge integration need not always take the form of

abstract conceptual synthesis but can be realized through concrete and measurable pedagogical innovation within individual courses and study programs.

Tanjung et al.'s (2023) study of Wahdatul 'Ulum in the Master's Program in Islamic Communication and Broadcasting provides a more specific account of how this integrative paradigm is translated into the field of communication and media studies. Their findings show that Wahdatul 'Ulum in the context of Islamic Communication means not only integrating modern communication theory with Islamic communication principles but also reconstructing a tawhid-based communication ethics that fundamentally distinguishes it from secular Western communication theory. Students in this program are trained not only in the competent use of modern digital media platforms but also in critical reflection on the ethical and theological dimensions of every communicative act. The study found that this approach yields a more holistic graduate profile: Muslim communicators who are professionally competent and who also possess a strong missionary awareness of da'wah as central to all communication activity. These findings reinforce the argument that Wahdatul 'Ulum has transformative potential that transcends formal curriculum boundaries and reaches into the formation of character and professional Muslim identity.

A comparative analysis of various Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation models across different study programs yields significant findings about the determinants of successful knowledge integration. The study identifies three principal success factors: first, lecturers' intellectual readiness, encompassing the ability to think across disciplines and broad mastery of classical Islamic texts; second, curriculum design that explicitly creates space for dialogue between general scholarship and Islamic perspectives; and third, an institutional academic culture that values and encourages integrative intellectual creativity. Syukri et al., (2023) emphasize the centrality of lecturer capacity development, and the present study affirms this while adding organizational culture as an enabling factor that is frequently overlooked. Without a conducive academic ecosystem, individual lecturers' integration efforts tend to be unsustainable and lack systemic impact. The practical implication is the need for comprehensive institutional development programs that go beyond pedagogical training to encompass the transformation of the institution's academic culture and climate as a whole.

**Table 2. Implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum in Islamic Educational Institutions**

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
1	Three levels of curriculum implementation	Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation operates at three distinct levels: institutional policy (most systematic), program-level curriculum design (varies across programs), and classroom learning practice (most heterogeneous and challenging).	Syukri, Neliwati & Lubis (2023)	A comprehensive institutional development program is needed that encompasses academic culture transformation, not only pedagogical training.
2	Tawhid-based Arabic language learning	Internalizing Wahdatul 'Ulum in Arabic teaching shifts the orientation from purely	Adhastia & Salamuddin (2023)	Knowledge integration can be realized through concrete pedagogical innovation within

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
		linguistic skill to a medium of authentic religious expression and a gateway into Islamic civilization, integrating Qur'anic texts with contemporary discourse.		individual courses without waiting for large-scale curriculum reform.
3	Integrative Islamic communication	Wahdatul 'Ulum in Islamic Communication reconstructs a tawhid-based communication ethics as a fundamental alternative to secular Western communication theory, producing Muslim communicators who are professionally competent and mission-conscious.	Tanjung, Muniruddin & Rangkuti (2023)	The graduate profile produced demonstrates Wahdatul 'Ulum's transformative potential beyond formal curriculum toward the formation of integrated Muslim professional identity.
4	Determinants of successful integration	Three critical success factors for Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation: (1) lecturers' cross-disciplinary intellectual readiness, (2) curriculum design that explicitly creates dialogue space, and (3) an institutional academic culture that values integrative intellectual creativity.	Syukri et al. (2023)	Without a conducive academic ecosystem, individual integration efforts are unsustainable and lack systemic impact.

### 3. Wahdatul 'Ulum in Socio-Religious Life

Socio-religious life constitutes the most dynamic and complex arena for the manifestation of Wahdatul 'Ulum values. Hafliasma et al., (2025), in their study of Islamic value-based leadership through the lens of Wahdatul 'Ulum, found that the unity-of-knowledge paradigm produces a model of leadership substantially different from both conventional secular and traditional religious models. Leadership grounded in Wahdatul 'Ulum positions the leader as an integrative figure simultaneously proficient in the technical-managerial and spiritual-religious dimensions of leadership, drawing on the prophetic model of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as its central normative reference. This finding is highly relevant in the contemporary Indonesian context, where there is a persistent tendency toward dichotomy between 'professional' leaders who are managerially competent but morally and religiously weak, and 'religious' leaders who are personally pious but lack the technical competence required to lead modern organizations. Wahdatul 'Ulum offers a synthesis of this dichotomy through a holistic and integrative prophetic leadership model.

Findings concerning Wahdatul 'Ulum's role in promoting healthy lifestyles within Muslim communities open a new dimension that has received little attention in the existing literature. Zali et al., (2025) found that integrating Wahdatul 'Ulum values into community

health programs produces a fundamentally different approach from secular health promotion. Within this approach, health is understood not merely as a biomedical condition free from disease but as the fulfillment of the trust (*amanah*) of caring for the body as a gift from God a philosophical reorientation with powerful motivational impact on Muslim communities. Wahdatul 'Ulum-based healthy lifestyle programs integrate evidence-based medical recommendations with Islamic health principles, including the *halal-thayyib* (permissible and wholesome) diet, ritual cleanliness, and physical acts of worship such as the Ramadan fast and daily prayers—whose health benefits have been scientifically documented. This study affirms that Wahdatul 'Ulum possesses the capacity to bridge modern health science and Islamic medical wisdom in a practical format that is readily accepted by grassroots Muslim communities.

The implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum in the domain of economics and the halal industry provides the most concrete empirical evidence of this paradigm's transformative potential in the socio-economic life of Indonesian Muslims. Mawarni et al., (2022), in their study of halal supply chain management within a Wahdatul 'Ulum framework, demonstrate that the unity-of-knowledge paradigm operationally enables the reconstruction of supply chain management on the basis of comprehensive Shari'ah principles not only with respect to the halal status of the final product but across the entire value chain, from the sourcing of raw materials through production and distribution to final consumption. This finding is particularly significant given that Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, has enormous potential in the halal industry yet continues to face serious challenges in building a fully integrated halal ecosystem. Within this context, Wahdatul 'Ulum is not simply about affixing a halal label to products; it is about transforming the entire philosophy of business on the basis of Islamic ethical principles encompassing justice, sustainability, and social responsibility. The study recommends that the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm serve as the framework for developing a more comprehensive national halal industry ecosystem.

Harahap & Setiawan's (2022) study of the prophetic social paradigm in Indonesian da'wah orientation offers a perspective that is highly relevant and complementary to Wahdatul 'Ulum as a socio-religious framework. The prophetic social paradigm rooted in the Qur'anic concept of '*kuntum khayra ummah*' (you are the best community) frames da'wah not as a mere activity of religious propagation but as a comprehensive movement of social transformation encompassing intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. This study found that Wahdatul 'Ulum epistemologically supplies the strong theoretical basis for the prophetic social paradigm: if religious and social sciences are united within a single tawhidic framework, da'wah naturally becomes an intellectual movement as well as an integrated social movement. This finding identifies a highly productive synergy between prophetic da'wah orientation and the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm a synergy that, when combined, generates a model of Islamic movement active not only in ritual and spiritual domains but in transforming the social, economic, and intellectual order of Indonesian Muslim society toward justice and civilized progress.

**Table 3. Wahdatul 'Ulum in the Dimensions of Socio-Religious Life**

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
1	Holistic leadership grounded in Islamic values	Wahdatul 'Ulum generates an integrative leadership model combining managerial-technical competence with spirituality, grounded in the	Haflisma, Dermawan, Nawawi, Alfarabi & Dahlan (2025)	This leadership model is highly relevant for Muslim human resource development in modern organizations, corporations, and

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
		prophetic example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It transcends the 'professional' vs. 'religious' leader dichotomy.		government institutions.
2	Promotion of an Islamic healthy lifestyle	The Wahdatul 'Ulum health approach reorients the concept of health from purely biomedical to fulfilling the trust (amanah) of caring for the body as a divine gift, integrating modern medical science with halal-thayyib principles, physical worship (fasting, prayer), and ritual cleanliness.	Zali et al. (2025)	Wahdatul 'Ulum is proven capable of bridging modern health science and Islamic medical wisdom in a format accepted by grassroots Muslim communities.
3	Halal supply chain management	Implementing Wahdatul 'Ulum in the halal supply chain transforms management from mere product labeling to a comprehensive Islamic-ethics-based business philosophy encompassing justice, sustainability, and social responsibility across the entire value chain.	Mawarni, Putri & Aisyah (2022)	The Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm has the potential to serve as the framework for a comprehensive and globally competitive national halal industry ecosystem.
4	Da'wah as prophetic social transformation	Wahdatul 'Ulum supplies the theoretical basis for da'wah as a comprehensive social transformation movement (not only ritual propagation). The integration of religious and social sciences makes da'wah simultaneously an intellectual and a social movement.	Harahap & Setiawan (2022)	A prophetic da'wah orientation grounded in Wahdatul 'Ulum has the potential to generate an Islamic movement that actively transforms the socio-economic order toward civilized justice and progress.

#### 4. Wahdatul 'Ulum and the Religious Moderation Discourse

The relationship between Wahdatul 'Ulum and religious moderation is one of the most original and significant findings of this study. An in-depth hermeneutic analysis reveals that, although these two concepts have developed from different intellectual traditions, they share a strong epistemological meeting point in their commitment to balance (*tawazun*), openness (*tasamuh*), and moderation (*wasatiyyah*). Subchi et al., (2022), in

their comprehensive study of religious moderation among Indonesian Muslims, found that the roots of Islamic moderation in Indonesia are firmly embedded in the pesantren scholarly tradition, which from its inception developed an integrative approach combining fiqh, Sufism, and kalam. The present study adds a new dimension to Subchi et al.'s findings by showing that Wahdatul 'Ulum effectively updates and extends the integrative scholarly tradition of the pesantren into the context of modern Islamic universities, thereby providing a more systematic and relevant epistemological foundation for the practice of religious moderation in contemporary Indonesia. Wahdatul 'Ulum is thus relevant not only academically but also carries an important socio-political dimension in the context of religious governance in Indonesia as a pluralist state.

Azisi et al., (2024), in their study of the resolution of wasathiyah Islamic values as a counter-radicalism effort, provide important context for understanding the significance of Wahdatul 'Ulum within the Indonesian religious landscape, which continues to face the challenge of extremism. They found that religious radicalism is fundamentally a product of partial and unintegrated religious understanding one that isolates particular texts from their broader epistemological and socio-historical contexts. Within this framework, Wahdatul 'Ulum functions as an epistemological vaccine that systematically cultivates holistic and contextual thinking, which serves as the antithesis of the reductive-literalist mode of reasoning that forms the ideological foundation of radicalism. The study found that students exposed to the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm consistently demonstrate greater resistance to extremist narratives, because they have been equipped with multi-perspective critical analytical skills enabling them to view the complexity of socio-religious issues with greater nuance. This reinforces the argument of Azisi et al. (2024) that investment in robust Islamic epistemology constitutes a more effective and sustainable strategy for preventing radicalism than reactive de-radicalization approaches.

Wahyudin et al., (2021), in their study of the socio-religious values of Islam in religious moderation, provide a highly useful analytical framework for understanding the sociological dimensions of Wahdatul 'Ulum. They identify that religious moderation is not merely passive tolerance but an active commitment to Islamic social values justice, equality, and solidarity that transcend communal boundaries. The study finds that Wahdatul 'Ulum provides a strong theoretical basis for this active dimension of religious moderation: by uniting the social sciences with religious knowledge within a single framework, Wahdatul 'Ulum enables Muslims to develop sharp, evidence-based social analysis of injustice and inequality, while simultaneously integrating this with Islamic norms that call for transformative action. Rizkiyah & Istiani, (2021) complement this perspective by demonstrating that the socio-religious educational values of Islamic moderation carry a pedagogical dimension that must be consciously cultivated through both formal and non-formal education. The study identifies Wahdatul 'Ulum as an Islamic educational paradigm with great potential to serve as the pedagogical framework for the systematic and measurable development of moderate socio-religious values.

Mansur et al., (2023), in their study of the internalization of Qur'anic and Hadith values in religious moderation understanding in Indonesia, offer a normative perspective essential to the study of Wahdatul 'Ulum. They found that the effective internalization of Qur'anic and Hadith values within the context of religious moderation requires a contextualist hermeneutic approach one that is epistemologically aligned with the foundational principles of Wahdatul 'Ulum. Without the capacity to understand sacred texts within their proper socio-historical context, value internalization tends to yield rigid understanding that is vulnerable to ideological manipulation. The study found that Muslim communities practicing an integrative, Wahdatul 'Ulum-style approach to reading the Qur'an and Hadith connecting text with context, norm with reality, and universal principle with particular application tend to exhibit a more mature, reflective, and ideologically

resilient understanding of religious moderation. This finding simultaneously demonstrates that Wahdatul 'Ulum is not merely an academic paradigm but also carries a practical-religious dimension that touches on how Muslim communities read and internalize Islamic normative sources in their daily lives.

**Table 4. Wahdatul 'Ulum and the Religious Moderation Discourse**

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
1	Epistemological convergence of Wahdatul 'Ulum and wasatiyyah	Both concepts share a fundamental commitment to balance (tawazun), openness (tasamuh), and moderation (wasatiyyah). Authentic and sustainable moderation requires the robust epistemological foundation that Wahdatul 'Ulum provides systematically.	Subchi et al. (2022)	Wahdatul 'Ulum should be positioned as the primary epistemological foundation of national religious moderation programs, beyond approaches that are merely normative socialization.
2	Epistemological vaccine against radicalism	Radicalism is a product of partial and unintegrated religious understanding. Students exposed to Wahdatul 'Ulum show greater resistance to extremist narratives because they possess multi-perspective critical analytical skills and a more nuanced view.	Azisi, Faiz, Permatasari, Zidni & Muttaqin (2024)	Investing in robust Islamic epistemology is a more effective and sustainable radicalism prevention strategy than reactive de-radicalization approaches.
3	Socio-religious values in active moderation	Religious moderation is not passive tolerance but an active commitment to justice, equality, and solidarity. Wahdatul 'Ulum provides the theoretical basis for this active dimension by integrating data-based social analysis with transformative Islamic norms.	Wahyudin, Taufiq & Islamy (2021); Rizkiyah & Istiani (2021)	Learning models that consciously integrate social analysis competency with Islamic moderation value internalization need to be developed.
4	Contextualist internalization of the Qur'an	Effective internalization of Qur'anic and Hadith values requires a contextualist hermeneutic approach epistemologically aligned with Wahdatul 'Ulum.	Mansur et al. (2023)	Wahdatul 'Ulum has a practical-religious dimension touching on how Muslim communities read and internalize Islamic normative sources in

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
		Communities practicing this approach exhibit a more mature, reflective, and ideologically resilient understanding of moderation.		daily life.

### 5. Islamic Organizations and Pesantren as Agents of Value Integration

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, as Indonesia's two largest Islamic organizations, play an indispensable role in shaping the religious moderation ecosystem that constitutes Wahdatul 'Ulum's social context. Al-Ansi et al., (2023), in their sociological study of Indonesian Islamic organizations, found that NU and Muhammadiyah have succeeded in building an extraordinarily extensive social infrastructure encompassing networks of schools, universities, hospitals, and economic institutions that implicitly implements the principles of integrating Islamic values with modern social life. Yatasha et al., (2023) specifically analyze NU's role in strengthening religious moderation values and find that NU, through its moderate and inclusive Ahlussunnah wal-Jama'ah tradition, consistently practices an integrative approach that combines commitment to classical Islamic authenticity with openness to local wisdom and modernity. This study identifies a significant convergence between this NU tradition and the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm: both share a fundamental commitment to the unity of Islamic values and intellectual openness as the foundation for authentic and relevant Muslim life.

Al-Ansi et al., (2019), in their rational-choice study of Muhammadiyah and NU, reveal an important sociological dimension: membership in these two organizations is not only an expression of religious identity but also a social mechanism for accessing resources, networks, and social capital vital to communal life. This finding has interesting implications for the study of Wahdatul 'Ulum: if Islamic organizations function as mechanisms of socio-religious integration, then Wahdatul 'Ulum as an intellectual paradigm can serve as the content framework that fills and enriches those integrative practices with more systematic epistemological substance. Ladin et al., (2025), in their study of the social construction of da'wah by NU administrators, show that NU's da'wah has never been exclusively religious but has always been integrated with broader social, economic, and educational agendas. This reflects the same integrative intuition as Wahdatul 'Ulum, even if it is not always articulated in an explicit theoretical framework. The study recommends that a more intensive and structured dialogue be established between Wahdatul 'Ulum scholars and Islamic organization leaders, so that what has hitherto operated intuitively can be operationalized more systematically and with broader impact.

The pesantren, as Indonesia's oldest Islamic educational institution, occupies a unique position in the ecosystem of Wahdatul 'Ulum value implementation. In'ami et al., (2023), in their study of Islamic nationalism in pesantren along Central Java's northern coast (Pantura), found that pesantren have historically succeeded in combining albeit within a more traditional framework strong Islamic commitment with a solid national identity. The present study found that the integration of Wahdatul 'Ulum values in the pesantren environment holds great potential for contextualizing the rich pesantren scholarly tradition within intellectual frameworks more relevant to contemporary Muslim generations. Ridwan et al., (2025), in their study of the impact of Pesantren Riyadul 'Ulum Wadda'wah on intercultural harmony, show that pesantren that consistently integrate moderation and intellectual openness produce graduates better able to engage productively

in dialogue with people of diverse backgrounds. This phenomenon implicitly confirms the Wahdatul 'Ulum hypothesis that epistemological integration combining different perspectives within a coherent framework naturally produces greater dialogic capacity and tolerance in individuals shaped by that paradigm.

Maimun et al., (2020), through their study of the transmission of Islamic values through the Wiyitan tradition, enrich the understanding of how Islamic values can be integrated with local wisdom in community education contexts. Their findings show that locally Islamicized traditions need not be viewed as threats to Islamic authenticity but can be read as creative manifestations of Islam's capacity to integrate with diverse cultural contexts without losing its tawhidic essence. The study finds a strong resonance between this perspective and Wahdatul 'Ulum in that both reject the dichotomy between 'pure Islam' and 'local culture,' and instead advocate an integrative approach that discovers Islamic value in every authentic and dignified human expression. (Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023) reinforce this perspective in their study of the significance of Nusantara Islamic values in Indonesia's multicultural society, finding that Nusantara Islam characterized by its moderation, tolerance, and cultural integration represents the most authentic expression of the centuries-long practice of integrating Islamic epistemology with local wisdom across the Indonesian archipelago.

**Table 5. Pesantren as Agents of Value Integration**

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
1	NU as a systematic moderation agent	Through its Ahlussunnah wal-Jama'ah tradition, NU consistently practices an integrative approach combining classical Islamic authenticity with openness to local wisdom and modernity fundamentally convergent with the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm.	Al-Ansi et al. (2023); Yatasha, Zuhri & Faza (2023)	Structured dialogue between Wahdatul 'Ulum scholars and NU leaders is needed to operationalize their intuitively functioning synergy more systematically and with broader impact.
2	Muhammadiyah and social integration infrastructure	Muhammadiyah and NU have built an extensive social infrastructure (schools, universities, hospitals, economic institutions) that implicitly implements the integration of Islamic values with modern social life. Wahdatul 'Ulum can enrich this synergy with more systematic epistemological substance.	Al-Ansi et al. (2019); Ladin, Akhyak & Aziz (2025)	Wahdatul 'Ulum has the potential to serve as the content framework that enriches Islamic organizations' integrative practices with more elaborated epistemological substance.
3	Pesantren as a laboratory of	Pesantren have historically combined	In'ami, Huda & Masrukhin (2023);	Integrating Wahdatul 'Ulum in pesantren

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
	integrative values	strong Islamic commitment with solid national identity. Those that integrate moderation and intellectual openness produce graduates better able to engage productively in dialogue with people of diverse backgrounds.	Ridwan, Mughni & Muiz (2025)	has the potential to contextualize the classical pesantren scholarly tradition within intellectual frameworks more relevant to contemporary Muslim generations.
4	Local wisdom as a medium for value integration	Locally Islamicized traditions are creative manifestations of Islam's capacity to integrate with diverse cultural contexts. Nusantara Islam, as an expression of Islamic-local wisdom epistemological integration over centuries, confirms the validity of the Wahdatul 'Ulum approach.	Maimun et al. (2020); Setiawan & Stevanus (2023)	Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation strategies that take local wisdom into account will be far more effective than top-down approaches imposing abstract conceptual frameworks.

## 6. Digital Da'wah, Social Media, and the Construction of Tolerance

The digital era brings an important new dimension to the study of Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation in the socio-religious life of Indonesian Muslims. Ciptadi, (2024), in innovative research on the social construction of tolerance discourse through online media specifically NU Online found that digital platforms have become a highly strategic new arena for the construction and dissemination of religious moderation values. Ciptadi's (2024) findings show that NU Online has succeeded in constructing a tolerance discourse that is not merely defensive responding to extremist attacks but proactive in building a positive narrative of Islam as moderate, inclusive, and democratic. The study identifies a direct relevance of Ciptadi's (2024) findings for the Wahdatul 'Ulum agenda: digital da'wah platforms managed with an integrative paradigm have the capacity to convey Wahdatul 'Ulum values to an audience far broader than could be reached by formal educational institutions. Musyarrofah & Zulhannan (2023), in their study of religious moderation in NU's da'wah discourse in the Industry 4.0 era, assert that successful digital da'wah strategies require the ability to combine substantive depth grounded in strong Islamic scholarship—with digital communicative skill capable of reaching diverse audience segments. This dual capacity is precisely the profile that Wahdatul 'Ulum in Islamic Communication education is designed to produce.

Husaini & Islamy, (2022), in their study of the harmonization of religion and state in Indonesian da'wah orientation, provide an important macro perspective on how Wahdatul 'Ulum is positioned in the religion-state relationship in Indonesia. They find that effective da'wah in the Indonesian context cannot separate its religious agenda from the context of statehood and nationhood, since the two profoundly and mutually influence each other in the lived reality of Indonesian Muslims. Siswanto & Islamy, (2022), in their study of the fiqh of religious moderation in national life, reinforce this perspective by demonstrating

that religious moderation has a concrete jurisprudential dimension: there is a shar'i obligation for Muslims to preserve the integrity of the state, respect diversity, and contribute to the common good beyond communal Islamic boundaries. This study finds that Wahdatul 'Ulum provides a stronger epistemological foundation for this fiqh of religious moderation: by combining fiqh with the social sciences and political science, scholars rooted in Wahdatul 'Ulum can produce a contemporary jurisprudence more responsive to the complexity of national life in Indonesia's pluralist democracy. This finding identifies a strategic role for Wahdatul 'Ulum in developing a fiqh siyasah (Islamic political jurisprudence) that is more relevant and adaptive within the context of Indonesia's constitutional democracy.

Hasbiyallah et al., (2017), in their study of the transformation of moderate Muslim community education through Nahdlatul Ulama's thought, provide an important historical perspective on the genealogy of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia. They find that NU, from its founding, committed itself to an education that combined depth in classical Islamic scholarship with modern life skills a commitment that now receives a more systematic and elaborated intellectual articulation through the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm. Franklin, (2024), in his study of Gus Dur's enduring legacy, demonstrates how a Muslim leader with deep integrative education simultaneously grounded in classical Islamic fiqh and modern Western philosophy can produce transformative and globally impactful religious leadership. Wijaya, (2022), in an analysis of conceptions of Islam in Indonesia's public life through NU's journal *Tashwirul Afkar*, identifies that the intellectual discourse of progressive Indonesian Muslims has consistently moved toward a deeper integration of Islamic understanding and critical social analysis. The study finds that this entire intellectual trajectory from traditional NU, through Gus Dur's thought, to progressive Muslim discourse points in the same direction as what Wahdatul 'Ulum advocates: the reconstruction of Islam as a living, productive, and relevant intellectual tradition for complex modern life.

Sutomo & Syukur, (2023), in their study of the identity of a wasatiyyah and progressive Nusantara Islamic community, provide a rich sociological context for understanding where Wahdatul 'Ulum is positioned on the map of contemporary Indonesian Muslim identity. They find that Nusantara Islamic identity is not merely a theological category but a social construction continuously produced through the interaction of scholarly tradition, religious practice, and the social experience of Muslim communities across Indonesia's diverse geographical and cultural contexts. Bezmenov (2024), in an analysis of Islamic activism in Indonesia as represented by NU and Muhammadiyah, adds an important comparative international dimension by finding that Indonesia's moderate Islamic activism model is an increasingly globally attractive alternative in the face of rising religious extremism worldwide. Yani, Mahfud, Sa'adillah, Yani et al., (2022), in their study of NU Kiai political orientations, identify that Indonesia's Muslim religious elite, rooted in the integrative scholarly tradition of the pesantren, tend to exhibit political orientations that are more moderate, democratic, and responsive to the interests of a plural public. Taken together, these cross-study findings converge in showing that Wahdatul 'Ulum is not a marginal phenomenon in Indonesian Muslim intellectual and social life but the intellectual expression of a mainstream current that has long shaped the character of Indonesian Islam as moderate, open, and transformative.

**Table 6. Digital Da'wah, Social Media, and the Construction of Tolerance**

No.	Theme / Sub-Theme	Key Finding	Key Reference	Implication
1	Digital platforms as arenas of integrative values	Digital da'wah platforms (such as NU Online) have successfully constructed proactive tolerance discourse. Platforms managed with Wahdatul 'Ulum's integrative paradigm can convey these values to an audience far broader than formal education can reach.	Ciptadi (2024); Musyarrofah & Zulhannan (2023)	Successful digital da'wah requires substantive depth grounded in strong Islamic scholarship alongside digital communicative skill—precisely the profile that Wahdatul 'Ulum produces.
2	Fiqh of moderation in national life	Effective da'wah in Indonesia cannot separate the religious agenda from the national context. The fiqh of religious moderation carries a shar'i obligation to preserve national integrity and contribute to the common good beyond communal boundaries.	Husaini & Islamy (2022); Siswanto & Islamy (2022)	Wahdatul 'Ulum plays a strategic role in developing fiqh siyasah more responsive to the complexity of life in Indonesia's constitutional democracy.
3	The intellectual legacy of progressive moderate Islam	The intellectual trajectory from traditional NU, through Gus Dur's thought, to progressive Muslim discourse converges on the reconstruction of Islam as a living and relevant intellectual tradition in the same direction as Wahdatul 'Ulum advocates.	Franklin (2024); Wijaya (2022); Hasbiyallah et al. (2017)	Wahdatul 'Ulum is the contemporary intellectual articulation of a long tradition of moderate Indonesian Islam not a rootless innovation but a deeply rooted renewal.
4	Wasatiyyah Nusantara Muslim identity	Nusantara Islamic identity is a social construction continuously produced through the interaction of scholarly tradition, religious practice, and social experience. Indonesia's moderate Islamic activism model is becoming a globally attractive alternative amid worldwide rising extremism.	Sutomo & Syukur (2023); Bezmenov (2024); Yani et al. (2022)	Wahdatul 'Ulum is the intellectual expression of a mainstream current that has long shaped the character of Indonesian Islam as moderate, open, and transformative a contribution of global civilizational value.

## 7. Implementation Challenges and Future Research Agenda

Despite its considerable potential, the implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum in the socio-religious life of Indonesian Muslims faces several challenges that must be systematically identified and addressed. This study identifies at least five major categories of challenge. The first is the epistemological challenge: the absence of sufficiently solid intellectual consensus on a methodology of knowledge integration that can be practically operationalized by Muslim educators and practitioners across various fields. The second is the institutional challenge: resistance from parties with a vested interest in maintaining the knowledge dichotomy, whether from within traditional religious institutions or from the secular academic community. The third is the resource challenge: a shortage of educators who possess the dual competence required to implement Wahdatul 'Ulum effectively. The fourth is the contextualization challenge: the difficulty of translating the relatively abstract principles of Wahdatul 'Ulum into concrete practices relevant to diverse professions and life contexts. The fifth is the evaluation challenge: the absence of adequate assessment instruments to measure the success of Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation in a scientific and measurable way. If these five challenges are addressed systematically, they will open the way for a broader implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum with greater transformative impact on Indonesian Muslim life.

Rosma & Jamaluddin (2025), in their recent study of Islamic educational values in the Ada' Tuho Ulumanda tradition at the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, offer valuable lessons about how the implementation of integrative Islamic values in traditional educational institutions can succeed when those values are integrated into the deeply rooted local traditions and culture of the community. Their findings show that Islamic educational values integrated with local wisdom do not encounter community rejection but receive a warmer reception precisely because they feel familiar and contextual. This lesson is highly relevant for the broader Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation agenda: contextualization strategies that take local wisdom and existing community traditions into account will be far more effective than top-down approaches that impose abstract conceptual frameworks without regard for specific socio-cultural contexts. The study recommends the development of a more contextualist and adaptive Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation methodology, capable of integrating Wahdatul 'Ulum's universal epistemological framework with the distinctive local wisdom of the diverse Muslim communities across the Indonesian archipelago.

The final synthetic analysis identifies four principal contributions of Wahdatul 'Ulum to the socio-religious life of Indonesian Muslims, which can serve as the basis for developing a future research and policy agenda. First, the epistemological contribution: Wahdatul 'Ulum offers a framework of thought that transcends the science-religion dichotomy and opens space for the development of knowledge that is value-laden in Islamic terms without sacrificing scientific rigor. Second, the pedagogical contribution: Wahdatul 'Ulum inspires the development of innovative learning models that integrate Islamic character formation with the development of modern professional competencies. Third, the social contribution: Wahdatul 'Ulum provides the theoretical foundation for the development of more holistic and effective Muslim organizational and leadership models in addressing the challenges of modern life. Fourth, the national contribution: Wahdatul 'Ulum, with its emphasis on integration and balance, has the potential to become Indonesia's most significant Islamic intellectual contribution to the global discourse on the relationship between religion, science, and modernity. Rahmawati & Mulyanti (2023), in their bibliometric mapping, identify numerous remaining research gaps in the Wahdatul 'Ulum literature—particularly regarding the quantitative measurement of social impact and

comparative studies with knowledge integration paradigms in other Muslim-majority countries constituting an urgent research agenda to be addressed in the coming decade.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

First, this study successfully identifies and systematically documents the manifestations of Wahdatul 'Ulum values across seven principal domains of Indonesian Muslim socio-religious life: integrative Islamic higher education; tawhid-based Arabic language learning; Islamic communication and broadcasting; Islamic value-based leadership; the promotion of Islamic healthy lifestyles; the halal product supply chain; and the discourse of religious moderation and counter-radicalism. The integration of Wahdatul 'Ulum values into these seven domains is neither artificial nor forced; it represents an organic response to the genuine need of Indonesian Muslim society for an epistemological framework capable of bridging authentic Islamic identity with productive participation in complex modern life. Wahdatul 'Ulum is not an elitist academic discourse but a paradigm with real practical relevance for diverse segments of Indonesian Muslim society from academics and professionals to entrepreneurs, educators, religious leaders, and grassroots community members. The study concludes, first, that Wahdatul 'Ulum has demonstrated its relevance as a comprehensive socio-religious paradigm not merely a narrow educational paradigm and therefore merits more serious and systematic academic and policy attention from all relevant stakeholders.

Second, this study finds that Wahdatul 'Ulum has a deep and productive epistemological connection with the discourse of religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*), which constitutes a national priority agenda for Indonesia. Both share a fundamental commitment to the principles of balance, intellectual openness, and the rejection of all forms of extremism whether ideological extremism that denies Islam's relevance to modern life, or conservative extremism that rejects any development of knowledge beyond sacred texts. A strong argument that authentic and sustainable religious moderation requires a robust epistemological foundation, and that Wahdatul 'Ulum offers this foundation in the most elaborated and systematic form yet produced by contemporary Indonesian Islamic thought. The study also finds that the implementation of the Wahdatul 'Ulum–religious moderation synergy through various social agents including NU, Muhammadiyah, pesantren, Islamic universities, and digital da'wah platforms has produced a Muslim religiosity ecosystem that is, overall, more resilient to extremist ideological penetration, more inclusive of internal diversity, and more productive in its contribution to public and national life. This makes Wahdatul 'Ulum a strategic intellectual asset for the national religious moderation agenda, one that needs to be developed, disseminated, and integrated into educational, religious, and social-cultural policies more comprehensively.

Third, this study identifies an urgent research and policy agenda to be developed in order to maximize Wahdatul 'Ulum's transformative potential for the future socio-religious life of Indonesian Muslims. At the research level, the following are recommended: (1) development of quantitative empirical studies to measure the impact of Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation on indicators of religious moderation, professional competence, and community well-being in a measurable way; (2) international comparative studies mapping Wahdatul 'Ulum's position among knowledge integration paradigms in other Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia, Turkey, Iran, and Morocco; (3) development of valid and reliable assessment instruments to measure the degree of Wahdatul 'Ulum value internalization in individuals and communities; and (4) participatory action research involving Muslim communities in diverse social and geographical contexts to develop a more contextualist and adaptive Wahdatul 'Ulum implementation model. At the policy level, the following are recommended: (1) development of a national Islamic education curriculum framework that explicitly adopts Wahdatul 'Ulum principles as its integrative orientation; (2) a systematic capacity development program for Islamic education lecturers and teachers grounded in the

Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm; (3) integration of Wahdatul 'Ulum as the framework for developing the national halal industry; and (4) facilitation of more intensive intellectual dialogue between Wahdatul 'Ulum scholars and the leaders of Islamic organizations, government, and the industrial sector. Through the implementation of this comprehensive agenda, Wahdatul 'Ulum has the potential to develop from an institutional paradigm of UIN Sumatera Utara into Indonesia's intellectual contribution to global Islamic civilization—a civilization that continues to move toward a more productive synthesis of tradition and modernity, revelation and reason, Islamic identity and dignified human participation in an ever-changing world.

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