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Strengthening Student's Character through Religious Moderation Education in the Digitalization Era

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Abstract

The challenges of a heterogeneous society in Indonesia are reducing friction and conflict between adherents of certain religions, adherents, communities, classes, tribes, and groups and creating a peaceful life. Religious moderation is an essential key in reducing extremism and radical acts of religion in Indonesia. The method used is qualitative with a case study approach. The primary data source used is the parents of MIS student Nurul Yaqin Sijang; secondary data sources include school documentation, research journals, and relevant books. Data collection techniques use observation, interviews, and documentation; data analysis techniques, data reduction, data verification, and conclusions. The research results show that parents are essential in shaping their children's understanding of religious moderation. Religious moderation education at home has proven effective in counteracting digitalization's negative influence, often containing radical and extreme content. Parents in border areas, even though they have limited access to technology, still provide a balanced understanding of religion and teach the values of tolerance and empathy between religious believers. This study implies that character education in the digital era must involve the active role of parents in filtering information and providing correct education about religious moderation to avoid polarization and social conflict. This research provides recommendations for policymakers to design educational programs that support the role of parents in religious moderation education in border areas.

Keywords: Character Strengthening, Digital Era, Indonesia-Malaysia Border, Parents's Role, Religious Moderation.

Abstrak

Tantangan masyarakat heterogen di Indonesia adalah mengurangi gesekan dan konflik antar pemeluk agama, penganut, komunitas, golongan, suku, dan kelompok tertentu serta menciptakan kehidupan yang damai. Moderasi beragama menjadi kunci penting dalam meredam ekstremisme dan tindakan radikal beragama di Indonesia. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Sumber data primer yang digunakan adalah orang tua siswa MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang; sumber data sekunder meliputi dokumentasi sekolah, jurnal penelitian, dan buku-buku yang relevan. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi; teknik analisis data, reduksi data, verifikasi data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa orang tua sangat berperan penting dalam membentuk pemahaman anak mengenai moderasi beragama. Pendidikan moderasi beragama di dalam negeri terbukti efektif menangkal pengaruh negatif digitalisasi yang sering kali mengandung konten radikal dan ekstrem. Orang tua di daerah perbatasan, meski memiliki keterbatasan akses terhadap teknologi, tetap memberikan pemahaman agama yang seimbang dan mengajarkan nilai-nilai toleransi dan empati antar umat beragama. Penelitian ini

mengandung makna bahwa pendidikan karakter di era digital harus melibatkan peran aktif orang tua dalam menyaring informasi dan memberikan pendidikan yang benar tentang moderasi beragama untuk menghindari polarisasi dan konflik sosial. Penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi bagi pengambil kebijakan untuk merancang program pendidikan yang mendukung peran orang tua dalam pendidikan moderasi beragama di daerah perbatasan.

Kata kunci: Era Digital, Moderasi Beragama, Penguatan Karakter, Peran Orang Tua, Perbatasan Indonesia-Malaysia.

Introduction

The challenge of a heterogeneous society in Indonesia is to reduce friction and conflict between adherents of certain religions, adherents, communities, groups, tribes, and groups and create a peaceful life. Therefore, every citizen must be nurtured, instilled, and educated so that a peaceful life can be made in the nation and state under controlled conditions and become the strength of the character of the Indonesian nation, still respecting differences and mutual respect, living side by side and working together and in harmony in society, and the spirit of peace living in diversity (Nashohah, 2021; Surahman et al., 2022).

The results of previous research from several supporting studies state that religious moderation must be understood contextually, not textually (Br et al., 2023). Religious moderation in Indonesia is not moderated, but the way of understanding religion must be moderate because Indonesia has many cultures and customs. The program aims to grow the golden generation of the Indonesian nation, that religious moderation in diversity in Indonesia strengthens the bonds of national unity.

The meaning of religious moderation is one of the results that need to be considered in religious education in Indonesia, which requires aspects of education as a forum to make it happen because starting moderation from an educational institute is considered more effective (Prasetio & Huda, 2022). According to Irama & Zamzami's opinion, the meaning of religious moderation is an essential key to reducing extremism and radical acts in religion in Indonesia (Irama & Zamzami, 2021). Meanwhile, the element that is considered necessary is responsible for spiritual harmony in Indonesia, namely the Ministry of Religion.

There is around 38.4% of the rate of religious intolerance in Indonesia, which is considered relatively high. Meanwhile, research from the Ministry of Education and Culture concluded that there was around 57.6%² rate of discrimination towards other religious practices. Religious moderation is essential to anticipate intolerance amidst differences in Indonesian society (Putra et al., 2023). It balances inclusive (different) spiritual and exclusive religious practices (Mustaghfiroh, 2022). By repeating religious moderation, wise

student character can be created so that students can know right from wrong and how to instill habits about good things in life so that students have high awareness and understanding as well as concern and commitment to implement policies in everyday life (Abdila, 2021).

Private Islamic Elementary School (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta*, MIS) Nurul Yaqin is one of the schools that consistently promotes religious moderation in education. They integrate Islamic teachings with the values of tolerance, harmony, and respect for differences in beliefs. "This is reflected in their curriculum, which teaches an inclusive understanding of religion and respect for diversity, as well as in a school atmosphere that fosters mutual respect between students from different religious backgrounds." MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang has characteristics different from other schools. MIS Nurul Yaqin is at the forefront of strengthening the strength of the Republic of Indonesia in terms of education, religion, economics, and culture.

This research will clarify the definition of religious moderation in more detail, including aspects such as tolerance, correct understanding of religion, and a balanced attitude towards diversity. This research will develop an educational model that can integrate the principles of religious moderation into character education. This model will include appropriate programs, learning strategies, teaching methods, and evaluation. They are practically applying this model in an Islamic educational institution at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Islam Nurul Yaqin Sijang by conducting a case study to see its impact on student character formation on the Indonesia-Malaysia border.

The practical implication of this research is the development of a more holistic and sustainable educational approach to shaping student character; by understanding and applying the principles of religious moderation, an inclusive academic environment can be created, respecting diversity and forming solid and empathetic characters in students, especially in border areas. That is because the region is in a position where there are cultural differences in communities with different faiths, ethnicities, and customs. MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang is in the border area of Indonesia and Malaysia, especially near the Aruk Border with Sarawak Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, which is still on the same mainland as the island of Borneo.

MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang has extraordinary communities, and there are ethnic, religious, and language differences between the students' parents. This uniqueness can be seen in the role of teachers in partnering well with parents in religious activities to build

togetherness with the community. Religious moderation in educational institutions and schools is essential in building and developing character education in the era of digitalization. Primary educational institutions are the foundation for further educational structures. This research deepens the cultivation of religious moderation education in strengthening students' character through religious moderation education in the era of digitalization on the Indonesia-Malaysia Border.

The aim of this research is the role of parents of MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang students in supporting the implementation of religious moderation education in the digital era in border areas. **The Role of Parents in Religious Moderation Education:** Parents play a crucial role in shaping the moderate character of children in border areas. Parents must set a good example, educate with the values of tolerance, teach respect for differences, and supervise the use of technology so that it does not have a negative impact. The mode of religious moderation cannot be separated from the influence of the social environment, including family, school, and society. In the context of MIS Nurul Yaqin, a study of the number of students who frequently commit violence can provide an overview of the condition of religious moderation in that environment. The digital era has brought significant changes in information access and interaction.

However, this era also brings risks, such as the spread of incorrect information, online radicalism, and ignorance of moderate values. Religious moderation education must be able to face this challenge by utilizing technology positively and wisely. **The Importance of Moderation Education:** Religious moderation education is crucial because it can form a character that values pluralism, tolerance, and peace. That is important, considering that the border between Indonesia and Malaysia is often an area of religious conflict. Moderation education can be a solution to prevent this conflict.

Methods

In this research, researchers used a descriptive case study approach. The location of this research is at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Yaqin Sijang, which is located at Jalan Tanjung Pura, Sijang Village, Galing District, Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan with unique private status under the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. **Characteristics of MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang:** The cultural, social, and religious impacts of neighboring countries are often felt in border areas. That can present both challenges and opportunities in

strengthening religious moderation. This research's data sources (informants) are the madrasah, such as the principal, teachers, school committee, and parents.

Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained through written literature sources, such as books on education, sociology or anthropology, scientific works, journals, or books. Data collection techniques used (1) primary observation, namely observing school activities and activities with parents of students at MI Nurul Yaqin Sijang directly; (2) interview instruments used; and (3) documentation in the form of photos and school data to support research.

Results and Discussion

The Role of Parents in Religious Moderation Education in the Digital Era

Interview results with parents of MIS Student Nurul Yaqin regarding the religious moderation education program in the formation of character education in the digital era on the border of Indonesia and Malaysia, 15 December 2023. Indeed, "there are program activities created by MIS Nurul Yaqin. Students are usually invited to visit or stay in touch with people or children of different beliefs. It could be an introduction for students, especially our children who study at MIS Nurul Yaqin, to learn tolerance in recognizing ethnic differences. The program visits different places of worship as part of field learning." Regarding the opinions from several of the interview results above, the results of this research are reinforced by Nashohah in the Internalization process, which is associated with community development (Nashohah, 2021).

Three stages can represent the process of internalization. The first is the value transformation stage, a process by educators to inform about good and bad values. At this stage, only verbal communication occurs between the teacher and the students. Second, the value transaction stage is a stage of value education through two-way communication or reciprocal interaction between educators and students. Thirdly, the transinternalization stage is much deeper than the transaction stage (Abidin & Wasito, 2019). Therefore, this final stage involves verbal communication, mental attitude, and personality. So, this stage reflects personality actively. So, in connection with human development, the internalization process must follow developmental tasks.

The parent's role is to care for and raise them and fulfill all their needs. However, parents are responsible for educating and nurturing their children regarding goodness. As primary educators, parents should always provide good education to their children so that

children can grow and develop into good individuals. With good parental personalities, parents can easily shape their children's personalities well.

Based on research findings, speaking good and polite words reflects a Muslim's morals. That can be seen when parents speak softly and politely with an older family member such as a grandfather or grandmother. Based on some data obtained from the results of the Focus Group Discussion with a parent named Mrs. Yusida, she stated that "at this time, it is imperative to provide an understanding to my children about the importance of building a sense of togetherness, examples in my family can come from parents in providing good examples. In behavior and speech so that children can imitate what they see" (Yusida, personal communication, 2023).

Apart from that, according to Mrs. Fuji Lestari, in interviews obtained in the field, she stated that: "Speaking good and polite words is a reflection of the morals of a Muslim. That can be seen when parents speak softly and politely with an older family member such as a grandfather or grandmother. And when you talk to children in a friendly manner, children imitate habits of respecting their older peers" (F. Lestari, personal communication, 2023). That was confirmed by Mr. Herlan, in an interview at the FGD, revealing that: "The role of parents in supporting religious moderation education in socializing. As a parent, I never forbid children from making friends from different ethnicities and religions. Of course, we have lived with people of different religions for a long time, but the relationship is still good" (Herlan, personal communication, 2023).

One way to foster character values in children is through tolerance because the Indonesian people have different religious backgrounds, including Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Catholicism, and Confucianism (Andreassen, 2013). These six religions have different perspectives, ways of behaving, understanding, and beliefs. Still, these differences are not a big problem, but the diversity of religions, ethnicities, and races gives birth to brilliant ideas that can work together (Dani et al., 2023).

The Importance of Teaching Children to Socialize

Parents in the community introduce children to the environment, which must be studied inside and outside the home (Yusida, personal communication, 2023). It will give children an insight into the surrounding environment, which can help them adapt. Mr. Herlan also expressed the same thing about the role of parents in supporting religious moderation education to strengthen character, including providing opportunities for children to socialize

(Herlan, personal communication, 2023). It is hoped that children will get used to accepting differences when interacting with people of different religions, ethnicities, and customs.

As children move from being dependent on their parents to becoming independent individuals, from a cognitive perspective, their knowledge begins to develop, such as the ability to think, understand, solve problems, and remember. In language development, children begin to recognize sentences, communicate, and understand sign or body language. In contrast, physically, from considerable motor skills to small motor skills, during childhood, also from a social and emotional perspective, children begin to interact and communicate and socialize with family members, the madrasah environment, and the environment where they live (Hasani, 2023). One of the characteristics of education students need to face diversity amidst globalization is the character of tolerance (Suri & Chandra, 2021).

It is essential to internalize the feeling of patience from an early age, both by teachers at school in the learning process and also by the student's parents. Because the role of teachers and parents dramatically influences the formation of students' social character, including the nature of tolerance (Mustafa, 2023). Social attitudes can be seen when working with others, peers, and teachers. Therefore, assessment of social attitudes is carried out by observing students during the learning process. Social attitude competency assessment is an assessment carried out by the teacher to measure the level of achievement of students' social attitude competency, which includes aspects of receiving attention, (a) receiving or attending, (b) responding, (c) organizing or managing, and d) having characteristics (Wijaya et al., 2020).

In the educational context, students' social capital is formed through social interactions in the school environment, such as with teachers, friends, and parents. Previous research has described social capital with school cohesion, friendship, neighborhood social cohesion, and trust. One of the roles of parents in supporting the implementation of religious moderation education in the community includes understanding religious moderation and mutual respect or tolerance between religious, ethnic, and cultural groups (Mahfud et al., 2020).

Providing Understanding to Children in Religious Moderation Education

Parents always provide children with an understanding of the diversity of children's backgrounds obtained from school and given experiences about the natural world (Mawardi,

personal communication, 2023). It allows children to explore the world and get to know different races of people, cultures, and landscapes. As it is known that books are a window into the world, they can train children to appreciate and respect other people while parents can express their views about religious moderation.

Currently, my child has friends who often come to play at the house. His friend is a Muslim child from Sijang village who has lived in Sijang village for quite a long time with his parents. I suspect this is an excellent opportunity for my child because he can see firsthand how his friend's activities are, especially how to pray and the differences in food. Because of this friend, I have discussion material to teach my children the value of respecting each other's differences."

Children are exploring their self-identity based on social learning theory at this age (Dewi & Adnyani, 2023). The first signs significantly affect The child's good responses and interpretations that have been formed will direct the child to good social behavior (Juharyanto et al., 2020), including tolerance towards other people (Sugihartati et al., 2020), until the child has maturity, including religious maturity, namely the child understands how to tolerate different religions so that awareness of religious moderation arises. The results of this research are also supported by Anwar's study, which states that developing an attitude of religious moderation from an early age is an anticipatory and protective step against anti-tolerance behavior, which is a characteristic of the birth of radical ideologies (Anwar, 2020).

Parents are considered supervisors because they monitor and supervise their children's responses to environmental influences at home, school, and society. This makes parents the best candidates for supervisor positions (Ikromah et al., 2022). Children need friends to play with (Guo, 2015). It is a psychological and biological need. In playing with friends, children develop a sense of community (socialization), practicing being leaders. In playing, children can find their identity. By making friends, solidarity is formed, knowledge about the environment increases, and so on. So, making friends means doing positive things (Marzuki & Setyawan, 2022).

That can help parents to be more active in monitoring their children's activities at school and build better relationships between parents and school. The school can also hold regular meetings with parents to discuss children's development and the challenges faced in maintaining children's positive behavior at home and school. These meetings can be a helpful discussion forum for parents to share experiences and get social support from other parents in the same matter (Widyanti & Jatiningsih, 2023).

Based on the description above, the role of parents in educating children about religious moderation can be characterized by giving children the freedom to socialize, such as interacting with anyone, whether older or not, playing with local friends by applying the existing rules, deliberating when they encounter differences of opinion with the interlocutor and so on. Children may have moderate attitudes toward daily habits (Lasurital et al., 2022).

Families in Sijang village, Galing District, Sambas Regency consist of various families with diverse educational backgrounds. They use different methods to educate their children. Still, in principle, they have one thing in common, namely that after a child is educated, they are expected to become children who will be obedient in carrying out the teachings of the Islamic religion, especially obedience in carrying out various forms of worship according to their abilities (Aldina, 2019).

Conclusion

The role of parents in the Indonesia-Malaysia border region is crucial in forming and supporting religious moderation education for their children. Even though they have limited access to and knowledge of technology, they can teach the values of tolerance, diversity, and empathy, which are essential in strengthening students' character in the digital era. This conclusion indicates the importance of integrating the role of parents in religious moderation education programs, especially in border areas, to prevent polarization and social conflict. This conclusion implies that strengthening character education, especially in religious moderation, requires collaboration between educational institutions, families, and society. It underlines the importance of a comprehensive education strategy involving various stakeholders to create a young generation who is resilient, tolerant, and open-minded in the ever-developing digital era.

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