

Strengthening Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education at Elementary Schools in Malang

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ABSTRACT

The rising trend of intolerance highlights the urgent need to instill religious moderation through formal education from an early age. At the elementary school level, Islamic Religious Education holds a strategic position in shaping student's character to become tolerant, moderate, and appreciative of diversity. This research aims to examine the implementation, instructional strategies, and influencing factors both supportive and inhibitive related to religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education at Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School Malang. Using a qualitative case study method, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results reveal that religious moderation is reinforced through contextual learning plans, the bina iman program, and social activities grounded in tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity. The instructional approach combines contextual teaching with religious class grouping while upholding the principle of inclusivity. Supporting factors include an inclusive school environment, adequate learning facilities, school commitment, the bina iman program, and student diversity. In contrast, inhibiting factors include family background, the relatively small number of Muslim students, and limited parental involvement in religious education at home.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Islamic Religious Education, Elementary School

1 Introduction

The increasing visibility of intolerant behavior in society has intensified the call to integrate religious moderation into early formal education. Within his framework, Islamic religious education at the elementary school level functions as a vital medium to nurture values of justice, tolerance, and a respectful worldview among students[1]. Rather than focusing solely on doctrinal knowledge, Islamic Religious Education can cultivate an inclusive mindset and character aligned with principles of social harmony and religious balance. By implementing moderate and inclusive learning approaches, educators are positioned to support the development of student character that is sensitive to cultural and religious pluralism[2].

Introducing religious moderation at the elementary level is essential, as this period forms the foundation for students' moral and spiritual outlook. Beyond delivering religious instruction, Islamic Religious Education contributes to shaping open minded individuals capable of embracing diversity[3]. By emphasizing inclusivity and respect for differences, Islamic Religious Education becomes a vital instrument for promoting religious moderation, characterized by a balanced and fair religious attitude that acknowledges cultural, social, and religious diversity[4]. As agents of socialization, elementary school provide fertile ground for the internalization of these values by facilitating interaction among students from various religious and cultural backgrounds[5].

Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School stands out as an example of inclusive education. According to data from the National Education Data System (Dapodik), the school consistently enrolls students from different religious backgrounds, including Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, and Catholicism. This

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diversity reflects the school's inclusive policy and contributes to a learning environment in which values of respect, empathy, and moderation are integrated into daily education interactions.

Building upon this context, this research aims to explore the implementation and strategies used to strengthen religious moderation within the Islamic Religious Education at Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School in Malang. Additionally, it aims to identify both the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the integration of religious moderation at the elementary school level.

2 Literature Review

The conceptual framework of religious moderation promoted by Indonesian's Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasizes an approach that integrates religious conviction with a respectful and tolerant social attitude. This framework is built upon four core values: *tawasuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *i'tidal* (justice). Collectively, these values promote an inclusive and equitable practice of religion and aim to cultivate a mindset that embraces diversity and supports social cohesion[6]. Zulkarnain's defines religious moderation as an ethical commitment that aligns religious understandings with universal values of respect, tolerance, and the rejection of extremism[7]. This orientation enables individuals to live harmoniously within pluralistic societies while remaining grounded in their faith.

To evaluate the practical application of religious moderation, the Ministry of Religion has established four operational indicators: commitment to national ideology (Pancasila), tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture values[8]. These indicators serve not only as evaluative tools but also as pedagogical guidelines for integrating moderation with educational practices. For instance, national commitment is reflected in loyalty to Pancasila and national unity, tolerance refers to respect for religious diversity; non-violence signifies a firm rejection of radicalism; and cultural accommodation encourages the integration of religious teaching with local wisdom. These indicators provide a strong foundation for educators to design learning experiences that promote religious moderation from the earliest stages of education.

Incorporating the values of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level is particularly important, as this stage forms the basis of students' character development. As Tilaar asserts, early education holds a vital position in forming students' attitudes and behaviors[9]. Therefore, the integration of moderation values should transcend the boundaries of religious instruction and be internalized in the broader educational experience.

This approach resonates with Banks' theory of multicultural education[10], which advocates for teaching strategies that foster mutual respect across cultural, ethnic, and religious differences. Accordingly, incorporating moderation into Islamic Religious Education not only strengthens religious identity, but also fosters peaceful coexistence among students from various backgrounds. By embedding moderation as a core aspect of the curriculum, educators equip students with the values necessary and contribute positively to a multicultural society.

3 Research Methods

This research employed a qualitative case study design to explore how religious moderation is implemented within the framework of Islamic Religious Education at Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School Malang. Data were obtained through several techniques: observation, comprehensive interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, and document analysis. The data analysis process was conducted using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which consist of three interconnected steps: simplifying and organizing raw data (data condensation), presenting information (data display), and drawing as well as validating conclusion[11].

4 Results and Discussion

1. Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation

The results of interviews, observations, and document analysis indicate that Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School in Malang implements religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education through various

structured programs and inclusive learning strategies. The Islamic Religious Education curriculum is designed to accommodate the school's multicultural context, which includes religious and ethnic diversity, despite the relatively small number of Muslim students. The subject is scheduled for three hours per week, and religious instruction is delivered in separate classes for Muslim and non-Muslim students. This approach ensures the integrity of doctrinal content while preserving the broader spirit of togetherness.

Islamic Religious Education teachers adhere to national curriculum guidelines while integrating values of moderation into teaching materials. The focus extends beyond cognitive learning to include spiritual and ethical dimensions such as gratitude toward Allah, social responsibility, and empathy. These values are further reinforced through the Bina Iman program and held biannually which includes religious activities such as mosque visits, practical worship training, celebrations of Islamic holidays, and community service projects. These activities are designed to foster solidarity.

2. Islamic Religious Education Learning Strategy

Data collected from interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers at Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School Malang revealed that the school has implemented a comprehensive, inclusive, and contextual approach to integrate religious moderation into learning. This strategy is designed to nurture students' religious understanding, tolerance, and ability to live harmoniously in a multicultural society.

As a practical measure, the school enforces limited class separation exclusively for religious education subjects. Muslim and non-Muslim students are separated only during religious instruction, while they continue to learn in other general subjects. This policy is not intended to create divisions among students but rather to respect each group's right to explore their faith traditions in depth, without undermining the inclusive culture of the school community.

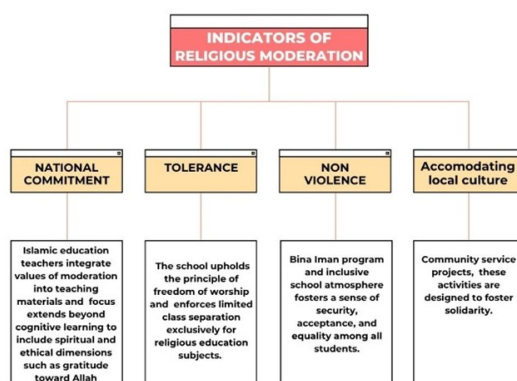
The learning process is guided by a contextual approach by integrating religious content with students' daily experiences. Core values such as moderation, gratitude, tolerance, and togetherness are instilled through practical activities, including shared meals collaborative school activities. These values are not merely taught conceptually but are lived out through structured programs like Bina Iman, which help students experience religion both cognitively and emotionally. This integration of intellectual understanding with affective and behavioral elements strengthens students' internalization of religious moderation.

Additionally, the school upholds the principle of freedom of worship. Muslim students are accommodated to perform Friday prayers in congregation, while students of other faiths are equally respected and supported in practicing their own religious practices. This inclusive atmosphere fosters a sense of security, acceptance, and equality among all students.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The implementation of religious moderation in Islamic Religious Moderation at Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School Malang is influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors. These factors contribute to the development of an inclusive learning environment that values diversity. Additionally, the findings indicate that certain challenges must be addressed wisely by the school to ensure that the religious moderation program can be implemented effectively and sustainably at the elementary school level. The identified supporting factors include: (1) an inclusive school culture that encourages interaction and collaboration across religious groups; (2) adequate infrastructure, including a halal canteens that meets students' dietary needs; (3) the Bina Iman programs, which strengthen students' religious knowledge and character development; (4) school commitment, manifested through a culture and policy framework that promote moderation and inclusivity in Islamic Religious Education; and (5) student diversity, which creates a social learning environment with opportunities for practicing tolerance and empathy.

The inhibiting factors include: (1) varied religious backgrounds in students' home environments, which can create discrepancies in Islamic understanding; (2) the relatively low number of Muslim students, which may limit peer interaction in Islamic learning contexts; and (3) limited parental involvement in religious education, which reduces reinforcement of religious moderation values outside of school.



Gambar 1. Caption

5 Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with the framework of religious moderation advocated by Indonesia's Ministry of Religious. At Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School, religious moderation is not treated merely as a theoretical concept but is actively embedded in the learning process through inclusive teaching strategies, integrated curriculum content, and experiential religious programs[12]. These efforts reflect the four core indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and the accommodation of local culture. The results support the idea that religious moderation must be internalized through lived experiences, rather than taught as abstract doctrine. The inclusive approach to Islamic Religious Education at this school illustrates how values of moderation can be holistically integrated into the educational system. This aligns with Tilaar's perspective, which highlights the critical role of foundational education in shaping inclusive and tolerant student character.

The learning approach implemented at Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School blends contextual learning with value-based education. Teachers are not limited to transferring religious knowledge; they also foster values such as empathy, social responsibility, gratitude, and mutual respect. These values are reinforced through the Bina Iman program, which allows students to engage in religious practices and social service activities that reflect religious moderation in action. This combination of cognitive and affective learning helps students develop a deeper understanding of religion that influences both thought and behavior.

Moreover, the school's approach echoes Bank's theory of multicultural education, which emphasize the importance of recognizing and respecting diversity across cultural, ethnic, and religious. In this case, Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School serves not only as a site a formal education but also as a social environment that actively nurtures a culture of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. Despite the limited number of Muslim students, the school has successfully fostered an atmosphere of mutual respect, inclusiveness, and religious freedom.

6 Conclusion

Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School has effectively established a learning atmosphere characterized by inclusivity and tolerance, even in the face of challenges arising from its students' diverse religious backgrounds. The applied learning strategies, including class separation based on religion, the Bina Iman program, and social activities, have proven effective in instilling the values of religious moderation. However, a significant challenge lies in the limited religious understanding provided by parents at home, which is crucial in supporting children's religious education. Therefore, the success of religious moderation education at Bina Budi Mulia Elementary School largely depends on collaborative efforts among schools, parents, and the broader community to foster an environment conducive to reinforcing religious moderation.

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