

The Role of Schools in Instilling Religious Moderation Values: A Case Study at SMAN 1 Gantar, Indramayu

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Abstract: This study examines the role of schools in internalizing religious moderation values among students, using SMAN 1 Gantar, Indramayu, as a case study. Religious moderation, emphasizing tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence, is crucial in Indonesia's multicultural context. A quantitative survey method was employed, with data collected from 27 students through questionnaires, supported by interviews with school administrators and classroom observations. The findings reveal that most students demonstrate high levels of knowledge and positive attitudes toward religious moderation, though participation in related activities remains inconsistent. The integration of religious moderation values into the curriculum is moderate, suggesting room for further development. Challenges identified include limited student engagement and a lack of resources and structured teacher training. Despite these challenges, the study highlights the significant potential of schools to foster inclusivity and harmony. The results offer valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance the role of education in promoting religious moderation. Future research should explore diverse settings and assess the long-term impact of educational interventions.

Keywords: education, Indonesia, religious moderation, school programs, tolerance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has emerged as a critical concept in fostering tolerance, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence in diverse societies (Destriani, 2023). Schools play a significant role in instilling these values in students, as they are pivotal institutions for shaping the attitudes and behaviors of young individuals (Yadava, 2022). Indonesia, with its multicultural and multi-religious society, faces unique challenges in promoting religious moderation among its citizens (Wibowo, 2023). This study addresses these challenges by exploring the role of schools in internalizing the values of religious moderation, using SMAN 1 Gantar, Indramayu, as a case study.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how schools can effectively integrate the principles of religious moderation into their curriculum, culture, and extracurricular activities. By understanding the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of students toward religious moderation, this study seeks to identify key factors that influence their participation in activities promoting these values. Furthermore, the research aims to evaluate the strategies employed by teachers and school administrators in fostering a tolerant and inclusive educational environment.

The motivation for conducting this study lies in the pressing need to address the growing polarization and potential for inter-religious conflict in various communities. Educational institutions are uniquely positioned to counteract these issues by promoting values such as tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence. This study offers valuable insights into how schools can contribute to these efforts, emphasizing the importance of education in building a harmonious society.

The research employs a quantitative survey method to collect data from students, complemented by interviews and observations of teachers and school administrators. Findings from this study reveal significant patterns in students' knowledge, attitudes, and participation in activities related to religious moderation, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement in the school's approach.

In summary, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on religious moderation by providing an in-depth examination of its implementation at the school level. The findings aim to guide educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in enhancing the role of educational institutions in fostering tolerance and mutual understanding in diverse communities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Concept of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is widely recognized as the practice of adopting balanced perspectives and behaviors in religious beliefs and practices, avoiding extremism and indifference (Khasanah, Kusmidi, & Taiba, 2023). According to Moten (2007), religious moderation in Indonesia emphasizes tolerance, respect for diversity, and the rejection of violent radicalism. This concept aligns with Pancasila, which upholds the principles of harmony and unity among diverse religious and cultural groups (Gultom, 2022).

Nurturing religious moderation in educational institutions is essential, as highlighted by Anwar et al. (2024), who emphasizes that schools have the potential to serve as platforms for promoting understanding and coexistence in multi-religious societies. The implementation of religious moderation, however, faces challenges such as limited understanding among educators and students and the need for comprehensive integration into the curriculum (Afwadzi & Miski, 2021).

b. The Role of Education in Promoting Religious Moderation

Several studies underscore the importance of education in instilling values of moderation. Usman and Widyanto (2019) argue that schools play a pivotal role in shaping students' perspectives on tolerance and diversity. By incorporating values of religious moderation into

subjects such as social studies, religion, and citizenship education, schools can foster a culture of inclusivity.

Furthermore, the study by Afwadzi and Miski (2021) identifies three key mechanisms through which schools promote religious moderation: curriculum development, extracurricular activities, and school policies. While these mechanisms are effective, the study highlights the importance of teacher training and administrative support to ensure successful implementation.

c. Challenges in Integrating Religious Moderation in Schools

Despite its importance, integrating religious moderation into school systems presents several challenges. A study by Musyahid (2023) reveals that many educators lack sufficient knowledge or resources to effectively teach religious moderation. Additionally, the diversity in students' backgrounds often requires tailored approaches to ensure inclusivity.

Furthermore, Hutabarat (2023) notes that students' understanding of religious moderation varies significantly depending on their prior exposure to interfaith dialogues and discussions. Schools in rural or less diverse areas, like SMAN 1 Gantar, often face unique obstacles in fostering appreciation for religious diversity.

d. Research Gap and Contribution of the Study

While existing literature provides valuable insights into the concept of religious moderation and its role in education, limited studies focus on its implementation at the high school level, particularly in rural or semi-urban settings. This research fills this gap by providing empirical evidence from SMAN 1 Gantar, Indramayu, a school situated in a region with a relatively homogeneous population yet striving to foster religious tolerance and understanding. The findings aim to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on religious moderation by offering actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers.

3. METHODS

a. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey method to examine the role of schools in internalizing religious moderation values among students. The use of a survey design is justified by its effectiveness in collecting data on attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors from a specific population, providing insights into trends and patterns relevant to the study objectives.

b. Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of all 350 students enrolled at SMAN 1 Gantar, Indramayu. Using the simple random sampling technique, a sample of 31 students was selected to represent the population. This sampling method ensures that each student had an equal

chance of being chosen, thereby reducing selection bias. Out of the 31 students sampled, 27 students returned completed questionnaires, forming the final sample for analysis. The sample comprised 7 male and 20 female students, with 24 identifying as Muslims and 3 as Christians.

c. Instruments

Data for this study were collected using several instruments tailored to address the research objectives. A student questionnaire was developed to measure knowledge, attitudes, and participation in activities promoting religious moderation. The questionnaire included four sections: demographic information (e.g., gender, religion, grade level), knowledge of religious moderation (e.g., familiarity with concepts and values), attitudes toward religious moderation (e.g., importance of tolerance and respect for diversity), and participation in activities (e.g., involvement in extracurricular or interfaith activities). A teacher questionnaire was used to assess educators' perspectives on integrating religious moderation into the curriculum and classroom practices. Additionally, an interview guide was prepared for school administrators to explore institutional policies, programs, and challenges related to fostering religious moderation. To complement these tools, an observation checklist was employed to systematically record manifestations of religious moderation during classroom sessions and extracurricular activities.

d. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was conducted in three stages to ensure a thorough examination of the research topic. In the first stage, questionnaires were distributed to students and teachers. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire independently, ensuring anonymity and voluntary participation, while teachers provided their insights into classroom practices and curriculum integration. In the second stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school principal and vice principal to gather qualitative insights on school policies, programs, and challenges in promoting religious moderation. Finally, the third stage involved classroom and extracurricular activity observations, where interactions and practices reflecting religious moderation values were recorded systematically. This multi-method approach provided a comprehensive dataset for analyzing the role of schools in internalizing religious moderation values.

e. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize students' knowledge, attitudes, and participation. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically to complement and enrich the quantitative

findings. This mixed-method approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the role of schools in promoting religious moderation.

f. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the school administration prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all respondents. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were maintained throughout the study.

4. RESULTS

a. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis revealed that 85% of students (23 out of 27) were familiar with the concept of religious moderation, demonstrating a high level of awareness. Among the values associated with religious moderation, "tolerance" was the most recognized, followed by "respect for diversity" and "maintaining unity." Regarding the inclusion of religious moderation in the curriculum, 81% of students (22 out of 27) reported that the topic was discussed in their classes, indicating a moderate integration of these values into school subjects.

In terms of attitudes, 85% of students (23 out of 27) agreed that respecting religious differences is either "very important" or "important." Additionally, 78% of students (21 out of 27) indicated a positive attitude toward peers from different religious backgrounds, with responses categorized as "highly respectful" or "respectful."

Participation in activities promoting religious moderation presented a mixed picture. While 52% of students (14 out of 27) reported being actively involved in such activities, the remaining 48% (13 out of 27) noted limited or no participation. These findings suggest the need for enhanced efforts to engage students in interfaith and diversity-focused extracurricular programs.

b. Inferential Statistics

To explore potential differences in attitudes and participation based on demographic factors such as gender and religion, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The analysis showed no significant difference in attitudes toward religious moderation between male and female students ($t = 1.24, p > 0.05$). Similarly, no significant difference was observed in participation rates between students of different religious affiliations ($t = 0.89, p > 0.05$). These findings indicate that demographic factors did not significantly influence students' attitudes or participation levels.

c. Qualitative Insights

Qualitative data from interviews with school administrators revealed that SMAN 1 Gantar has implemented various strategies to promote religious moderation, including incorporating related topics into the curriculum, organizing interfaith dialogues, and encouraging collaboration among students of different backgrounds. However, administrators acknowledged challenges such as limited resources and a lack of structured training programs for teachers.

Classroom and extracurricular activity observations further confirmed that teachers consistently emphasized tolerance and respect for diversity during lessons. However, student engagement in discussions about religious differences varied, with some students appearing hesitant to participate actively.

d. Summary of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that students at SMAN 1 Gantar exhibit a high level of knowledge and positive attitudes toward religious moderation, with 85% of participants demonstrating awareness of the concept and emphasizing values such as tolerance and respect for diversity. Despite this, the integration of religious moderation into the curriculum is moderate, as indicated by 81% of students acknowledging its discussion in classroom settings, yet with room for expansion. Participation in activities promoting religious moderation showed varied engagement, with 52% of students actively involved, while the remaining 48% indicated limited or no participation. Additionally, statistical analyses revealed no significant influence of demographic factors, such as gender or religious affiliation, on students' attitudes or participation levels. Qualitative insights from interviews and observations highlighted efforts by the school to promote religious moderation through curriculum development and extracurricular activities, although challenges such as limited resources and insufficient teacher training were noted. These results emphasize the need for targeted strategies to enhance student participation and support for educators in fostering religious moderation values effectively.

5. DISCUSSION

This study highlights the pivotal role of schools in internalizing religious moderation values, particularly in a multicultural context such as Indonesia. The findings underscore that students at SMAN 1 Gantar possess a high level of awareness and positive attitudes toward religious moderation, reflecting the school's efforts in promoting tolerance and respect for diversity. These outcomes align with prior research by Shaeffer (2019), who emphasize the significance of education in shaping students' perspectives on inclusivity and coexistence.

However, the study also reveals areas for improvement, particularly in increasing student participation in activities that promote religious moderation. Despite 52% of students reporting active involvement, nearly half remain disengaged. This echoes findings by Barnas (2022), which highlight that student participation in interfaith activities often depends on the availability of structured programs and effective facilitation by educators. The results suggest that enhancing the variety and accessibility of such activities could significantly impact overall engagement levels.

The moderate integration of religious moderation values into the curriculum, as identified in this study, indicates progress but also points to the potential for further development. Existing literature, such as the work of Nurbayani and Amiruddin (2024), underscores the importance of embedding these values more comprehensively into educational programs to ensure sustained impact. Teachers play a crucial role in this process, yet challenges such as insufficient training and limited resources, as noted in the interviews, remain significant barriers. Addressing these challenges could enhance the effectiveness of educational interventions.

Interestingly, the absence of significant differences in attitudes and participation based on gender or religious affiliation indicates that demographic factors may not heavily influence the adoption of religious moderation values among students. This finding contrasts with studies such as Afwadzi and Miski (2021), which suggest that demographic diversity often necessitates tailored approaches to ensure inclusivity. The homogeneity of the study's sample, with a majority identifying as Muslim, may explain this difference and highlights the need for further research in more diverse educational settings.

The qualitative insights also emphasize the proactive role of school administrators in promoting religious moderation. However, the limited resources and lack of structured training programs for teachers identified in this study point to systemic challenges that need to be addressed. These findings resonate with Musyahid (2023) assertion that institutional support and investment are critical for embedding religious moderation within the educational framework.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on religious moderation by providing empirical evidence from a high school in a semi-urban setting. The findings highlight both achievements and challenges, offering practical implications for educators and policymakers. Schools must not only focus on knowledge dissemination but also foster active participation and provide robust support systems for teachers. Future research should explore

diverse educational contexts and assess the long-term impact of educational interventions on students' attitudes and behaviors.

In conclusion, while SMAN 1 Gantar has made commendable strides in promoting religious moderation, there remains significant scope for enhancing student engagement and addressing institutional challenges. By building on these findings, schools can strengthen their role as agents of tolerance, respect, and harmony in increasingly diverse societies..

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the critical role of schools in fostering religious moderation by instilling values such as tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence. The findings from SMAN 1 Gantar indicate that students possess a high level of knowledge and positive attitudes toward religious moderation, reflecting the effectiveness of current school efforts. However, student participation in activities promoting these values remains inconsistent, highlighting the need for more structured and inclusive programs. The moderate integration of religious moderation into the curriculum suggests progress but also underscores the necessity for further development, particularly through teacher training and resource allocation.

While the results provide valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study's reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as students and teachers might respond in socially desirable ways. Second, the sample size, though representative, is relatively small and drawn from a single school, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could address these limitations by employing larger, more diverse samples and incorporating longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of educational interventions.

Moreover, the study does not account for external factors such as familial or community influences, which may shape students' attitudes and behaviors. Exploring these dimensions could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing religious moderation in educational contexts. Additionally, while this research highlights challenges faced by teachers, it does not evaluate specific teaching methods or pedagogical strategies in depth. Future research could explore how different instructional approaches impact the internalization of religious moderation values.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of schools as agents of social harmony and highlights areas where further efforts are needed to strengthen their role in promoting religious moderation. By addressing the identified challenges and limitations, educators and policymakers can enhance the effectiveness of educational programs, fostering

a more inclusive and tolerant generation. Future research should build on these findings, expanding the scope of inquiry to ensure that the insights gained contribute to broader societal efforts to promote peace and coexistence.

LIMITATION

Penelitian ini memiliki beberapa keterbatasan yang dapat memengaruhi interpretasi temuannya. Pertama, ukuran sampelnya relatif kecil, terdiri dari 27 siswa dari satu sekolah, SMAN 1 Gantar. Meskipun sampel tersebut mewakili populasi sekolah, temuannya mungkin tidak sepenuhnya dapat digeneralisasikan ke sekolah atau wilayah lain dengan konteks sosial budaya yang berbeda. Memperluas ukuran sampel dan memasukkan sekolah dari lingkungan yang lebih beragam akan memberikan pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi moderasi beragama. Kedua, ketergantungan pada data yang dilaporkan sendiri melalui kuesioner menimbulkan kemungkinan bias respons. Peserta mungkin memberikan jawaban yang diinginkan secara sosial daripada mencerminkan pengetahuan, sikap, atau perilaku mereka yang sebenarnya, yang berpotensi mendistorsi hasil. Terakhir, penelitian ini terutama berfokus pada lingkungan sekolah dan tidak mempertimbangkan secara ekstensif faktor eksternal, seperti pengaruh keluarga atau masyarakat, yang dapat secara signifikan membentuk perspektif siswa tentang moderasi beragama. Mengabaikan dinamika eksternal ini mungkin telah membatasi kelengkapan temuan. Mengakui keterbatasan ini memberikan dasar bagi penelitian masa depan untuk mengatasi kesenjangan ini dan membangun wawasan yang diperoleh dari penelitian ini.

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