

Living Madhhab Moderation In Modern Islamic Boarding Schools: Dynamics Of Islamic Legal Thought At Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso

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ABSTRACT

Diversity of legal schools is an inherent characteristic of Islamic legal tradition, yet its management in Islamic educational institutions has largely been examined from a normative perspective. Limited attention has been given to how madhhab moderation is institutionalized as an educational culture. This study investigates the implementation of Living Madhhab Moderation in Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso, the dynamics of Islamic legal thought cultivated within the institution, and its implications for the intellectual character formation of students. This research employed a qualitative approach within the framework of empirical Islamic law. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving school leaders, teachers, and students. Thematic analysis was conducted using the theoretical perspectives of wasatiyyah, fiqh al-ikhtilaf, and living Islamic law. The findings demonstrate that madhhab moderation is institutionalized through curriculum integration, comparative jurisprudence learning, academic dialogue, teacher role modeling, and the daily educational culture of the boarding school. The dynamics of Islamic legal thought are developed through mastery of classical Islamic texts, principles of Islamic legal methodology, structured scholarly discussions, and continuous training in legal reasoning. These processes cultivate students who appreciate methodological diversity in Islamic jurisprudence, demonstrate critical legal reasoning, respect the ethics of scholarly disagreement, and respond constructively to contemporary Islamic legal issues. The study further reveals that the sustainability of madhhab moderation depends on an integrated institutional culture that combines academic excellence, religious values, and social responsibility. This study proposes Living Madhhab Moderation as a conceptual framework explaining madhhab moderation as a lived practice of Islamic law embedded within the educational system of modern Islamic boarding schools. The framework contributes to the development of empirical Islamic legal studies and provides a

theoretical foundation for designing more inclusive, dialogical, and context-responsive Islamic education.

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Introduction

The development of contemporary Islamic law shows that the existence of schools of thought is no longer understood merely as an exclusive religious identity, but rather as a methodological tradition that provides a scientific framework in the process of legal reasoning. This paradigm shift occurs alongside the increasing need for Islamic law formulations that can address social changes, advancements in science, and the complexities of modern Muslim community life. The approach based on *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, *ijtihād jamā'ī*, and *fiqh al-ikhtilāf* encourages the emergence of a more inclusive perspective towards sectarian differences, so that the diversity of opinions is no longer positioned as a threat to the unity of the ummah, but as an academic consequence of differing ijtihad methodologies. In this perspective, schools of thought function as instruments for the development of Islamic law that are adaptive to change without relinquishing the authority of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and classical scholarly traditions. Hallaq (2009) explains that the transformation of modern Islamic law does not eliminate the function of schools of thought, but rather repositions them as a source of more dynamic methodology in responding to contemporary issues. In line with that, Kamali (2008) emphasises that the orientation of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* opens up space for inter-sect dialogue through the principle of *maslahah*, so that methodological differences become a strength in building Islamic law that is responsive to the needs of society.

The strengthening of sectarian moderation becomes increasingly relevant as Muslim communities live in a social space that is becoming more pluralistic and digitised. The development of digital media accelerates the spread of religious authority while also expanding the space for contestation of fiqh opinions, which often leads to sectarian fanaticism, intra-religious polarisation, and the simplification of complex Islamic legal issues. Recent literature shows that managing sectarian diversity requires an approach that is not only normative but also sociological through the formation of a culture of dialogue, respect for differences, and the strengthening of scholarly ethics. Abu Baedah et al. (2026) explain that sectarian moderation is an ethical reconciliation mechanism that integrates respect for diverse opinions with the social responsibility of Muslims. The theory of *'ilm al-ikhtilāf* places differences of opinion as an inherent part of the Islamic intellectual tradition because each school of thought is built through a methodology of *istinbat* that has scientific legitimacy (Laabdi, 2024). Thus, strengthening sectarian moderation is not aimed at eliminating differences, but rather at building the community's ability to manage the diversity of Islamic law in a proportional, rational, and community welfare-oriented manner.

This phenomenon shows that the main issue in the development of contemporary Islamic law no longer lies in the existence of sectarian differences, but rather in how these differences are understood and implemented in social life. Sectarian fanaticism (*ta'aṣṣub madhhabī*), low literacy in *istinbat* methodology, and the rise of identity politics have led some Muslim groups to view sects as symbols of exclusivity, rather than as products of ijtihad open to scientific study. Abdullah et al. (2020) state that this exclusive attitude is influenced by a partial understanding of religion and a weak grasp of fiqh methodology,

while Sairi (2021) shows that sectarian identity often intertwines with social and political interests, thereby increasing the potential for internal fragmentation among Muslims. This condition is further reinforced by digital media that create echo chambers, which are communication spaces that narrow exposure to alternative views and strengthen stereotypes against other groups. As a result, differences in fiqh, which are epistemologically a consequence of *ijtihad*, have the potential to shift into social conflicts that hinder the realisation of community cohesion (Yani et al., 2025).

Various studies recommend Islamic education as a strategic instrument for building the ability to manage differences constructively. A dialogical educational approach, based on *fiqh al-ikhtilāf* and orientated towards strengthening critical thinking, is considered capable of reducing tendencies towards exclusivism while instilling an appreciation for the diversity of Islamic legal perspectives. Fitriani (2023) emphasises that religious education needs to integrate intra-religious understanding through learning that positions the plurality of schools of thought as an intellectual wealth, not a threat to the purity of the teachings. Muhajir et al. (2025) also found that the integration of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education contributes to the enhancement of inclusive attitudes, empathy, and the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. In this context, *pesantren* hold a very strategic position because they not only transmit knowledge of fiqh but also shape academic culture, religious character, and dialogue ethics through interactions between *kiai*, teachers, and students. Thus, strengthening sectarian moderation within the *pesantren* environment is a relevant approach to building an Islamic intellectual tradition that appreciates differences while also reinforcing social cohesion in a pluralistic society.

A more operational approach to building sectarian moderation can be explained through the perspective of living Islamic law or living fiqh, which views Islamic law not only as a set of textual norms but also as a social practice that lives within institutional culture and societal behaviour. In this perspective, the effectiveness of Islamic law is measured by the process of internalising sharia values into habits, educational systems, and social interactions, rather than merely by the existence of normative norms. Wimra et al. (2023) explain that living fiqh is a form of dynamic interaction between texts, scholarly authority, and social reality, so that Islamic law continuously undergoes a process of actualisation according to the context of society. In the *pesantren* environment, this actualisation takes place through the curriculum, the study of fiqh texts, scientific discussions, the exemplary behaviour of teachers, institutional discipline, and the habituation of mutual respect in addressing differences of opinion. Thus, moderation in sectarianism is not only taught as a normative concept but is also realised as an academic culture that shapes ways of thinking, behaving, and making decisions based on scientific argumentation. Hasbiyallah et al. (2024) emphasise that the implementation of Islamic law in educational institutions occurs through the process of forming an organisational culture that allows the values of sharia to become part of the daily lives of the institution's members. Meanwhile, Mashuri (2025) shows that the actualisation of living fiqh in *pesantren* develops through a curriculum that is responsive to contemporary issues and the use of the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach in addressing various social problems.

Several previous studies have shown that the internalisation of moderation values in *pesantren* has made significant contributions to the character formation of students and the strengthening of a culture of tolerance. Chakim and Nurfalalah (2026) found that the integration of fiqh curriculum, deliberation forums, transmission of scholarly lineage, and daily life habituation can form an institutional culture that supports the development of religious moderation. Other research also shows that the success of moderation education is influenced by curriculum consistency, teacher competence, a culture of dialogue, and exemplary practices in *pesantren* life (Yani et al., 2025). Nevertheless, most of these studies

still focus on religious moderation in a broad sense, such as strengthening interfaith tolerance, multicultural education, and preventing extremism. The discussion on how moderation is specifically realised in managing sectarian differences, the dynamics of fiqh argumentation, and the formation of intellectual traditions in modern pesantren is still relatively limited. As a result, the empirical mechanisms explaining the relationship between cross-sect learning, the academic culture of pesantren, and the formation of the intellectual character of students have not yet received comprehensive explanations in contemporary Islamic legal literature.

A review of previous research shows the existence of conceptual, empirical, and methodological gaps that are still open for development. Conceptually, publications on moderation in Islamic education more often position moderation as an instrument for strengthening interfaith relations (interreligious moderation), while the dimension of moderation in intra-faith relations, particularly the management of differences in fiqh schools, has not received adequate attention. The bibliometric mapping conducted by Junaidi et al. (2025) shows that research on religious moderation is still dominated by themes of tolerance, pluralism, citizenship, and radicalism prevention, while studies on the dynamics of sects, the culture of *ikhtilāf*, and the pluralism of Islamic law are still relatively few. From an empirical perspective, most research on pesantren focuses on salaf pesantren or the general implementation of moderation values, thus failing to explain in depth how modern pesantren build intellectual traditions through cross-sect fiqh learning and how this process shapes the thinking and religious attitudes of students (Rahmawati, 2022; Rambe et al., 2022; Sutrisnawati & Pangestuti, 2024). Methodological gaps are also apparent because existing research tends to be descriptive regarding the implementation of moderation programs, without developing an analytical model that explains the relationship between the curriculum, scholarly authority, institutional culture, and the formation of sectarian moderation as a social practice.

Based on these gaps, this research aims to analyse the implementation of Living Madhhab Moderation at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso as a living Islamic legal practice within the pesantren education system. The research focuses on three main aspects, namely the implementation of sectarian moderation in educational culture, the dynamics of Islamic legal thought that develop through the academic tradition of pesantren, and its implications for the formation of intellectual character and the religious attitudes of students. The novelty of the research lies in the development of the concept of Living Madhhab Moderation, an analytical framework that integrates the theory of *fiqh al-ikhtilāf*, living Islamic law, and pesantren education to explain how madhhab moderation is internalised as an institutional culture, rather than merely a normative doctrine. Unlike previous research that focused more on religious moderation in general, this study positions sectarian moderation as a mechanism for managing the plurality of Islamic law, which occurs through the curriculum, cross-sect learning, teacher exemplification, and the tradition of scientific dialogue. In this qualitative research, no statistical hypothesis is formulated, but a scientific proposition is built that the internalisation of sectarian moderation through the academic culture of pesantren contributes to the development of a tradition of critical thinking, a tolerant attitude towards differences, and the ability of students to respond to contemporary Islamic legal issues argumentatively. The scope of the research is limited to educational practices and intellectual culture at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso as a representation of modern pesantren that develops cross-sectarian learning within the framework of empirical Islamic law.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with an empirical Islamic law perspective to analyse the implementation of sectarian moderation as a living Islamic law practice at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso. This approach views Islamic law not only as written norms (law in books) but also as social practices (law in action) shaped through the interaction between Sharia teachings, institutional culture, religious authority, and the life experiences of pesantren residents. Therefore, the research integrates an analysis of Islamic law sources, fiqh literature, and the empirical realities that develop within the pesantren education system to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the process of internalising sectarian moderation (Damopolii et al., 2023; Yaqin et al., 2020).

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the heads of the pesantren, teachers, and students who were purposively selected based on their involvement in the learning process and the development of religious life in the pesantren. Interviews were combined with participatory observations of academic activities, fiqh learning, deliberation forums, and the daily activities of students, allowing the researcher to understand the alignment between the values taught and the practices occurring in the field. In addition, documentation in the form of curricula, educational guidelines, institutional archives, and other supporting documents is used to strengthen and verify the information obtained from interviews and observations. The combination of these three techniques produces rich data and provides a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of sectarian moderation compared to the use of a single data collection technique (Alkouatli, 2024; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Subekti & Hilmy, 2024).

Data analysis was conducted thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and iterative conclusion drawing by placing the theory of *wasatiyyah*, *fiqh al-ikhtilāf*, and living Islamic law as the interpretative framework. The analysis process not only describes the practice of sectarian moderation but also explains the relationship between the organisational culture of pesantren, cross-sect fiqh learning, teacher leadership, and the formation of students' intellectual character. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the research applies source triangulation, technique triangulation, time triangulation, and member checking with key informants so that the interpretations produced align with the empirical experiences of the participants. The application of trustworthiness strategies as proposed by Lincoln and Guba, and further developed by Shenton (2004) and Creswell and Poth (2016), strengthens the aspects of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the research. Thus, this methodology enables the formulation of findings that are not only empirically valid but also capable of conceptually explaining how Living Madhhab Moderation develops as a living Islamic legal practice within the tradition of modern pesantren education (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Shenton, 2004).

Results and Discussion

1. Living Madhhab Moderation in the Pesantren Education System

The implementation of madhhab moderation at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso shows that the management of sectarian differences is not merely treated as a doctrinal issue, but rather as part of the education system that shapes the intellectual culture of the santri. Research findings show that moderation in sectarianism is internalised through the curriculum, the learning process, the cultivation of the pesantren's life, and the exemplary behaviour of the teachers, thus becoming a living practice in the daily lives of the pesantren community. This pattern shows that pesantren not only transmits knowledge of fiqh but also builds a way of thinking that places differing opinions as a methodological

consequence of the *ijtihad* process. In the perspective of living Islamic law, Islamic law gains meaning when its values are embodied through institutional culture and social behaviour, rather than merely understood as textual norms (Wimra et al., 2023). Therefore, sectarian moderation at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso can be understood as an educational practice that integrates normative, pedagogical, and sociological dimensions in shaping the scholarly character of the students.

Field findings indicate that the implementation began with a curriculum design that places the study of *fiqh* as a medium to understand the methodologies of the school imams, rather than merely memorising legal products. The curriculum indeed uses *fiqh* books that predominantly orient towards the Shafi'i school as the main reference, but the learning process does not stop at a single opinion. Teachers systematically introduce the arguments of the Hanafi, Maliki, and Hanbali schools when discussing certain issues, so that students gain an understanding of the methodological reasons that give rise to the diversity of legal perspectives. This approach aligns with the character of *pesantren* education, which views schools of thought as methods of legal reasoning, not as exclusive identities that limit the space for dialogue. This tradition is also in line with the historical development of the schools of thought, which from the beginning grew as a result of the dynamics of *ijtihad* by scholars in responding to different social realities (Hallaq, 1984; Kamali, 2008). Interview data shows that this orientation has become an educational policy recognised by the *pesantren* leadership. One of the informants explained:

"In Gontor, we do not educate students to be fanatical about one school of thought. What we instill is how to understand the way the imams of the schools of thought think. When they understand the reasons behind differing opinions, they will learn to respect other viewpoints without losing confidence in the opinion they have chosen." (Cecep Sobar Rochmat, Head of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso, Interview, Poso, June 16, 2026).

That statement shows that sectarian moderation is built through strengthening methodological literacy, not through obscuring sectarian identity. Students are still guided to follow opinions that have a strong scientific basis, but at the same time, they are taught that opinions from other schools of thought also emerge through *ijtihad* processes that have legitimacy in Islamic legal tradition. Respect for differences is not based on the relativism of truth, but rather on the recognition of the diversity of *istinbat* methodologies. This finding is in line with the concept of *fiqh al-ikhtilāf*, which explains that differences of opinion are an epistemological consequence of differing methods of understanding the *nash*, not a deviation from Islamic teachings (Laabdi, 2024).

The implementation of sectarian moderation is then reinforced through classroom learning practices. The research results show that the teacher not only conveys the legal rulings of a matter but also explains the evidence, methods of reasoning, and the principles of jurisprudence used by each school of thought. This type of learning model encourages students to understand the relationship between evidence, methodology, and legal products so that they can distinguish between areas that are definitive (*qat'i*) and speculative (*ẓanni*). Learning is not directed towards finding the most correct school of thought, but rather understanding why these differences occur and how to approach them scientifically. The informant, who is a *fiqh* teacher, explained:

"In teaching *fiqh*, we always explain the reasons why Imam Shafi'i differs from Imam Abu Hanifah or Imam Malik. Students should not only know the law but also understand the methods used so that they become accustomed to appreciating differing opinions." (Adi Kurniawan, Ustad/ Fiqh Teacher, Interview, Poso, June 17, 2026).

The results of the interview indicate that the learning process is orientated towards the development of legal reasoning rather than merely mastering legal material. This approach encourages the development of analytical, argumentative, and reflective thinking skills in understanding fiqh issues. These findings reinforce the research results of Daud (2021) and Mighfar et al. (2025), which concluded that comparative fiqh learning can enhance critical thinking skills while simultaneously reducing the tendency towards *ta'assub al-madhab*. From the perspective of *wasatiyyah*, the practice also reflects the principles of *tawāzun* and *tasāmuḥ* because students are accustomed to considering various arguments before reaching a legal conclusion (Kamali, 2008).

In addition to the curriculum and learning, sectarian moderation is also internalised through the culture of life in the pesantren. The interaction between teachers and students, scientific discussion forums, deliberations, and dormitory life become spaces for the actualisation of values that respect differences of opinion. In these forums, students are encouraged to present arguments based on evidence without belittling the views of others. This tradition builds an academic ethic that the quality of an opinion is determined by the strength of its argumentation, not by the identity of the sect followed. Thus, the life of the pesantren functions as a social laboratory that integrates formal education with the formation of moderate religious character.

Research findings indicate that Living Madhhab Moderation at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso is the result of the integration of curriculum, learning processes, academic culture, and teacher exemplarity. This integration produces a mechanism for value internalisation that allows sectarian moderation to develop as an institutional culture, rather than merely as teaching material. These findings expand on previous studies that generally view moderation as an educational program or institutional policy. This research shows that the effectiveness of sectarian moderation depends on its ability to become a living social practice within all educational activities of the pesantren. Thus, the concept of Living Madhhab Moderation offers a new perspective in the study of empirical Islamic law, namely that sectarian moderation gains its effectiveness when the values of *wasatiyyah*, *fiqh al-ikhṭilāf*, and living Islamic law are simultaneously internalised within the educational system, organisational culture, and intellectual traditions of the pesantren.

2. The Dynamics of Islamic Legal Thought in the Intellectual Tradition of Gontor 11 Poso

The dynamics of Islamic legal thought at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso develop through an intellectual tradition that combines mastery of authoritative Islamic sources, the study of *istinbāṭ* methodology, and a culture of continuous academic dialogue. Research findings indicate that the pesantren not only transmits knowledge of fiqh as a finished legal product but also cultivates the ability of students to understand the process of the emergence of a legal opinion through a systematic methodological approach. Thus, the dynamics of Islamic legal thought in the pesantren environment are not directed towards the textual reproduction of sectarian opinions, but rather towards the formation of a legal reasoning that can explain the relationship between the text, the methodology of *usul fiqh*, and social reality. This pattern shows that the intellectual tradition of pesantren becomes a space for the actualisation of living Islamic law, which is the process when Islamic law comes to life through educational practices, academic culture, and scientific interactions among pesantren residents, not just through normative learning (Wimra et al., 2023). These findings also reinforce the view that modern pesantren play a strategic role in maintaining the continuity of classical fiqh traditions while simultaneously encouraging the emergence of Islamic legal thought that is adaptive to contemporary developments.

The process of forming this dynamic thought begins with strengthening the epistemological foundation of the students through mastery of the Arabic language and direct reading of classical literature (*turāt*). The leadership of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso explained:

“Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor introduces both classical and contemporary Islamic thought in a structured and directed manner, starting with the active mastery of the Arabic language. This is the key to directly accessing the treasure trove of classical Islamic thought without relying on translations that often fail to capture the depth of meaning in the original texts. Then through *turath* books as a foundation, followed by organised discussions and intellectual activities. Gontor has a long tradition of facilitating students for discussions, debates, and idea exchanges through various forums such as *muhadharah*, scientific discussion training, and other organisational activities.” (Cecep Sobar Rochmat, Head of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso, Interview, Poso, June 16, 2026).

The results of the interview indicate that mastery of the Arabic language is not positioned merely as a linguistic skill, but rather as an epistemological prerequisite for authentically understanding the arguments of the scholars. Students are directed to read primary sources so that they can trace the methodological construction behind each legal opinion without relying on secondary interpretations. This approach demonstrates that the development of Islamic legal thought is built through the strengthening of methodological capacity, not through the passive acceptance of doctrine. This finding is in line with Hallaq (2009), who emphasises that the authority of Islamic law is based on mastery of the *ijtihād* methodology, while Laabdi (2024) explains that the tradition of *ikhtilāf* can only be fully understood if learners have direct access to the sources of Islamic knowledge. Openness to the treasure trove of Islamic thought also constitutes the institutional identity of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso. This was emphasised by the head of the *pesantren* as follows:

“Our founder emphasised that Gontor belongs to all Muslims, not to a particular group, so Gontor students are educated not to hastily reject a thought before truly understanding it fairly from its original source.” (Cecep Sobar Rochmat, Head of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso, Interview, Poso, June 16, 2026).

That statement reflects that intellectual openness at Gontor is built on the principle of epistemic fairness, which is the obligation to understand a viewpoint based on its original argumentation before passing judgement. Such an attitude prevents the development of stereotypes against certain groups while simultaneously building an academic tradition that values the scientific process. In the perspective of *wasāṭiyyah*, this approach reflects the principles of *tawāzun* and *tasāmuḥ*, which is the balance between steadfastness in faith and openness to the diversity of Islamic legal methodologies (Kamali, 2008). This view is further reinforced by the explanation of the head of the Islamic boarding school regarding the nature of intellectual diversity in Islam:

“In our view, the diversity of thought in Islam is a vast blessing, not a rigid system. The fundamental principle we instill in our students is that the diversity of thought in Islam is part of the expansiveness of the sharia itself, not a sign of division. Great scholars throughout history have differed in opinion due to different methodologies of *ijtihād*, and this is considered a wealth, not a weakness.” (Cecep Sobar Rochmat, Head of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso, Interview, Poso, June 16, 2026).

The data shows that the *pesantren* constructs the understanding of students by placing *ikhtilāf* as an inherent part of the development of Islamic law. Differences of opinion are understood as the result of the scholarly activities of the *mujtahid* who use different *istinbāt*

methodologies on the same issue. Thus, the dynamics of Islamic legal thought are not understood as doctrinal conflicts, but as a mechanism for enriching the treasury of Islamic scholarship. This interpretation is consistent with the theory of fiqh *al-ikhtilāf*, which views the plurality of opinions as a logical consequence of the diversity of *usul fiqh* approaches (Azizy, 2004; Laabdi, 2024).

This intellectual culture is then reinforced through discussion forums, *muḥāḍarah*, scientific debate training, book studies, and structured student organization activities. This tradition makes students active subjects in building arguments, testing the validity of evidence, and scientifically justifying their opinions. Unlike memorization-oriented learning, the educational process at Gontor develops higher-order thinking skills through the analysis of differing opinions, evaluation of the strength of arguments, and the application of *usul fiqh* principles to contemporary issues. These findings are in line with the research by Munir and Ukhrawiyah (2025), which shows that fiqh learning in pesantren includes elements of inquiry, reflection, ethical deliberation, and collaborative learning, thereby contributing to the enhancement of analytical thinking and problem-solving skills. Similarly, Sarwenda (2014) emphasises that the culture of discussion and critical reading of classical Islamic texts produces a balance between intellectual freedom and respect for scholarly authority, while Yasin and Khasbulloh (2022) refer to it as ethical critical thinking, which is the ability to think critically while still framed by academic etiquette.

That intellectual tradition does not stop at strengthening academic abilities, but is also aimed at shaping the capacity of students to respond to contemporary Islamic legal issues argumentatively. Research findings indicate that various current issues, such as technological developments, digital economic transactions, bioethics, and socio-religious dynamics, are used as discussion materials in the pesantren's academic forum. The approach used does not stem from seeking instant answers, but rather through the exploration of evidence, analysis of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and consideration of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. Thus, students are accustomed to understanding that resolving Islamic legal issues requires a responsible process of *ijtihad* and cannot be separated from the methodologies developed by scholars. The learning model shows that the intellectual tradition of Gontor is not only orientated towards the preservation of classical heritage but also towards the development of adaptive abilities in facing social changes. This is in line with Kamali's (2008) view that the revitalisation of Islamic law in the contemporary era must be based on the integration of textual authority, *ijtihad* methodology, and the orientation of *maslahah*. This view is reinforced by one of the teachers who explained that the development of Islamic legal thought in pesantren is always linked to the realities of community life.

"Our students are accustomed to not stopping at just reading the books. They must be able to understand why a certain law is established, what its jurisprudential basis is, and how that opinion is applied when facing the ever-evolving issues of society. So learning fiqh is not just about memorising laws, but learning the way scholars think." (Interview with a Teacher from Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso).

The results of the interview show that the orientation of learning has shifted from a content-oriented approach to a reasoning-oriented approach. Legal knowledge is not positioned as a final product, but rather as the result of a methodological process that can always be re-evaluated based on valid *istinbāt* principles. Such an approach has important implications for the formation of the intellectual character of students because they not only have the ability to explain the content of an opinion but also to evaluate the strength of the underlying argumentation. In the perspective of living Islamic law, this process demonstrates that Islamic law gains its relevance when understood as a result of the interaction between text, methodology, and social context (Wimra et al., 2023). Therefore,

the dynamics of Islamic legal thought that develop in pesantren do not result in legal relativism, but rather strengthen the students' ability to engage in systematic and responsible legal reasoning.

The research results also show that the culture of scientific dialogue takes place not only in the classroom but also in the daily lives of the students. Organisational forums, dormitory discussions, speech practice (*muḥāḍarah*), and deliberations become learning media that allow students to express opinions, receive criticism, and refine their arguments based on evidence and jurisprudential principles. That academic culture creates a deliberative space that encourages the development of intellectual humility, as every opinion must be scientifically accountable and open to correction. These findings reinforce the research results of Nashihin et al. (2025), which state that the academic tradition of pesantren fosters reflective thinking skills, scientific discipline, and respect for scholarly authority without stifling intellectual creativity. Thus, the educational process at Gontor demonstrates that the dynamics of Islamic legal thought are built through a balance between respect for tradition (*turāt*) and the courage to conduct critical readings of contemporary realities.

Research findings indicate that the dynamics of Islamic legal thought at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso are the result of the interaction between mastery of classical literature, learning the methodology of *usul al-fiqh*, a culture of academic dialogue, and the habituation of argumentative thinking in the pesantren environment. That tradition produces an educational pattern that not only gives rise to students who understand the diversity of schools of thought but also have the ability to explain the epistemological foundations behind each difference of opinion and connect them with the needs of modern society. These findings expand upon previous research, which generally focused separately on the study of *fiqh* or religious moderation. This research shows that the intellectual tradition of modern pesantren shapes the dynamics of Islamic legal thought through an integrative mechanism, namely connecting mastery of primary sources, the ethics of *fiqh al-ikhtilāf*, academic culture, and the actualisation of living Islamic law within a single educational ecosystem. Thus, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso not only functions as an institution for the transmission of Islamic knowledge but also as a space for the production of moderate, dialogical, and adaptive Islamic legal thought in response to contemporary societal developments.

3. Implications of Sectarian Moderation on the Character Formation of Santri

The implementation of sectarian moderation at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso not only results in a more comprehensive understanding of sectarian diversity but also has significant implications for the intellectual character and religious attitudes of the santri. Research findings indicate that the internalisation of moderation values occurs systematically through curriculum integration, academic culture, dormitory life coaching, and teacher exemplification. This process shapes a mindset that prioritises scientific argumentation, respect for differences, and moral responsibility in conveying religious opinions. Thus, the character of the santri is not built through the uniformity of thought, but rather through the ability to manage differences proportionally based on the principles of Islamic law. This perspective aligns with the concept of living Islamic law, which views the effectiveness of Islamic law education as determined by the success of internalising sharia values into everyday social practices (Wimra et al., 2023).

Field data shows that one of the main impacts of implementing sectarian moderation is the emergence of an open attitude towards the diversity of scholars' views. Students no longer view differing opinions as a reason to oppose certain groups or sects, but rather as

methodological consequences that must be understood scientifically. One of the teachers explained:

“We always instill in the students that the differences of opinion among scholars should not be a reason to blame each other. What needs to be learned is why they differ and how to respect every opinion that has a scientific basis. Thus, the students will be more mature when facing differences in society.” (Interview with a Teacher from Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso).

The quote shows that respect for differences is built through strengthening epistemological understanding, not merely through normative calls to be tolerant. Students are guided to understand that every legal opinion emerges through a process of *ijtihad* that has a methodological foundation, making it unworthy of judgement solely based on the difference in its final outcome. Such an educational model reinforces the concept of *fiqh al-ikhtilāf*, which places etiquette in addressing differences as an inseparable part of the Islamic scholarly tradition (Laabdi, 2024). In the perspective of *wasatīyyah*, such an attitude also reflects the principles of *tasāmuḥ* and *l'tidāl*, which are respect for diversity without neglecting the commitment to scientific truth (Kamali, 2008).

The next implication is seen in the development of critical and argumentative thinking skills. Based on the results of observations and interviews, students are accustomed to expressing opinions based on evidence, principles of *usul al-fiqh*, and accountable arguments. The tradition of discussion, *muḥāḍarah*, book study, and scientific deliberation fosters an intellectual habit that encourages students to analyse before drawing conclusions. One of the students stated:

“In our boarding school, we are taught not to immediately accept or reject an opinion. We must look at the evidence, understand the reasons behind the scholars’ *ijtihad*, and then discuss it with the teacher. From there, we learn that differing opinions are normal, as long as they are based on strong foundations.” (Interview with a student from Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso).

The findings show that the learning process not only results in mastery of *fiqh* material but also shapes legal reasoning, which becomes the foundation for legal decision-making. Students are trained to develop analytical skills, evaluate the strength of arguments, and distinguish between issues that are definitive (*qaṭʿī*) and speculative (*ẓannī*). This process aligns with the research of Nashihin et al. (2025), which states that the academic culture of *pesantren* is capable of fostering intellectual humility, defined as the willingness to accept criticism and acknowledge the possibility of other opinions that equally possess scientific legitimacy. Thus, doctrinal moderation directly contributes to strengthening the intellectual capacity of students in facing the complexities of contemporary Islamic legal issues.

In addition to shaping academic abilities, the implementation of moderation in sects also impacts the social-religious attitudes of the students. The life in *pesantren*, which brings together students from various regional, cultural, and Islamic organisational backgrounds, becomes a practical space to actualise the values of tolerance in daily life. Differences are not seen as a separating factor, but rather as an opportunity to broaden scientific horizons and strengthen Islamic brotherhood. The condition shows that the *pesantren* culture successfully integrates cognitive, affective, and social dimensions in shaping the character of the students. These findings reinforce the research by Chakim and Nurfalah (2026), which explains that the success of moderation in *pesantren* is greatly determined by the consistency of institutional culture, not just by the classroom learning materials.

Another equally important implication is the formation of the readiness of students to become agents of moderation within society. Through a learning experience that emphasises dialogue, respect for differences, and scientific responsibility, students are

equipped to face various religious issues more proportionally. They are not only able to explain the differences of opinion among scholars, but also to mediate those differences through rational argumentation based on scholarly ethics. This shows that sectarian moderation does not stop at the formation of individual character, but has broader social implications in strengthening community cohesion and preventing the development of sectarian fanaticism.

Overall, the research findings show that the implementation of Living Madhhab Moderation at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso results in the transformation of students' character in three interconnected dimensions. The first dimension is the intellectual dimension, characterised by the development of critical, analytical, and argumentative thinking skills in understanding Islamic law. The second dimension is the religious dimension, reflected in the growth of *tasāmuḥ* attitudes, respect for differences, and the ability to distinguish between fundamental issues and those within the realm of *ijtihād*. The third dimension is the social dimension, which involves the ability to build inclusive communication, dialogue, and leadership within community life. These findings expand on previous studies that generally place moderation as a result of value learning. This research shows that sectarian moderation is a process of forming an intellectual culture that takes place continuously through the integration of the curriculum, academic traditions, teacher exemplarity, and the collective life of the *pesantren*. Thus, the concept of Living Madhhab Moderation provides a new theoretical contribution to empirical Islamic law studies by explaining that the character formation of students is not only determined by mastery of *fiqh* material but also by the success of embodying the ethics of *fiqh al-ikhtilāf*, the principle of *wasatīyyah*, and the practice of living Islamic law throughout the entire *pesantren* education system.

Conclusion

This study shows that Living Madhhab Moderation at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 11 Poso is an educational practice that integrates the study of *fiqh*, academic culture, teacher exemplarity, and *pesantren* life in shaping a moderate intellectual tradition of Islamic law. Moderation of sects is not understood as an effort to eliminate sectarian differences, but rather as a process of internalising the ethics of *ikhtilāf* that encourages students to understand the methodological foundations of each legal opinion, appreciate the diversity of *ijtihād*, and develop argumentative thinking skills. The dynamics of Islamic legal thought develop through mastery of classical literature, the study of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, deliberative forums, and a culture of scientific dialogue that enables students to critically and responsibly connect the treasures of jurisprudence with contemporary issues. This process results in the formation of an intellectual character marked by epistemological openness, a tolerant attitude towards differences, the ability to reason legally, and readiness to become agents of moderation within society. The main contribution of this research lies in the development of the concept of Living Madhhab Moderation as a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between *wasatīyyah*, *fiqh al-ikhtilāf*, living Islamic law, and the *pesantren* education system. This concept expands the study of empirical Islamic law by showing that moderation in sectarianism is an institutional culture that thrives through educational practices, not merely as norms or curriculum policies. The research findings have implications for the development of a more dialogical, inclusive, and adaptive *pesantren* education model in response to the dynamics of contemporary Islamic law. Subsequent research is recommended to test the application of the Living Madhhab Moderation concept on various typologies of *pesantren* in Indonesia through a comparative or mixed methods approach, so as to obtain a more comprehensive implementation model with a broader theoretical reach.

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