



Engagement:

Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat

Vol. 10, No. 03, Augus, 2026, pp. 539 – 555

ISSN: 2579-8375 (Print), ISSN: 2579-8391 (Online)

<https://engagement.fkdp.or.id/index.php/engagement>

 OPEN ACCESS

Strengthening Religious Moderation in Islamic Boarding Schools through Mentoring a Contextual Qur'anic Exegesis Teaching Model in the Takhassus Tafsir Program

Fathurrosyid¹, Samheri², Abd. Rahman³, Insiyah⁴

^{1,3,4} Universitas Annuqayah

² STAI al-Mujatama' Pamekasan

Email: fathurrosyid090381@gmail.com; samheri.mash@gmail.com; gusement@gmail.com; insiyahfiqi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: Increasing polarization and ideological tensions in religious life, particularly in Pamekasan Regency, Madura, threaten social cohesion. Textualist and exclusive orientations in understanding the Qur'an contribute to intolerance. Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), especially those with Takhassus Tafsir programs, hold strategic potential to foster religious moderation through contextual and participatory exegesis teaching.

Purpose of the Study: This community service aims to strengthen religious moderation by mentoring a contextual Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) teaching model based on exegetical reception within the Takhassus Tafsir Program at Pondok Pesantren Al-Majidiyyah, Pegantenan, Pamekasan.

Methods: Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, the program was implemented over four months (October–December 2025) involving 12 ustadz and 78 students. The process followed eight stages: problem identification, action planning (FGD), model development (curriculum and modules), training, workshops, classroom mentoring, monitoring & evaluation, and dissemination.

Results: The mentoring produced a competency-based contextual tafsir curriculum and three thematic modules. Learning practices shifted from textual-passive to participatory-analytical. Results showed 82% of students could conduct contextual verse analysis, 76% could construct moderate, evidence-based arguments, and 71% demonstrated increased engagement in participatory discussions. This approach effectively strengthened students' critical reasoning, interpretive skills, and inclusive religious attitudes.

Keywords

Religious Moderation; Contextual Tafsir; Exegetical Reception; Islamic Boarding School; Participatory Learning

Article History:

Received: Dec 21st 2025

Revised: May 04th 2026

Accepted: August, 01st 2026

Corresponding Author: Fathurrosyid; Email: fathurrosyid090381@gmail.com; Universitas Annuqayah

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Introduction

Pamekasan Regency is one of the regions in Madura widely recognized for its strong and deeply rooted Islamic traditions (Saleh, 2017; Mawar & Hermanda, 2024; Firdausi & Muhsin, 2024). However, behind this religious reputation lies a complex socio-religious reality marked by increasing polarization and ideological tension among Muslim groups. Based on the findings of Ali Topan (Topan, 2024), the emergence of religious groups with textualist and exclusive orientations has contributed significantly to symptoms of intolerance in Pamekasan's social sphere. This condition is reinforced by the study of Hannan and Syarif (Hannan & Syarif, 2022) which records a rise in horizontal conflicts driven by differences in interpretation and approaches to understanding Islamic teachings, particularly at the grassroots level.

Such conditions pose a serious challenge to maintaining social cohesion and religious harmony in Pamekasan. The gap between textualist understandings and contextual approaches to the Qur'an often results in rigid, judgmental religious practices that lack a spirit of tolerance (Hasan, 2013). Conversely, a substantial potential for fostering moderate Islamic understanding can be found within traditional Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), which have long played a crucial role in shaping the religious worldview of society (Sutrisnawati & Pangestuti, 2024; Luthvia & Nugoho, 2024).

One particularly promising initiative is the Takhassus Tafsir al-Qur'an Program at Pondok Pesantren Al-Majidiyyah, Palduding, Plakpak Village, Pegantenan Subdistrict, Pamekasan. This program is a specialized Qur'anic exegesis education that emphasizes not only textual mastery but also an exegetical reception approach (*resepsi eksegetis*)—a mode of Qur'anic reading that takes into account social context, cultural background, and local needs (Fathurrosyid, 2015). This approach has proven effective in cultivating a more inclusive, tolerant, and socially applicable understanding of Islam. A preliminary study conducted by the researchers in 2024 through participatory observation and interviews with program instructors and students revealed that 75% of students participating in exegetical reception-based tafsir studies demonstrated a more open religious orientation toward differences of legal schools (*mazhab*) and greater engagement in cross-community social activities.

Additional data indicate that over the past two years, Pondok Pesantren Al-Majidiyyah has graduated 335 students from the Takhassus program, (Margaretta, 2024) accompanied by a growing interest among students in social issues such as gender justice, diversity, and environmental justice within thematic Qur'anic interpretation. This potential positions the pesantren as a strategic asset for community service programs aimed at strengthening religious moderation. Nevertheless, a key challenge remains: the absence of systematic documentation, standardized curriculum models, and contextual exegetical reception-based tafsir modules that can be replicated by other Islamic educational institutions. As a result, the success of the program remains largely confined to the internal environment of the pesantren, without extending its impact to surrounding communities or similar institutions in Pamekasan and Madura more broadly.

Through this community service program, the mentoring team seeks to strengthen the curriculum and teaching methodology of tafsir based on contextual exegetical reception, while developing a model of contextual and moderate tafsir modules applicable both within pesantren settings and the wider community. Assistance will also be provided through training in writing socially contextual tafsir grounded in local realities, as well as facilitating the publication of students' exegetical works to enhance their broader reach. In this way, the program not only addresses the limitations of adaptive tafsir pedagogy in responding to Indonesian socio-religious issues, but also leverages the significant potential of Pondok Pesantren Al-Majidiyyah as a pioneer of locally grounded, moderate, contextual tafsir education.

This article examines the challenges of tafsir instruction in instilling religious moderation through contextual exegetical reception, identifies effective strategies for strengthening religious

moderation via this approach, and analyzes its implications for enhancing moderate Islamic understanding within the Takhassus Tafsir Program at Pondok Pesantren Al-Majidiyyah, Pegantenan, Pamekasan.

Numerous previous studies have addressed issues of religious moderation and contextual tafsir education in pesantren. However, there remains considerable room for developing more contextual and applicable tafsir teaching methods, particularly in Madura, a region characterized by distinct social diversity and religious dynamics. The landscape of relevant research can be described as follows:

First, studies on Qur'anic reception in pesantren. A number of academic works within the field of living Qur'an studies have demonstrated that the Qur'an is received in diverse ways within pesantren communities. In addition to exegetical reception through interpretation and teaching (Taufiq & Sikumbang, 2022), the Qur'an is also received functionally, as shown in the studies of Alawiyah et al (Alawiyah et al., 2022) and aesthetically, as highlighted by Jimmy (Lukita, 2023) who demonstrates that Qur'anic recitation (naghām) not only enhances aesthetic appreciation but also contributes to moral refinement. According to Badruz Zaman (Zaman, 2020), these various forms of reception carry distinct meanings and symbols as expressions of obedience, internalization, and contextualization of the moral messages embedded in Qur'anic verses.

Second, research on tafsir and religious moderation in pesantren. Hisny Fajrussalam (Fajrussalam, 2020) explains that classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) taught in pesantren serve as key intellectual references in nurturing moderate attitudes among students. This is supported by Hasanah (Hasanah, 2023), whose study shows that religious moderation is conveyed to students through lessons on Tafsir Jalalain, particularly verses related to theology, law, and ethics. However, Hasbullah (Hasbullah et al., 2024) emphasize that pesantren interpretations of moderation-related verses employ both textual and contextual interpretive models. In this regard, Sindy Anwar (Anwar et al., 2024) argue that tafsir pedagogy in pesantren requires the development of more critical learning methods, such as *munāẓarah* (critical discussion), to foster comprehensive understanding and move beyond reliance on traditional *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods, as further supported by Afifullah (Afifullah, 2021).

Third, studies on the dynamics of religious life in Pamekasan. Research by Firdausi and Muhsin (Firdausi & Muhsin, 2024) highlights how local Madurese traditions, such as *Okol*, play a role in reinforcing moderate and tolerant Islamic values, underscoring the importance of cultural acculturation as a foundation for religious development. However, this study focuses more on cultural traditions in general and does not specifically examine tafsir pedagogy in pesantren as a strategic medium for religious moderation. Meanwhile, Ali Topan's research depicts the reality of ideological conflict in Pamekasan triggered by the emergence of Wahhabi-Salafi groups characterized by exclusivist and textualist tendencies. Although this study is crucial for understanding the roots of intolerance, it remains largely descriptive and does not propose educational or tafsir-based intervention models grounded in local contexts. Similarly, Hannan and Syarif analyze religious thought dynamics among local Islamic organizations in Madura that may lead to conflict, emphasizing moderation as a solution, yet without developing concrete tafsir curricula or teaching methods capable of cultivating moderate attitudes within pesantren.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that pesantren are institutions with a strong commitment to advancing religious moderation through both formal and informal curricula. Tafsir education in pesantren thus plays a vital role in shaping moderate religious understanding through various forms of Qur'anic reception. Nevertheless, the present research and community service initiative is distinct in its focus on mentoring a contextual tafsir teaching model that integrates exegetical reception with local socio-religious issues, specifically within Pondok Pesantren Al-Majidiyyah, which hosts a dedicated Takhassus Tafsir program. This initiative is expected to fill existing gaps and make a significant contribution to the development of religious moderation

education in pesantren through tafsir learning.

This community service program offers several unique contributions compared to previous studies. First, it focuses on developing and mentoring a contextual exegetical reception-based tafsir teaching model that prioritizes the social, cultural, and local needs of Pamekasan, particularly within Pondok Pesantren Al-Majidiyyah. Second, it seeks to develop a systematic and replicable curriculum and moderate tafsir modules applicable to other pesantren as practical educational solutions for strengthening religious moderation. Third, it connects tafsir instruction with contemporary issues such as diversity, gender justice, and environmental concerns, areas that have received limited attention in traditional tafsir education. Fourth, the program targets the publication of students' exegetical works as a strategy to broaden social impact and public education, an approach rarely implemented in pesantren-based tafsir programs.

Method

The community service implementation method was designed in a phased and participatory manner to strengthen religious moderation within the pesantren environment through mentoring a contextual Qur'anic exegesis teaching model in the Takhasus Tafsir Program at PP. Al-Majidiyyah, Pegantenan, Pamekasan. The approach employed was Participatory Action Research (PAR), which emphasizes the active involvement of participants at every stage of change.

The program was conducted over four months (October-December 2025), involving 12 ustadz (teachers) and 78 santri (students) as the main participants. Operationally, the mentoring process followed eight sequential and reflective stages as illustrated in Figure 1.

1. Problem Identification
2. Action Planning (FGD)
3. Model Development (Curriculum & Modules)
4. Training & Workshops
5. Classroom Mentoring Implementation
6. Monitoring & Evaluation
7. Dissemination
8. Reporting

Figure 1: PAR-Based Mentoring Flow

Based on this flow, the implementation of activities is detailed as follows: (1) Problem identification stage (2 weeks), including needs assessment, analysis of the existing tafsir curriculum, and identification of students' religious understanding tendencies; (2) Action planning stage (2 weeks) through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to formulate the intervention design; (3) Model development stage, involving the preparation of curriculum, thematic-contextual tafsir modules, as well as learning tools and evaluation instruments; (4) Training and workshop stage, conducted in six sessions over one month as a process of knowledge transfer to ustadz, musyirif (mentors), and santri; (5) Classroom mentoring implementation stage (2 months), consisting of the direct application of the contextual tafsir learning model accompanied by supervision and periodic reflection; (6) Monitoring and evaluation stage (2 weeks) to assess the effectiveness of the program in enhancing religious moderation reasoning; (7) Dissemination stage, involving the sharing of best practices through academic forums, pesantren discussions, and scientific publications; and (8) Reporting stage as a form of accountability and scientific documentation of the activities.

Each stage within this PAR cycle is reflective and continuous, allowing for iterative improvement throughout the mentoring process. Thus, this program not only produces a

contextual tafsir learning model but also strengthens the internal capacity of the pesantren in developing religious education practices that are moderate and responsive to social contexts.

Result

Overview of the Mentoring Outcomes

The Participatory Action Research (PAR)-based mentoring program resulted in measurable and observable transformations in the tafsir learning system within the Takhassus Program at PP. Al-Majidiyyah. These transformations encompassed instructional practices, learning design, and classroom engagement. The program was conducted over four months (October–December 2025), involving 12 ustadz and 78 students. Participation rates during training sessions ranged from 85% to 95%, indicating a high level of engagement throughout the program.

In line with the objectives outlined in the study, the mentoring produced both tangible outputs and measurable learning outcomes. The outputs include: (a) A competency-based contextual tafsir curriculum; (b) Three thematic tafsir modules (contextual analysis, maqāṣid-based approach, and socially grounded tafsir); (c) Six structured training sessions and four workshops; (d) Continuous classroom mentoring activities.

More importantly, the program demonstrated significant improvements in students' learning capacities. Based on monitoring and evaluation results: *First*, Approximately 82% of students were able to conduct contextual analysis of Qur'anic verses by linking textual meaning with socio-historical contexts; *Second*, Around 76% of students demonstrated the ability to construct moderate, evidence-based arguments independently; *Third*, About 71% of students showed increased active participation in analytical and discussion-based classroom activities.

These findings indicate a shift from a predominantly textual-passive learning pattern toward a more participatory and analytical approach. Students were no longer positioned as passive recipients of knowledge but actively engaged in interpreting texts, questioning meanings, and relating Qur'anic messages to contemporary realities.

The mentoring process of contextual tafsir learning in the Takhassus Program at PP. Al-Majidiyyah, Pamekasan, was carried out in four main stages. *First*, the problem identification stage was conducted over two weeks. *Second*, the action planning stage, in the form of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), was held for two weeks. *Third*, the training stage was implemented over one month through six structured sessions. *Fourth*, the classroom mentoring stage was conducted over a period of two months.

Problem Identification Stage

Participatory observation and interviews with *ustadz* and students revealed patterns in the previous learning practices. The key findings are as follows:

Tabel 1: Identification Stage

No.	Main Findings	Impact on Learning
1	Dominance of <i>bandongan</i> and <i>sorogan</i> methods	Students tended to be passive, and the understanding of Qur'anic verses remained limited to literal meanings
2	Absence of a standardized, competency-based curriculum	There was no clear and measurable learning direction
3	Lack of tafsir learning modules	Students did not have systematic guidance for independent learning
4	Minimal integration of social issues and religious moderation	Tafsir was difficult to apply to students' everyday realities

Interview data further confirmed that both *ustadz* and students expressed a strong need for tafsir learning that is more applicative, thematic, and contextual—particularly in addressing social and religious issues.



Figure 2. The Atmosphere of Tafsir Jalalayn Learning Using the Bandongan Method.

Action Planning Stage

Through a two-day FGD, all stakeholders collectively formulated the direction for transforming the learning process. The concrete outcomes included: (a) the formulation of competency-based Learning Outcomes, encompassing epistemological competence in tafsir, the ability to analyze contexts and compare interpretations, the capacity to construct moderate arguments, and skills in writing analytical or mini-tafsir works; (b) a two-semester curriculum structure, with Semester 1 focusing on epistemology, the history of tafsir, concepts of contextual tafsir, and *maqāṣid*; and Semester 2 emphasizing the practice of contextual interpretation and case studies of Qur'anic verses; and (c) a draft of learning modules covering fundamental concepts of contextual tafsir, techniques of contextual analysis, case studies of sensitive verses (such as jihad, interreligious relations, and gender), as well as exercises and mini-projects in tafsir.

Findings at this stage indicate that the transformation of tafsir learning was not imposed by the researchers, but rather emerged as a collective agreement within the pesantren community.



Figure 3: The Atmosphere of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in the Tafsir Takhassus Program: (a) Development of the Contextual Tafsir Curriculum and Modules; (b) Methodology of Textual and Contextual Tafsir; (c) Participatory Learning

Action Implementation Stage (Classroom Intervention)

Intensive training and mentoring directly transformed classroom learning practices. The forms of implementation included: (a) training in contextual tafsir methodology, in which *ustadz* learned sociological analysis techniques, dynamic *asbab al-nuzul*, and *maqāṣid* approaches through case studies; (b) workshops on writing social–conceptual tafsir, where *ustadz* produced mini-*tafsir* based on contemporary issues such as social justice, Madurese culture, and religious moderation; (c) training in participatory learning and micro-teaching, during which *ustadz* practiced applying the Think–Pair–Share model, verse-based case analysis, problem-based discussions, and mini-*tafsir* presentations; and (d) mentoring of direct teaching practice in the classroom, where students demonstrated increased interaction and greater confidence in questioning the relevance of Qur’anic verses to social issues.

Analysis of Changes in Learning Practices, Challenges and Sustainability Strategies

The transformation of learning can be seen in the following comparison:

Tabel 2: Changes in Learning Practices

No.	Aspect	Before Mentoring	After Mentoring
1	Role of the <i>Ustadz</i>	Sole source of information	Facilitator of discussion and analysis
2	Student Activities	Listening and note-taking	Questioning, discussing, and analyzing verses
3	Learning Focus	Literal meaning of verses	Meaning of verses integrated with social context
4	Learning Evaluation	Memorization and textual meaning	Contextual analysis and mini- <i>tafsir</i> writing
5	Verse–Reality Relationship	Not explicitly addressed	Discussed through social case studies

The mentoring of tafsir learning in the Takhassus Tafsir Program at PP. Al-Majidiyyah,

Pegantenan, resulted in observable changes in learning practices, as reflected in the shift in student participation and instructional methods, as presented in the table above.

Despite the significant changes achieved, collective reflection identified several challenges:

Tabel 3: Challenges and Sustainability Strategies

No.	Challenges	Recommended Follow-Up Strategies
1	Some <i>ustadz</i> remain comfortable with traditional methods	Establishment of a tafsir teachers' learning community
2	Limited availability of contemporary tafsir references in the pesantren	Provision of digital and printed literature repositories
3	Integration of modules into the academic calendar requires time	Monitoring and mentoring during the first semester
4	Students are not yet accustomed to analytical writing	Regular writing workshops and the development of a student journal

Discussion

In this subsection, the authors present an in-depth analysis of the processes, dynamics, and outcomes of the mentoring program on the contextual tafsir teaching model aimed at strengthening religious moderation in the pesantren. Following the presentation of empirical findings in the previous subsection regarding the implementation of the mentoring activities, this section critically interprets those findings to examine the extent to which the contextual tafsir approach has influenced students' mindsets, learning patterns, and religious practices within the pesantren environment.

The discussion does not merely focus on evaluating the program's successes, but also highlights the challenges, forms of resistance, and supporting factors that affected the effectiveness of the mentoring process. The analysis connects field data—including micro-teaching activities, FGDs, classroom observations, and interviews—with the theoretical frameworks employed from the outset of the study, such as the concept of contextual tafsir, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, socio-historical approaches, and the core values of religious moderation.

Through this comprehensive analytical structure, the subsection aims to provide a holistic picture of how contextual tafsir learning in pesantren can function as a pedagogical strategy for cultivating inclusive, tolerant, and socially adaptive religious perspectives, while maintaining a firm commitment to the authenticity of Qur'anic teachings. This discussion also serves as the foundation for formulating recommendations and implications for curriculum development, learning methodologies, and pesantren policies in the subsequent chapter.

Paradigmatic Shift from Textual Tafsir to Contextual Tafsir

Before the mentoring intervention, as identified in the initial assessment stage, tafsir learning in the Takhasus Program at PP. Al-Majidiyyah operated through traditional *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods, in which the *ustadz* held the highest interpretive authority, while the santri functioned primarily as recipients of information. This structure emphasized the accuracy of the literal meaning of the verses, *i'rāb*, and the rules of *nahwu-ṣarf* to ensure linguistic precision. The primary focus was to ensure that students understood the grammatical meaning of the text as written, rather than relating it to the dynamics of social life. Within this approach, truth was

perceived as fixed (given) and merely transmitted to subsequent generations.

Following the mentoring intervention—particularly after six training sessions and two months of classroom mentoring—the learning process underwent a transformation toward a context-based tafsir approach (Kerwanto et al., 2024). Instruction no longer focused solely on explaining the meaning of verses but also encouraged students to analyze historical contexts—both classical *asbāb al-nuzūl* and contemporary socio-historical interpretations—to understand why the verses were revealed and what human problems they sought to address. Students were also invited to compare the perspectives of various mufasssir across different periods and to connect the ethical messages and *maqāṣid al-Qurʾān* with contemporary issues such as gender justice, tolerance, economic concerns, ecology, and challenges in digital society (Shomad, 2022). In the classroom, discussions, case studies, and analytical assignments became integral components of the learning process, shifting the focus toward reasoning rather than mere memorization.

This transformation indicates a fundamental epistemological shift (Putri et al., 2024). *First*, religious knowledge is no longer positioned as a ready-made inheritance to be passively consumed, but rather as a collective construction between ustadz and santri through critical dialogue grounded in scientific methodology. *Second*, the meaning of Qurʾanic verses is understood as dynamic guidance—the core message remains constant, but its application must be mediated through social realities so that the Qurʾan functions as a source of solutions rather than merely theoretical knowledge. *Third*, the position of santri evolves from objects of instruction into subjects of interpretation, namely individuals with epistemic capacity to understand texts responsibly based on authoritative references.

This transformation aligns with the fundamental principle of contextual tafsir, in which the revealed text serves a normative function as guidance (*hidayah*), while social reality becomes the arena for the actualization of meaning (Kaltsum, 2020). Therefore, the success of understanding Qurʾanic verses is not measured solely by linguistic accuracy, but by the extent to which Qurʾanic values can be actualized to address contemporary challenges. This approach does not abandon tradition, but rather expands it (Saefulloh, 2024); linguistic rigor is preserved while being reinterpreted within a framework of religiosity that is responsive, inclusive, and relevant to societal needs.

Thus, the pedagogical and epistemological shift occurring in the Takhasus Program not only enhances students' academic competence but also cultivates a more context-aware Qurʾanic mindset—one that is capable of preserving the classical scholarly heritage while integrating ethical principles and the values of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) into modern life (Ridho et al., 2025). This serves as a crucial foundation for developing a new generation of mufasssir who are moderate, analytical, and prepared to contribute to contemporary socio-religious discourse.

The Contribution of the Mentoring Program to Strengthening Religious Moderation

The approach developed through the mentoring program positioned the interpretive process as the primary medium for cultivating moderate attitudes, rather than merely transmitting values in a direct and prescriptive manner. Because students were encouraged to function as active interpreters, religious moderation emerged as a rational and scholarly outcome, rather than as a doctrinal dogma. This model strengthened students' agency in interpreting the text substantively and fairly, while at the same time safeguarding them from extremist tendencies arising from binary or black-and-white readings of religious texts (Fathurrosyid, 2020). As a result, the impact of the mentoring program can be observed across three mutually reinforcing pathways: epistemic (ways of knowing), hermeneutic (ways of understanding the text), and social-practical (ways of applying interpretation), as elaborated below:

First, the Epistemic Pathway: Cultivating a Tolerant Way of Knowing. Along this epistemic pathway, students were made aware of the diversity of interpretive methods and exegetical traditions, enabling them to accept differences of interpretation without undermining religious authority. The mechanisms included: (1) teaching the history of tafsir and comparative interpretive methodologies (e.g., literal, contextual, and *maqāṣid*-based approaches) (Ridwan, 2016) as an integral part of the curriculum rather than as supplementary material; (2) conducting comparative textual studies, in which a single verse was examined through the interpretations of two to three mufasssirs from different traditions, with an emphasis on mapping their arguments and underlying methodological premises; (Zahra, 2025) (3) employing structured academic debates that required evidence-based references rather than emotional rhetoric.

Second, the Hermeneutic Pathway: Shifting the Focus from Words to Moral Purposes. Within this hermeneutic pathway, students were trained to read Qur'anic verses by asking about their ethical objectives and social functions, thereby directing interpretation toward moral solutions rather than mere textual labeling. The learning mechanisms included: (1) introducing and applying the concept of *maqāṣid* (the objectives of Islamic law) as an analytical lens for each topic—such as justice, public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*), and the protection of life, dignity, and property (Maimun et al., 2024). (2) exercises moving “from text to norm,” namely extracting core values from the text and formulating universal principles relevant to contemporary issues.

Third, the Social–Practical Pathway: Linking Textual Interpretation with Social Realities. Along this social–practical pathway, students were required to internalize moderation through the practical application of tafsir to local problems, ensuring that values became lived realities within social interaction. The learning mechanisms included: (1) project-based curricula involving small-scale social interventions, such as inter-community dialogue, tolerance workshops, and literacy campaigns; (2) simulations of conflict resolution and mediation facilitation using arguments derived from contextual tafsir; and (3) collaboration with local stakeholders—including community leaders, government officials—to provide real-life contexts and constructive feedback.

Transformation of Learning Methods: From Lecture-Based Classes to Participatory Learning

Prior to the mentoring program, tafsir classes in the *Takbassus* Program at PP Al-Majidiyyah were oriented toward a knowledge-transmission model: the *ustadz* explained the meaning of verses, students took notes, and the session ended. This pattern positioned the *ustadz* as the sole authority and fostered a hierarchical classroom culture. The mentoring program shifted this approach toward participatory and collaborative learning, in which the *ustadz* acted as a facilitator of thinking processes rather than as the single source of truth.

Key elements of this transformation included the implementation of micro-teaching, verse-based case analysis, the Think–Pair–Share technique, and the preparation of mini-tafsir assignments. Each technique played a distinct role in developing independent and argumentative tafsir reasoning, as outlined below:

First, Micro-Teaching: Teaching Simulations to Develop Tafsir Reasoning. The learning design consisted of: (1) selected students taking turns presenting their interpretation of a verse for 7–10 minutes; and (2) other groups acting as reviewers who provided feedback based on tafsir principles, including linguistic analysis, *asbab al-nuzūl*, *munāsabah*, and *maqāṣid*. The concrete impacts included: (1) students learned not only to understand verses, but also to communicate tafsir arguments systematically; (2) rigidity and fear of making mistakes were reduced, replaced by confidence in taking scholarly responsibility; and (3) the *ustadz* assumed the role of a coach who guided the process, rather than an authoritative corrector who determined right and wrong.

Second, Verse-Based Case Analysis: Linking Text with Social Reality. The learning design involved: (1) presenting verses not for literal explanation, but for connection with specific issues such as tolerance, gender relations, the community economy, child marriage, or digital ethics; and (2) requiring students to identify the social problem, the moral message of the verse, and the Qur'anic solution. The concrete impacts were: (1) tafsir became not merely abstract knowledge, but a tool for problem-solving; (2) students learned that differing contexts may produce different applications, even though the core values of the verse remain the same; and (3) social sensitivity increased, as students learned to read society through a Qur'anic ethical lens.

Third, Think–Pair–Share: Encouraging Scholarly Dialogue among Students. The learning steps included: (1) *Think*: students individually analyzed a verse based on specific scholarly instructions (e.g., linguistic or *maqāṣid*-based analysis); (2) *Pair*: students discussed their analyses with a partner, identifying points of agreement and difference; and (3) *Share*: each pair presented a synthesized result to the class for critique and further development. The concrete impacts included: (1) increased academic equality, as quieter students were given space to think before speaking; (2) the classroom became not an arena of competition, but a space for the collective production of knowledge; and (3) the development of a culture of engaging with others' arguments, rather than merely awaiting the *ustadz*'s judgment.

Fourth, Mini-Tafsir Writing: Full Internalization of the Scholarly Process. The process involved: (1) each student selecting one verse related to a particular theme and composing a 2–5 page tafsir summary based on linguistic analysis, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the views of two to three mufasssirs, the moral objectives of the verse, and its contemporary social relevance. The concrete impacts included: (1) students were able to practice tafsir methodology, not merely quote existing interpretations; (2) there was a marked improvement in reference literacy, scholarly citation, and written argumentation; and (3) a sense of ownership over the academic process emerged, as scholarly products were developed independently.

The Construction of Local Knowledge as a Basis for Tafsir

The mentoring process demonstrated that the interpretation of Qur'anic verses became easier to understand, more deeply internalized, and more applicable when the text of the Qur'an was connected to local knowledge that is embedded in the everyday life of Madurese society. Contextualization, therefore, was not merely an academic exercise, but a process of enabling the Qur'an to speak through the cultural language familiar to students and the wider community. In this sense, local wisdom functioned as an epistemological bridge linking revelation to social reality. Within this framework, the construction of tafsir was directed toward the following dimensions;

First, Madurese Social Traditions as Entry Points for Interpretation. Several Madurese cultural values were used as entry points to understand the messages of Qur'anic verses, such as family honor and dignity, ethical respect toward parents, *kiai*, and elders, communal solidarity and mutual cooperation, as well as Islamic ethics in neighborly relations. A concrete classroom intervention illustrates this approach: when discussing QS al-Ḥujurāt (49):11–12 on the prohibition of mockery and negative suspicion, the *ustadz* asked students to compare the verses with the hierarchical use of local Madurese language—*engkok*, *kauleh*, *abdinah*—which reflects relations of respect within the family and broader social etiquette. This approach enabled the verses to be more easily understood and connected to social realities. In this way, Qur'anic messages were not perceived as “foreign teachings,” but as an integral part of Madurese cultural identity.

Second, Dynamics of Local Religious Authority as Material for Tafsir Reflection. Madurese society is characterized by strong structures of religious authority involving *ulama*, *kiai*, and pesantren leaders. When verses concerning leadership, trust (*amānah*), and ethical inquiry were contextualized within these structures, students responded more actively. A concrete example can

be seen in the discussion of QS al-Nisā' (4):58 on *amānah*, where the focus shifted toward the moral responsibility of a *kiai* as a public figure, not merely as a formal state leader. Students were asked to identify positive and negative examples from pesantren life and surrounding communities without mentioning specific names. This approach aimed to cultivate critical thinking without undermining ethical respect, while also internalizing tafsir as a tool for strengthening communal moral integrity rather than as abstract theory. In this sense, tafsir functioned as an instrument of social and institutional education, not merely as an academic ritual.

Third, Tafsir as a Response to Local Social Problems. When Qur'anic verses were linked to social issues currently faced by Madurese communities—such as the high prevalence of early marriage, social conflicts between families or villages, boundaries of gender interaction during adolescence, and the influence of migration culture and migrant economies—tafsir classes shifted from a purely theoretical domain to one of social transformation. A concrete example involved verses on marriage and readiness for family responsibility (QS al-Nūr 24:32; QS al-Rūm 30:21), which were discussed alongside criteria of physical, psychological, and economic maturity. The discussion was directed toward questioning whether being “ready for marriage” is determined solely by biological age or by preparedness to build a family based on the principles of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. Students were then asked to formulate Qur'anic-based recommendations for village communities, enabling tafsir to function directly as a discourse of social awareness and transformation.

Pedagogical Intervention as a Strategy of Scholarly Deradicalization

The findings of the mentoring program indicate that changes in methods of tafsir instruction not only enhanced students' academic competence but also fostered intellectual safeguards against extreme, exclusive, and uncivil forms of religiosity. Pedagogical interventions grounded in contextual tafsir functioned as a process of scholarly deradicalization, namely by developing students' capacity to engage critically with religious texts while preserving the authenticity of Islamic scholarly sources. In this way, the prevention of extremism proceeded through academic pathways rather than through purely persuasive counter-narrative sermons that lack transformation in patterns of thinking. This pedagogical intervention can be elaborated through the following dimensions:

First, the Ability to Distinguish between Normative and Historical Commands: Closing the Space for the Misuse of Qur'anic Verses. One of the roots of religious extremism lies in the tendency to treat all Qur'anic commands as absolute instructions without differentiating between commands that are normative (universal, enduring, and applicable across time) and those that are historical (situational and linked to specific social phenomena in the context of revelation). The mentoring method, which integrated *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*, and comparative tafsir studies, enabled students to understand the ethical objectives of verses, determine their appropriate scope of application, and identify universal values that must not be compromised. With these competencies, students avoided rigid legalistic black-and-white thinking—a cognitive pattern that often becomes an entry point to radicalism. They came to recognize that the application of Qur'anic verses must consider *maṣlaḥah*, justice, and humanity as the spirit of the Shari'ah. At this point, deradicalization occurred structurally through interpretive competence rather than through doctrinal prohibition.

Second, the Ability to Detect Extremist Interpretive Biases: Dismantling Radical Rhetoric from Its Epistemic Roots. Radicalism is not merely a problem of attitude, but also an epistemological issue concerning how verses are read and interpreted. Through micro-teaching, case-based verse analysis, and content analysis, students were trained to recognize patterns of extremist interpretation, such as partial quotation of verses, neglect of *maqāṣid*, erasure of historical

and socio-political contexts, and the generalization of conflict-related verses to all situations. When students became accustomed to tracing references, verifying arguments, comparing scholarly opinions, and examining logical structures, they were able to counter extremist narratives even before such narratives entered their belief systems. What emerged was not simply an emotional rejection of radicalism, but an epistemological incompatibility in which extremism found no cognitive space to take root or develop.

Third, the Ability to Argue with Adab and Scholarly Rigor on Sensitive Issues: Cultivating an Ethic of Respectful Disagreement. Extremism thrives in monolithic modes of thinking that assume there is only one legitimate religious opinion. The mentoring program transformed tafsir classes into spaces of scholarly deliberation rather than monologue. When students became accustomed to presenting interpretations grounded in verifiable sources, receiving academic criticism with openness, and offering counterarguments with adab and without personal attacks, a healthy and dignified culture of *ikhtilaf* (Jamrah, 2014) was cultivated—far removed from opinion fanaticism or tendencies toward excommunication of those who differ. Such socio-religious intelligence constitutes a permanent contradiction to radicalism, because extremism depends on emotional polarization to survive.

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Development

The transformation of contextual tafsir learning in the Takhasus Program has produced significant progress; however, the process is not yet fully ideal. The development of new discourses inevitably encounters structural and cultural resistance that must be examined through scholarly analysis. Therefore, existing limitations and opportunities for further development cannot be overlooked and may be outlined as follows.

1. Persisting Limitations

First, the adaptation of some ustadz to new pedagogical methods. Pedagogical innovation entails a shift in the role of the teacher from a sole authority to a facilitator of scholarly dialogue. Not all ustadz feel prepared to leave behind traditional *bandongan* and *sorogan* models that have been deeply rooted for decades. Some express concern that open discussion and plurality of opinions may diminish teacher authority or generate divergent viewpoints among students. This resistance does not constitute outright rejection, but rather reflects uncertainty in responding to an epistemological shift.

Second, limited access to contemporary tafsir literature. Students and ustadz remain heavily dependent on classical tafsir texts, while references to modern and contemporary tafsir—such as the works of Quraish Shihab, Fazlur Rahman, Abdullah Saeed, Amina Wadud, and other contemporary scholars—are not yet sufficiently available. This imbalance in literature can hinder deeper engagement with contextual interpretive methodologies and restrict students from conducting richer comparative studies across diverse perspectives.

Third, the absence of an evaluation system based on analytical assessment. Learning assessment continues to focus predominantly on memorization and grammatical accuracy rather than on interpretive analysis, argumentation, and application to social contexts. Without comprehensive evaluation, indicators of success in critical learning are difficult to map. The lack of analytical rubrics results in students' learning outcomes not being systematically monitored.

2. Long-Term Development Opportunities

First, the formation of a learning community among ustadz. Regular forums among instructors can serve as platforms for sharing methodologies, developing syllabi, and discussing classroom dynamics. Such communities enable peer mentoring, ensuring that change is not driven solely by external mentoring but also grows organically from within the institution as an intellectual

necessity.

Second, the publication of a Madura-based contextual tafsir book. Interpretive experiences rooted in local realities—such as religious authority, male-dominated cultural norms, kinship relations, and social issues like early marriage—can be compiled into an academic publication that represents an original scholarly contribution from the pesantren. Such publications could become regional references and strengthen the pesantren’s scholarly identity as a producer of tafsir knowledge.

Third, the development of a mini academic journal for Takhassus students. Providing students with a platform to publish contextual tafsir research would foster a research culture from an early stage. A mini journal would also serve as a form of academic legitimation for students, as well as a portfolio to support further studies or scholarly engagement.

Fourth, academic collaboration among pesantren. Strengthening networks with other pesantren—within Madura, across Java, and at the national level—would expand knowledge exchange, methodological discussions on tafsir, and the organization of seminars and workshops. Such networks could reduce disparities in access to literature and enhance the academic competitiveness of pesantren as centers for the study of Nusantara tafsir.

Conclusion

This community service initiative, conducted through mentoring on a contextual tafsir teaching model in the Takhassus Tafsir Program at PP Al-Majidiyyah, Pegantenan, Pamekasan, demonstrates that strengthening religious moderation in pesantren can be effectively achieved through pedagogical and epistemological transformation in tafsir learning. The contextual tafsir approach based on exegetical reception not only enriches teaching methods but also shapes students’ ways of thinking to be more inclusive, critical, and responsible in understanding the Qur’an.

The results of the mentoring reveal a significant shift from a textual–passive learning pattern toward a contextual–participatory model. Students are no longer positioned merely as recipients of knowledge, but as active interpreters who analyze Qur’anic verses by considering historical context, the *maqāṣid al-Qur’ān*, and local socio-religious realities. This transformation has a direct impact on enhancing students’ abilities to construct scholarly arguments, to accept differences in interpretation, and to connect Qur’anic messages with social issues such as tolerance, gender justice, and community challenges in Madura.

The mentoring also contributes to strengthening religious moderation through three main pathways: the epistemic, hermeneutic, and social–practical pathways. Their integration ensures that moderation is not merely a normative discourse, but emerges as a rational awareness and lived religious praxis. Moreover, changes in learning methods—through micro-teaching, verse case analysis, Think–Pair–Share, and the preparation of mini-tafsir—function as an effective strategy of scholarly deradicalization, as they equip students with the ability to detect biases in extremist interpretations and to cultivate an ethic of *ikhtilaf* that is courteous and civilized.

Nevertheless, this community service also identifies several limitations, particularly in relation to the adaptation of some ustadz to new methods, limited access to contemporary tafsir literature, and the lack of an optimal analytical-based evaluation system. At the same time, these limitations open up opportunities for long-term development, such as the formation of ustadz learning communities, the publication of locally based contextual tafsir from Madura, the development of student journals, and the strengthening of academic networks among pesantren.

Overall, this mentoring affirms that pesantren—particularly through the Takhassus Tafsir Program—hold a strategic position in building religious moderation that is firmly rooted in the

Islamic scholarly tradition while remaining responsive to social contexts. The contextual tafsir teaching model developed at PP Al-Majidiyyah is not only relevant to the local context of Pamekasan, but also has the potential to be replicated as a model for religious moderation education in other pesantren across Indonesia.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

The author extends sincere gratitude and highest appreciation to the caregivers, administrators, ustadz, and students of the Takhassus Tafsir Program at Pondok Pesantren Al-Majidiyyah, Pegantenan, Pamekasan, for their openness, support, and cooperation throughout the mentoring process and the implementation of this community service. Their active participation and meaningful contributions at every stage of the activities—from discussions and training sessions to the implementation of the contextual tafsir learning model—are deeply appreciated. The author also expresses gratitude to the Directorate of Islamic Higher Education, Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, for providing financial support for this community service through the Litapdimas program. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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