



Evaluation of Holistic Learning and Independent Curriculum: Enhancing Education Quality Through Religious Moderation

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Abstract

Issues in implementing the Independent Curriculum or *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and in integrating religious moderation, often hinder holistic evaluation of learning, thereby affecting educational quality in Islamic higher education. This study examines the influence of holistic learning evaluation on the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and its impact on educational quality, with a focus on religious moderation at UIN SMH Banten. Using a quantitative explanatory approach, data were collected from 174 PGMI students via validated questionnaires (CFA loadings ≥ 0.60 , CR ≥ 0.70 , AVE ≥ 0.50 ; Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.80$). Holistic learning evaluation is a comprehensive assessment of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. At the same time, religious moderation refers to balanced, tolerant, and inclusive Islamic values measured by indicators of fairness, respect, and anti-extremism. Data were analysed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with AMOS. The results show that learning evaluation significantly affects educational quality ($\beta = 0.482$, $p < 0.001$) and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* ($\beta = 0.396$, $p < 0.01$), while the *Kurikulum Merdeka* also significantly improves educational quality ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$). Religious moderation has no significant direct effect on educational quality ($\beta = 0.082$, $p > 0.05$) and does not moderate the effect of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* ($p > 0.05$). Model fit is acceptable (CFI = 0.907, RMSEA = 0.050, CMIN/DF = 1.434). The findings imply that PTKIN should strengthen learning evaluation and curriculum implementation systems to enhance educational quality, while religious moderation should be integrated through curriculum design and academic culture rather than as a direct influencing factor.

Keywords: *Learning Evaluation, Kurikulum Merdeka, Religious Moderation, PTKIN, SEM*

INTRODUCTION

The development of modern education in Indonesia reflects a transformative shift toward producing graduates who are academically competent while embodying moderate religious values. Within Islamic higher education (PTKIN), implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* or *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* has become a strategic step to enhance quality and relevance. The program encourages flexible, student-centred learning through project-based activities that align academic competence with real-world application. Several studies, [Wahyudin et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Fuad et al. \(2024\)](#), report improvements in students' learning independence and adaptability. However, implementation in PTKIN is often constrained by uneven lecturer readiness and a lack of teaching resources consistent with the principles of religious moderation. Thus, while the Independent Curriculum fosters innovation and global competitiveness, its success depends on institutional capacity and the integration of Islamic values.

Holistic learning evaluation complements the Independent Curriculum by assessing students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies in an integrated manner. Research has demonstrated that such evaluations enhance critical thinking, creativity, and cooperation ([Briliant & Mustofa, 2025](#); [Qoirunnisa & Ikhrom, 2025](#)), leading to graduates who are not only



intellectually capable but also strong in character. However, in practice, evaluation within PTKIN remains largely exam-oriented and lacks consistency in implementing performance or portfolio-based assessments. The limited adoption of holistic evaluation frameworks, especially those aligned with religious character formation, indicates a gap between policy design and institutional practice. Previous studies have shown that learning evaluation in the Independent Curriculum plays an important role in improving the quality of education at State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN). [Fakhri \(2023\)](#) emphasised that competency-based evaluation supports holistic education and is oriented toward character development and applied competencies in line with the demands of the world of work.

A holistic evaluation based on the Independent Curriculum can strengthen attitudes of religious moderation through a practical competency approach that encourages inclusivity and avoids polarisation ([Hidayat et al., 2025](#)). Other research confirms that evaluations that focus on character development and social values strengthen an inclusive and tolerant understanding of religious moderation and encourage interfaith collaboration, thereby supporting the internalisation of moderate attitudes among students ([Minabari et al., 2024](#); [Nasir et al., 2023](#)).

Religious moderation serves as a foundational value for PTKIN, guiding educational transformation towards inclusivity, tolerance, and balance in religious understanding. Empirical studies by [Setiawan \(2024\)](#) and [Purnomo et al. \(2024\)](#) suggest that integrating moderation values into learning improves students' social cohesion and moral development. However, evidence remains mixed regarding its direct effect on educational quality and its interaction with curriculum and evaluation systems. Few quantitative studies explore how religious moderation functions as a moderating or mediating variable in educational processes. This study addresses that gap by analysing the influence of holistic learning evaluation and the Independent Curriculum on the quality of education, while assessing the role of religious moderation as both a moderator and a mediator within PTKIN, particularly at UIN SMH Banten.

This study aims to analyse the interrelationships among holistic learning evaluation, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, religious moderation, and educational quality within the context of UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Examine the effect of holistic learning evaluation on the quality of education at PTKIN.
2. Analyse the influence of holistic learning evaluation on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.
3. Assess the impact of the Independent Curriculum on the quality of education.
4. Evaluate the role of religious moderation as a moderating variable in strengthening the relationship between the Independent Curriculum and the quality of education.

Based on these objectives, the present study addresses the following questions:

1. How does holistic learning evaluation influence educational quality?
2. Does holistic learning evaluation affect the implementation of the Independent Curriculum?
3. How does the Independent Curriculum affect educational quality?
4. Does religious moderation moderate the relationship between the Independent Curriculum and educational quality?

This study offers one of the first SEM-based integrated models in the PTKIN context that links holistic learning evaluation, Independent Curriculum implementation, and educational quality, while clarifying the non-significant moderating role of religious moderation in this relationship.

The results guide PTKIN leaders and lecturers to prioritise moderation-oriented holistic assessment and consistent Independent Curriculum implementation as the main levers to enhance educational quality, while embedding religious moderation through curriculum design and campus culture rather than as a standalone driver.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious moderation in PTKIN

In PTKIN, religious moderation is typically defined through dimensions such as national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture. It is promoted as a policy framework to prevent extremism and support social cohesion. Studies by [Alif and Yasin \(2020\)](#) and [Purnomo and Nursyiwan \(2024\)](#) in Islamic higher education environments show that campuses with strong moderation programs tend to report higher levels of inclusive attitudes, intergroup harmony, and resistance to radical narratives among

However, the evidence from [Murtadho and Hanafi \(2023\)](#); [Mausul \(2025\)](#); [Waslah et al. \(2025\)](#) evidence is mixed on whether religious moderation directly translates into higher measured educational quality, because many studies focus on attitudes and behaviour rather than learning outcomes or institutional performance indicators. This suggests that in a curriculum–quality model, religious moderation may function more as a contextual or moderating factor than as a strong direct driver of quality, which underpins its placement as a moderator in this study.

Independent Curriculum/MBKM in PTKIN

The Independent Curriculum and MBKM aim to create flexible, student-centred learning that connects coursework with real-world experience through research, projects, and cross-disciplinary activities. In PTKIN, these policies are expected to strengthen academic relevance and graduate competitiveness while remaining aligned with Islamic values and national character ([Suryati et al., 2023](#)).

Empirical findings generally, [Fisabilillah et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Chan and Chen \(2022\)](#) report gains in student autonomy, collaboration, and innovation where MBKM is well supported, yet implementation quality varies significantly due to differences in institutional capacity, lecturer readiness, and digital infrastructure. Consequently, this study treats Independent Curriculum implementation as a core process variable that should positively affect educational quality, while acknowledging that its impact may depend on the extent to which it is supported and aligned with other elements of the learning system.

Holistic learning evaluation as a quality lever

Holistic learning evaluation in higher education refers to an assessment that systematically covers cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, often through performance tasks, projects, and portfolios alongside tests ([Biggs & Tang, 2011](#)). Research by [Haryono \(2024\)](#) and [Supit et al. \(2025\)](#) shows that such approaches can enhance critical thinking, creativity, and professional skills, and they support continuous quality improvement by generating richer feedback for lecturers and programmes.

Nonetheless, many universities, including PTKIN, still rely heavily on written exams and fragmented assessment practices, so the potential of holistic evaluation for quality assurance is not fully realised ([Lennie et al., 2015](#)). Within this study's model, holistic learning evaluation is therefore conceptualised as a key quality assurance mechanism that should positively influence both Independent Curriculum implementation and overall educational quality.

Integrative studies on evaluation, curriculum, and quality of education

Quality in Islamic higher education is commonly operationalised through indicators such as accreditation results, graduate competence, achievement of learning outcomes, student satisfaction, and internal quality assurance performance. [Rosli et al. \(2021\)](#) study links curriculum innovation and assessment reform to improvements in these indicators, but most focus on single levers (curriculum, evaluation, or environment) rather than testing integrated structural

relationships, particularly in PTKIN contexts.

There is also limited SEM-based work that simultaneously models how evaluation practices and curriculum implementation drive educational quality while incorporating religious moderation as a contextual factor (Zamhari et al., 2023). This gap justifies developing an integrated SEM model in this study that links holistic evaluation, Independent Curriculum implementation, religious moderation, and educational quality within a single framework.

Positioning religious moderation in the model

Theoretically, the internalisation of religious moderation values in PTKIN can be explained through social learning and campus culture approaches, where students adopt moderate attitudes by observing role models, participating in programmes, and engaging in inclusive academic environments (Kemenag, 2025).

Such values, Yahya et al. (2025) note, may indirectly support educational quality by reducing conflict, fostering cooperation, and creating a conducive learning climate. However, they may not appear as a strong direct statistical predictor of quality measures that focus on learning outcomes or accreditation scores. Therefore, in this study, religious moderation is positioned as a moderating variable that may strengthen or weaken the impact of Independent Curriculum implementation on educational quality, rather than as a major direct determinant.

Hypothesis development

Drawing on Constructive Alignment and quality assurance perspectives, holistic learning evaluation is expected to support better curriculum implementation and higher educational quality by aligning outcomes, teaching, and assessment. At the same time, Independent Curriculum implementation is assumed to enhance educational quality by promoting relevant, student-centred learning, while religious moderation is hypothesised to shape the extent to which curriculum practices translate into quality gains within the PTKIN context.

Accordingly, this study tests the following hypotheses, which are consistent with the introduction and abstract:

- H1: Learning evaluation has a positive and significant effect on the quality of education.
- H2: Independent Curriculum implementation has a positive and significant effect on the quality of education.
- H3: Learning evaluation has a positive and significant effect on Independent Curriculum implementation.
- H4: Religious moderation moderates the effect of the Independent Curriculum on the quality of education, such that the positive effect of the Independent Curriculum on quality of education becomes stronger/weaker at different levels of religious moderation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative explanatory design using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with AMOS to test theory-driven hypotheses regarding the relationships among learning evaluation, Independent Curriculum implementation, religious moderation, and educational quality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). SEM is used to examine both direct and moderating effects among latent variables measured with multi-item Likert scales, in line with recommendations for theory testing in educational research (Hair et al., 2021).

Learning Evaluation (X) is specified as an independent variable that directly affects the Quality of Education (Y) and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (M). The Independent Curriculum functions as a mediating process variable linking learning evaluation to educational quality, while Religious Moderation (Z) is modelled as a moderator that may strengthen

or weaken the relationship between curriculum implementation and educational quality. This configuration captures the complexity of interactions among evaluation, curriculum, and value-based context. It is consistent with explanatory SEM approaches that emphasise simultaneous estimation of multiple paths and conditional effects (Kline, 2016).

The population comprises all active students of the Islamic Madrasah Teacher Education Study Program (PGMI) at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten in the semester when data were collected. The sampling frame was constructed from the official list of active PGMI students provided by the academic administration office, including student ID, study year, and class group. Inclusion criteria were active registration in the current semester, enrolment in at least one core PGMI course, and willingness to participate; students on academic leave or with incomplete enrolment status were excluded.

A simple random sampling technique was applied using the sampling frame: each student was assigned a unique number and selected via a computer-generated random number procedure to ensure equal probability of inclusion (Creswell, 2014). From the invited students, 174 completed responses were obtained; this sample size is acceptable for covariance-based SEM given the model complexity and aligns with commonly cited guidelines of at least 5–10 cases per estimated parameter and a minimum of around 150–200 cases for medium-complexity SEM models (Memon et al., 2025). The achieved N also exceeds simpler rules of thumb, such as “10 observations per indicator”, when considering that some indicators were removed during the CFA stage, which reduces the number of freely estimated parameters (Hair et al., 2021).

Primary data were collected using a 75-item questionnaire scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), administered online via Google Forms to facilitate access for all PGMI students and to streamline data management (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To minimise duplicate responses, the form was configured to limit submissions to one response per institutional email account and to block editing after submission. Data collection took place at UIN SMH Banten during [November–December, 2025], and reminders were sent to non-respondents to improve the response rate.

The measurement instrument operationalises four latent constructs: Learning Evaluation, Independent Curriculum, Religious Moderation, and Quality of Education. Learning Evaluation encompasses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor assessments, including project- and portfolio-based tasks, feedback practices, and performance-oriented criteria adapted from the higher-education assessment literature (Herlina et al., 2025). The Independent Curriculum construct reflects flexibility of learning paths, student-centred pedagogy, project-based learning, and external learning experiences aligned with MBKM guidelines in Religion Affairs (Kemenag, 2025). Quality of Education is defined through indicators related to perceived achievement of learning outcomes, teaching effectiveness, relevance to professional needs, and satisfaction with programme quality, consistent with quality assurance frameworks in Islamic higher education (Komalasari et al., 2024). Religious Moderation is measured using dimensions such as tolerance, anti-violence, respect for diversity, and adherence to national and institutional moderation guidelines, adapted from policy documents and previous PTKIN moderation instruments (Hutagaol et al., 2025).

Items for each construct were adapted from validated scales and policy frameworks in the literature and refined through expert review by three PTKIN lecturers with expertise in educational evaluation, curriculum, and religious moderation (DeVellis, 2017). A pilot test was conducted with a small group of PGMI students ($n = 30$). If all items are valid, the instrument can be trusted to measure the variables in this study. The r-count (r-hit) values range from 0.402 to 0.897, which means each item has a positive and significant correlation with the total score because they are higher than the r-table value (0.361). In addition, the reliability test result is 0.981, indicating very high reliability, meaning the instrument is very consistent and dependable for measurement.

Data analysis followed a structured sequence. First, descriptive statistics were computed for all items and constructs to characterise the sample and check basic distributional properties. Second, data screening procedures were conducted, including checks for missing values, outliers, and normality; cases with excessive missing data or implausible response patterns were removed, and item-level missingness below a small threshold was handled using appropriate methods. Multicollinearity among constructs was assessed using correlation matrices and variance inflation factors to ensure stable parameter estimation.

The measurement model was then examined using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in AMOS to assess convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was evaluated based on standardised factor loadings (preferably ≥ 0.50), Composite Reliability (CR ≥ 0.70), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE ≥ 0.50) for each construct, following established criteria (Hair et al., 2019; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For Learning Evaluation (EB), 1 of 18 indicators (EB17) with a loading of 0.36 was removed; the remaining items yielded CR = 0.964 and AVE = 0.616, indicating good convergent validity. For Quality of Education (MP), all 21 indicators had loadings above 0.50, with CR = 0.702 and AVE = 0.624. The Independent Curriculum (KM) construct retained 17 of 18 indicators after removing KM1 (loading = 0.38), resulting in CR = 0.918 and AVE = 0.721. Religious Moderation (MB) retained 14 of 15 indicators after excluding MB15 (loading = 0.000), achieving CR = 0.968 and AVE = 0.684. Discriminant validity was assessed through the Fornell–Larcker criterion, ensuring that the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

After ensuring an acceptable measurement model, the structural model was estimated in AMOS to test the hypothesised relationships among variables. Path coefficients, standard errors, and p-values were examined to evaluate the direct effects of Learning Evaluation on Independent Curriculum and Quality of Education, the effect of Independent Curriculum on Quality of Education, and the direct effect of Religious Moderation on Quality of Education. Moderation by Religious Moderation was tested using an interaction term between Independent Curriculum and Religious Moderation, created from mean-centred latent scores or product indicators, and its effect on Quality of Education was assessed within the SEM framework. Model fit was evaluated using multiple indices such as CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and χ^2/df , with values indicating acceptable to good fit according to widely accepted thresholds.

Robustness checks included sensitivity analyses with alternative model specifications and alternative estimation approaches. This stepwise procedure enhances the credibility and replicability of the findings and aligns the methodological approach with current best practices in SEM-based educational research with AMOS. The overall measurement model meets the standards of convergent validity and reliability, ensuring that the retained indicators represent a significant latent construct and can be used in subsequent SEM or PLS analyses, as shown in Figure 1:

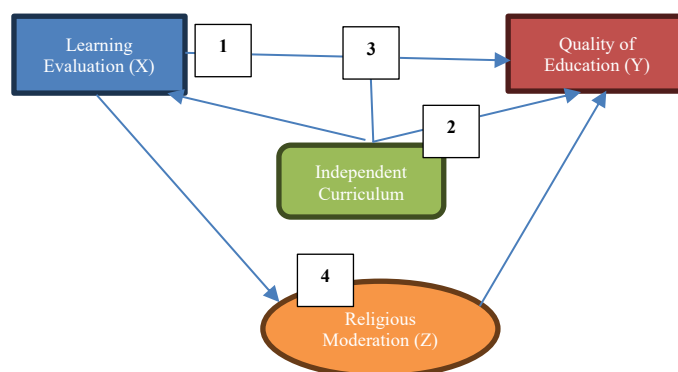


Figure 1. Constellation of Research Hypotheses**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION****Respondent Demographics**

A total of 174 respondents participated in this study. The demographic characteristics of the respondents include gender, current semester, and age range.

Gender

The majority of respondents were female (107; 61.49%), while 67 (38.51%) were male, indicating a higher representation of female students in the sample.

Table 1. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	107	61.49
Male	67	38.51
Total	174	100

Source: Research Data (2025)

Current Semester

Respondents were distributed across several academic levels. Students in Semester 1–2 accounted for 48 respondents (27.59%), followed by Semester >9 with 50 respondents (28.74%). Meanwhile, Semester 3–4 had 31 respondents (17.82%), Semester 5–6 had 22 respondents (12.64%), and Semester 7–8 had 23 respondents (13.22%).

Table 2. Respondents by Current Semester

Current Semester	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1–2	48	27.59
3–4	31	17.82
5–6	22	12.64
7–8	23	13.22
>9	50	28.74
Total	174	100

Source: Research Data (2025)

Age

Most respondents were in the 16–23-year age range. The largest group was 16–17 years (64 respondents; 36.79%), followed by 20–21 years (45 respondents; 25.86%), 22–23 years (42 respondents; 24.14%), and 18–19 years (23 respondents; 13.22%).

Table 3. Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
16–17	64	36.79
18–19	23	13.22
20–21	45	25.86
22–23	42	24.14
Total	174	100

Source: Research Data (2025)

Measurement Model Results

The measurement model was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs, including Independent Curriculum, Learning Evaluation, Religious Moderation, and Education Quality. The analysis examined convergent validity through factor loadings and overall model fit using several Goodness-of-Fit indices.

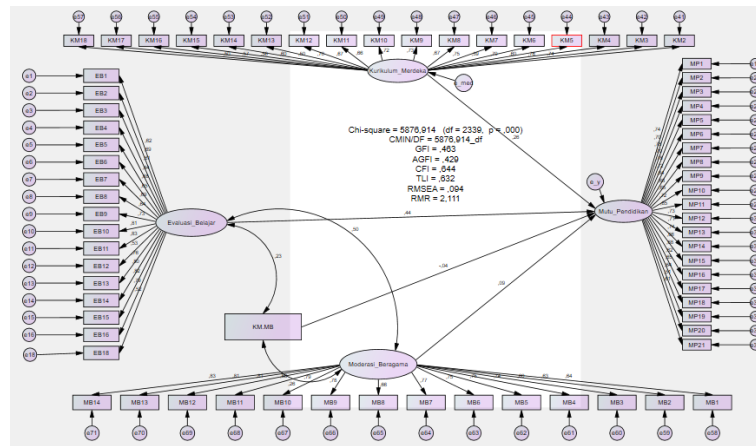


Figure 2. Measurement Model

The initial model showed that several indices did not meet the recommended fit criteria. Therefore, an iterative model modification process was conducted based on modification indices and theoretical considerations. After several adjustments, the final model achieved acceptable fit levels for some indices.

The final measurement model yielded an RMSEA of 0.050 and a CMIN/DF of 1.434, indicating a good fit. The CFI value reached 0.907, indicating good comparative fit, while TLI (0.895) fell within the marginal range. However, GFI (0.702), AGFI (0.653), and RMR (1.587) remained below the recommended threshold, suggesting that although the model fit improved, some global fit limitations remain.

Table 4. Model Fit Indices

Criterion	Value	Interpretation
Chi-Square	3058.496	Poor
p-value	0.000	Poor
GFI	0.702	Poor
AGFI	0.653	Poor
CFI	0.907	Good
TLI	0.895	Marginal
RMSEA	0.050	Good
RMR	1.587	Poor
CMIN/DF	1.434	Good

Source: Research Data (2025)

Overall, the results suggest that the modified measurement model achieved acceptable fit for hypothesis testing, although some indices indicate room for further model refinement.

Structural Model Results

After establishing the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to analyse the relationships among the latent variables. The structural model examines the influence of Learning Evaluation, Independent Curriculum, and Religious Moderation on Education Quality.

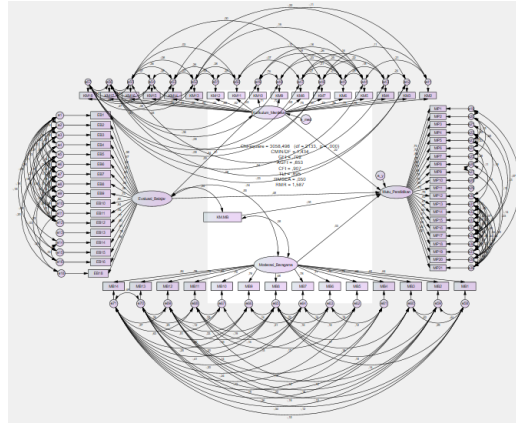


Figure 3. Structural Equation Model

The results indicate that Learning Evaluation plays a central role in the model, showing strong relationships with both the Independent Curriculum and Education Quality. Meanwhile, Religious Moderation did not show a statistically significant effect on Education Quality.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using standardised path coefficients, critical ratios (t-values), and probability values (p-values).

The analysis indicates that Learning Evaluation has a positive and significant influence on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum ($\beta = 0.604$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that effective evaluation practices contribute to the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Learning Evaluation also has a positive and significant effect on Education Quality ($\beta = 0.702$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that improvements in evaluation systems substantially enhance the overall quality of education.

Furthermore, the Independent Curriculum positively influences Education Quality ($\beta = 0.283$, $p = 0.014$). Although the effect size is smaller compared to Learning Evaluation, the relationship remains statistically significant.

In contrast, Religious Moderation does not significantly influence Education Quality ($\beta = 0.028$, $p = 0.727$). Similarly, the moderating effect of Religious Moderation on the relationship between the Independent Curriculum and Education Quality was also not statistically significant.

Table 5. Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing

Relationship	Estimate	Error	t-value	p-value	Result
Independent Curriculum $\leftarrow$ Learning Evaluation	0.604	0.137	4.414	***	Supported
Education Quality $\leftarrow$ Learning Evaluation	0.702	0.166	4.226	***	Supported
Education Quality $\leftarrow$ Independent Curriculum	0.283	0.115	2.464	0.014	Supported

Relationship	Estimate	Error	t-value	p-value	Result
Education Quality ← Religious Moderation	0.028	0.079	0.349	0.727	Not Supported
Education Quality ← Curriculum × Religious Moderation	0.000	0.000	-0.783	0.434	Not Supported

Source: Research Data

Moderating and Indirect Effects

The mediation analysis indicates that the Independent Curriculum indirectly influences Education Quality through Learning Evaluation. The indirect effect coefficient is 0.604 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a statistically significant mediation pathway.

This result confirms that evaluation practices function as a key mechanism through which curriculum implementation contributes to educational quality.

Table 6. Indirect Effect Testing

Relationship	Estimate	Error	t-value	p-value	Result
Independent Curriculum → Learning Evaluation → Education Quality	0.604	0.137	4.414	***	Significant

Source: Research Data

Discussion

This study examines the relationships among learning evaluation, the Independent Curriculum, religious moderation, and education quality within the context of Islamic higher education at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. The findings highlight the central role of evaluation practices in shaping both curriculum implementation and educational quality, while also revealing a more complex, indirect role for religious moderation in the academic environment.

Learning Evaluation Has a Positive Impact on the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at UIN SMH Banten

The results demonstrate that learning evaluation significantly strengthens the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, suggesting that curriculum reform is highly dependent on the quality of evaluation mechanisms embedded in the learning process. From a theoretical perspective, this finding aligns with constructive alignment theory [Biggs and Tang, \(2011\)](#), which emphasises that curriculum objectives, learning activities, and assessment practices must be aligned to achieve effective learning outcomes. Within this framework, evaluation functions not merely as a measurement tool but as a regulatory mechanism that ensures the coherence between curriculum design and classroom practice.

This finding supports previous studies by [Wiyono et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Sulfadli and Supartinah \(2023\)](#), which argue that the Independent Curriculum requires an adaptive and continuous evaluation system to ensure the achievement of competencies and character development. In this context, evaluation serves not only as an administrative requirement but also as a strategic tool for monitoring and improving the quality of learning.

However, the present study extends these previous findings by demonstrating the strong magnitude of the relationship between evaluation and curriculum implementation in the context of Islamic higher education institutions. While earlier research largely focused on school-level implementation, this study confirms that evaluation also plays a critical role at the university level, particularly in institutions such as UIN SMH Banten, where curriculum reform must align with both

academic and religious educational objectives.

Similarly, the studies of [Herlina et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Novalia et al. \(2025\)](#) emphasise that the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum depends on how educators design evaluation strategies that align with student-centred learning principles. In this regard, learning evaluation serves as a feedback mechanism that enables lecturers to adjust learning materials, teaching strategies, and instructional media to meet students' needs and characteristics.

Consistent with [Ningtyas and Juliantari \(2022\)](#), the results of this study also suggest that an effective evaluation system can encourage student autonomy, creativity, and character development. Thus, the positive relationship between Learning Evaluation and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum reinforces the argument that evaluation is a key determinant of successful curriculum transformation.

Learning Evaluation Has a Positive Impact on the Quality of Education at UIN SMH Banten

The results of this study also show that Learning Evaluation has a positive and significant influence on the quality of higher education. This indicates that systematic and well-designed evaluation practices contribute to improving teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes.

This finding is consistent with [Gaylard Baleni \(2015\)](#), who emphasised that learning evaluation provides constructive feedback for both lecturers and students, enabling continuous improvement in the learning process. Through evaluation, weaknesses in teaching strategies and student understanding can be identified and addressed, thereby improving academic quality.

Similarly, [Morris et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Pickering and Joynes \(2016\)](#) highlight the role of innovative evaluation methods, including technology-based assessment and active-learning evaluation, in enhancing student engagement and learning quality. Such approaches help develop not only academic competencies but also essential soft skills required in the modern workforce.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study provide an additional contribution by showing that evaluation plays a more dominant role than curriculum implementation in improving educational quality. This suggests that even well-designed curricula may not yield optimal outcomes without effective evaluation systems.

This result also aligns with the findings of [Komalasari et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Mustamin \(2024\)](#), which emphasise that evaluation systems are central to maintaining educational quality by ensuring that learning processes meet institutional standards. Therefore, learning evaluation functions as a critical instrument for quality assurance in higher education.

The Implementation of the Independent Curriculum Positively Influences the Quality of Education

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum was also found to have a positive and significant impact on the quality of education. However, the magnitude of this effect was smaller than that of Learning Evaluation.

This result supports the findings of [Rahmawati and Katoningsih \(2023\)](#), indicating that the flexibility provided by the Independent Curriculum enables students to develop competencies more relevant to industry and society. The curriculum encourages lecturers to adopt innovative learning approaches that emphasise creativity, independence, and problem-solving.

Studies by [Qorin \(2022\)](#) and [Claessens \(2020\)](#) also highlight that student-centred learning approaches, such as project-based learning and experiential learning, can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. These approaches allow students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world contexts, thereby improving their overall competencies.

However, the present study refines these previous findings by demonstrating that curriculum reform alone is insufficient to significantly improve educational quality without strong

evaluation mechanisms. This suggests that systematic monitoring and assessment processes must accompany curriculum innovation to ensure effective implementation.

Religious Moderation Did Not Show a Significant Direct Effect on Education Quality

One of the study's unexpected findings is that Religious Moderation did not have a statistically significant direct effect on Education Quality. This result differs from several previous studies that emphasise the importance of moderation values in strengthening educational outcomes within Islamic institutions.

Several possible explanations may account for this finding.

First, measurement limitations may have influenced the statistical results. Religious moderation is a complex construct that includes attitudes, values, and behaviours related to tolerance and inclusivity. If the indicators used primarily capture normative attitudes rather than observable practices in academic learning, the direct relationship with educational quality may appear statistically weak.

Second, religious moderation may already be highly institutionalised within PTKIN (State Islamic Higher Education institutions) such as UIN SMH Banten. When a value becomes widely embedded within institutional culture, the variation among respondents tends to be relatively low. In statistical terms, limited variance can reduce a variable's ability to demonstrate a significant effect within a structural model.

Third, religious moderation may influence educational quality indirectly rather than directly. Instead of directly improving academic outcomes, moderation values may help foster an inclusive academic climate, constructive dialogue, and harmonious campus interactions. These cultural factors may then indirectly affect learning quality through variables such as teaching practices, student engagement, or institutional governance.

This interpretation partially contrasts with previous research, such as that by [Nasution et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Muliadi et al. \(2025\)](#), which highlights the strong role of moderation values in Islamic education. The difference may be explained by contextual factors: while earlier studies emphasised the normative and ideological importance of moderation, the present study examines its measurable statistical impact on educational quality.

Thus, this study contributes to the literature by suggesting that religious moderation may function more as a cultural or institutional foundation rather than a direct determinant of academic quality.

The Role of Religious Moderation in Strengthening the Independent Curriculum

Although religious moderation did not show a significant statistical effect in the structural model, it remains an important normative principle in Islamic higher education. At UIN SMH Banten, values of moderation are integrated into the curriculum and campus activities to promote tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for diversity.

Research by [Hoktaviandri et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Aflahah et al. \(2023\)](#) suggests that integrating moderation values into the curriculum can enhance students' character development and social awareness. In this sense, religious moderation contributes to the broader educational mission of Islamic universities by shaping students who are intellectually competent and socially responsible.

Therefore, while the statistical effect may not appear significant in this model, religious moderation remains an essential component of the educational philosophy and institutional culture of UIN SMH Banten.

Independent Curriculum Improves Education Quality Through Learning Evaluation

Finally, the results of this study indicate that Learning Evaluation plays a mediating role in

strengthening the relationship between the Independent Curriculum and Education Quality. This finding suggests that curriculum reform contributes to educational quality primarily when supported by effective evaluation systems.

The Independent Curriculum promotes flexible, student-centred learning, allowing students to explore learning pathways aligned with their interests (Abas et al., 2025; Awawina & Zulfah, 2024). However, the effectiveness of this approach depends largely on how lecturers design evaluation strategies that monitor and guide student learning.

At UIN SMH Banten, learning evaluation is implemented through various approaches, including authentic assessment, formative feedback, and technology-based evaluation tools. These practices enable lecturers to track students' progress comprehensively and provide constructive feedback to support continuous improvement.

Therefore, integrating curriculum flexibility with robust evaluation mechanisms creates a learning environment that is both innovative and accountable. This combination ultimately strengthens the quality of higher education and prepares graduates to compete at national and global levels.

This study supports the findings of Morris et al. (2021) and Pickering and Joynes (2016), which emphasise that innovative learning evaluation, particularly technology-supported assessment and active learning approaches, can significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes in higher education. The results are also consistent with the constructive alignment theory proposed by Biggs and Tang (2011), which argues that effective learning occurs when curriculum objectives, teaching activities, and assessment strategies are systematically aligned.

In this study, the strong influence of learning evaluation on both curriculum implementation and education quality indicates that evaluation functions as a critical mechanism for aligning learning processes with curriculum goals. Moreover, the integration of technology-based evaluation tools enables more adaptive, continuous feedback, allowing lecturers to adjust teaching strategies and learning activities to meet student needs. Therefore, learning evaluation supported by digital technologies not only improves assessment efficiency but also strengthens the alignment between curriculum design and learning outcomes, ultimately enhancing educational quality.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to examine the relationships among Learning Evaluation, the Independent Curriculum, Religious Moderation, and Education Quality within the context of Islamic higher education at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten (PTKIN). Specifically, the research investigated whether learning evaluation influences the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and education quality, whether the Independent Curriculum contributes to improving education quality, and whether religious moderation plays a moderating role in these relationships.

The empirical results indicate that the first hypothesis is supported, showing that learning evaluation has a positive and significant effect on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The second hypothesis is also supported, demonstrating that learning evaluation significantly improves education quality. The third hypothesis is supported, indicating that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum positively influences education quality, although the magnitude of this effect is smaller than that of learning evaluation. In contrast, H4 and H5 are not supported, as religious moderation does not show a significant direct effect on education quality nor a significant moderating effect on the relationship between the Independent Curriculum and education quality. Additionally, mediation analysis confirms that learning evaluation strengthens the relationship between the Independent Curriculum and education quality, indicating that curriculum reforms contribute to educational quality primarily through effective evaluation

mechanisms.

These findings suggest that learning evaluation functions as the strongest operational driver of educational quality, consistent with principles of constructive alignment and quality assurance in higher education. Evaluation mechanisms ensure that curriculum objectives, teaching practices, and learning outcomes remain aligned and continuously improved. Several factors may explain the non-significant effect of religious moderation. First, moderation values may already be institutionalised within PTKIN environments, resulting in limited variation among respondents. Second, religious moderation may influence education quality indirectly through institutional culture, academic climate, and social interaction, rather than through measurable academic indicators. Third, the measurement of moderation may capture normative values rather than concrete pedagogical practices, thereby weakening its observable statistical influence within the model.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide several policy implications for strengthening educational quality in Islamic higher education:

- Universities should prioritise the development of holistic and technology-supported learning evaluation systems to ensure effective implementation of curriculum reforms.
- Lecturer capacity in authentic assessment, formative feedback, and digital evaluation tools should be strengthened through continuous professional development.
- Curriculum implementation should be accompanied by systematic quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that learning outcomes align with institutional educational goals.
- The values of religious moderation should continue to be integrated within institutional culture, student activities, and academic discourse, even though their direct statistical effect on educational quality was not observed in this model.
- Universities should strengthen data-driven decision-making by using evaluation results to improve teaching and learning practices continuously.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses on a single Islamic university (UIN SMH Banten), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other PTKIN institutions. Second, the measurement of religious moderation may require refinement to capture its influence on academic learning processes better. Third, the study employs a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to observe long-term impacts on the curriculum. Future research should therefore expand the sample to multiple Islamic universities, apply longitudinal research designs, refine measurement indicators for religious moderation, and incorporate qualitative approaches to provide deeper insights into how institutional culture and pedagogical practices shape educational quality in Islamic higher education.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The limitations of this study are the student population at PGMI UIN SMH Banten and the variables of learning evaluation, educational quality, independent curriculum, and religious moderation. Further research should explore in greater depth the role of religious moderation and other contextual factors in shaping the relationship between the Independent Curriculum and educational quality at several public and private Islamic universities that have implemented it.

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