

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION EDUCATION IN FORMING A TOLERANT GENERATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the role of religious moderation education in forming a tolerant generation in the digital era, especially in early childhood. Religious moderation education is considered important to instill the values of tolerance and respect for religious and cultural differences from an early age, in order to form characters who can live harmoniously in a pluralistic society. This research uses the literature study method by analyzing various literature, journals, and previous research related to religious moderation education, tolerance, and the influence of the digital era on child development. The results show that religious moderation education can introduce children to the concept of religious and cultural diversity, as well as the importance of a tolerant attitude in social interaction. However, the digital era brings its own challenges because children can be exposed to content that does not support the values of religious moderation, so supervision from parents and educators is needed. This study also found that teachers and parents have a very important role in directing children to develop an attitude of tolerance in accordance with moderate religious values.

Keywords: Religious moderation education, tolerance, early childhood, digital era, diversity.

Introduction

The digital era has significantly changed social and cultural dynamics, including in character education for the younger generation. Easy access to various information and digital content, both constructive and destructive, influences children's mindsets and behavior from an early age (Jf, 2022). In dealing with the rapid flow of information, it is very important to provide children with a solid educational foundation, one of which is through religious moderation education (Nasrullah & Basri, 2023). Religious moderation, which teaches a balanced and tolerant way of practicing religion, is increasingly relevant in the context of a multicultural and pluralistic society (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). Religious moderation education not only aims to provide a correct understanding of religion, but also to instill humanitarian values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation (Fitriyah et al., 2020). Thus, children can grow into individuals who can live side by side harmoniously with people from various religions, ethnicities, and cultures (Hidayat, 2021).

However, the digital era also brings major challenges in building a tolerant generation. Children are at risk of being exposed to digital content containing radical ideologies, intolerance, or discrimination, which can damage the values of moderation that have been instilled. On the other hand, digital technology also opens up great opportunities to expand access to quality education and promote positive values.

Childhood is a critical period in character formation (Dian Putri, 2014). Religious moderation education applied from an early age will have a significant positive impact on

children's development. This education can prevent radicalization by becoming a bulwark against extreme ideologies that often exploit children's weaknesses. In addition, religious moderation education plays a role in building children's character, such as honesty, a sense of responsibility, and empathy, as well as improving children's social skills in interacting with people from different backgrounds. Therefore, it is very important for parents, educators, and the community to include the values of religious moderation in early childhood education, both through activities at home and in the school curriculum (Zaini & Rahmat, 2023). A religious moderation-based approach can be applied through methods such as story-based learning, projects, and the use of technology that supports the values of tolerance. With a holistic approach, religious moderation education is expected to instill the values of tolerance from an early age, so that children grow into individuals who respect differences and uphold human values (Azizah, 2023). Based on this background, the author is interested in studying the topic in more depth with the research title "The Role of Religious Moderation Education in Forming a Tolerant Generation in the Digital Era in Early Childhood."

Literature Review

Religious moderation education in the digital era for early childhood is an important aspect in forming a tolerant and inclusive attitude amidst religious, cultural, and social differences. The theoretical basis in this study includes various relevant concepts regarding education, religious moderation, tolerance, and the impact of the digital era on the formation of children's character.

1. Religious Moderation Education

Religious moderation education focuses on teaching the values of tolerance, respecting differences, and avoiding extremism in religious practices. The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2022) explains that religious moderation education not only teaches religious aspects, but also suggests a balance between religious principles and social realities. Moderation education aims to build character that respects differences and avoids radical attitudes that can damage harmony between religious communities.

2. Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is an important phase in the development of a child's character. At an early age, children form basic mindsets that influence their attitudes towards the world around them, including towards religious diversity. According to Hidayat (2021), teaching the values of tolerance and religious moderation to early childhood is very effective in forming an inclusive attitude that can have a positive impact in the long term.

3. Tolerance in Social and Religious Contexts

Tolerance in social and religious contexts involves an attitude of mutual respect for differences without imposing one view. Based on the theory of social interaction, according to Giddens (2009), tolerance functions as a social mechanism to maintain harmony in a heterogeneous society. Tolerance is expected to reduce conflict and strengthen social solidarity.

4. The Digital Era and Its Impact on Education

The digital era has a significant impact on children's lives, including in the formation of their character. On the one hand, technology can be an efficient educational tool, but on the other hand, social media and digital content can also spread the ideology of intolerance. Zaini

and Rahmat (2023) explain that although technology provides easy access to information, without proper supervision, technology can worsen intolerant attitudes in children.

Method

This study uses a library research method, which aims to analyze and explore various literature related to the role of religious moderation education in forming a tolerant generation, especially in the digital era and in early childhood. Library studies were chosen because this approach allows researchers to collect relevant and comprehensive secondary data from various trusted sources. The data used in this study come from various literatures, such as: Reference books, journal articles, Policy documents, e-books, and others according to research studies (Mestika, 2014). Data collection techniques through literature search steps, selection of relevant literature. Data analysis techniques are carried out qualitatively with the following steps: Data Reduction, Data Categorization, Conclusion Drawing.

Result and Discussion

1. Implementation of Religious Moderation Education in Early Childhood

This study provides in-depth insight into the implementation of religious moderation education in early childhood, which has been proven to be possible through various innovative and effective approaches. These approaches include teaching the values of tolerance, using stories that depict religious diversity, and project-based learning that allows children to be directly involved in educational experiences. In this way, children not only understand the theory of differences, but also experience them in real and practical contexts. The main focus of this education is to shape children's tolerant attitudes towards differences, both related to religion, culture, and other social aspects (Sasior et al., 2023).

In this context, the majority of parents and educators involved in this study stated that the application of religious moderation values is not only a theory taught in schools, but must also be an integral part of the character that must be instilled from an early age (Zuliana et al., 2024). They argue that teaching religious moderation to children from an early age is a long-term investment to create a generation that not only understands their own religion but is also able to appreciate and live side by side with the diversity of religions, cultures, and social views that exist in society.

The theory of religious moderation proposed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2022) provides a clear basic framework regarding the importance of education that instills values of tolerance and respect for differences. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes that it is important for children to be taught to appreciate the differences that exist in society, avoid extreme views that can cause division, and maintain a balance between the religious teachings they believe in and the social realities they face. This is in line with the principle of moderation which emphasizes a wise, fair, and balanced perspective in dealing with differences in society.

In line with this thinking, Hidayat (2021) added that education based on tolerance values has enormous potential to form a generation that is more inclusive, open, and ready to face increasingly complex social challenges. In this increasingly connected world, the social challenges faced by the younger generation are increasingly diverse, ranging from inter-religious tensions to other social issues. Education that emphasizes the values of religious moderation can provide strong provisions for children to face it with a constructive attitude, respect differences, and avoid divisions caused by views that are too extreme. Through education based on religious moderation, children are expected to not only be able to know their religion more deeply, but also develop an attitude that respects differences. This is an

important step in building a peaceful, inclusive, and harmonious society, especially in facing technological developments and globalization that increasingly open up space for interaction between different individuals and groups. Therefore, religious moderation education is one of the main keys in forming a future generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also wise and tolerant in dealing with differences.

2. The Impact of the Digital Era on the Formation of Tolerant Attitudes in Early Childhood

In today's digital era, early childhood is often exposed to various types of content through electronic devices, such as television, the internet, and digital applications (Akrim, 2018). This content can have a significant influence on the development of children's character, including their attitudes of tolerance towards religious, cultural, and social differences. This study found that although digital technology can be used as a very effective educational tool, there are significant risks associated with exposure to content that is inconsistent with the values of religious moderation. Several parents and educators involved in this study reported that their children often accessed videos, games, or applications that contained elements of intolerance, either intentionally or unknowingly. The influence of digital media on children's character development cannot be underestimated. Zaini and Rahmat (2023) explained that digital media has a dual role in shaping children's character. On the one hand, technology can be a very effective tool in supporting education, by providing access to various sources of quality information and learning materials. Children can learn about positive values, diversity, and tolerance through various interesting and interactive educational applications. However, on the other hand, without proper supervision from parents and educators, digital media can also be a means of spreading negative content that is contrary to the principles of tolerance and religious moderation.

Digital content containing elements of intolerance, discrimination, or violence can be easily accessed by children, who do not yet have the full ability to assess and filter the information they receive (Trias et al., 2022). This of course has the potential to damage their understanding of diversity and worsen their attitudes towards differences. For example, some videos or online games that show religious or cultural differences negatively, or that teach extreme values, can influence children's perceptions of others and increase their tendency to develop intolerant attitudes.

Therefore, it is very important for parents and educators to provide strict guidance in the use of digital media by children. This guidance not only involves direct supervision of the types of content accessed by children, but also education on how to select and sort content that is in accordance with the values of religious moderation. Parents and educators need to play an active role in providing guidance to children about the importance of respecting differences, as well as teaching them how to use technology wisely and responsibly. In addition, there needs to be learning about diversity delivered through safe and educational media, which can strengthen the values of religious tolerance and moderation in children. In this context, Zaini and Rahmat (2023) also emphasize the need for good digital literacy for parents and educators. With adequate digital literacy, they can better understand the impact of digital media on child development and can be wiser in choosing content that suits their educational needs. In addition, they can also teach children how to recognize and avoid content that can be detrimental to their character development. Therefore, wise and selective supervision in choosing digital content will play a key role in ensuring that children grow up with a tolerant and moderate attitude amidst the rapid development of the digital world.

3. The Role of Teachers and Parents in Implementing Religious Moderation Education

This study reveals that the role of teachers and parents is very important in implementing religious moderation education in early childhood. Teachers who work in early childhood education institutions hold a great responsibility in introducing children to the values of religious diversity through a curriculum designed to teach the concept of tolerance and respect for differences (Khadijah & Jf, 2021). Through this approach, teachers are expected to create an inclusive learning environment, where children learn to respect differences in their religion, culture, and social background (Lestarinigrum, 2017). Education based on the values of religious moderation can help children understand that differences are not barriers, but rather wealth that needs to be appreciated and understood more deeply.

Meanwhile, parents also have a very crucial role in strengthening religious moderation education at home. Education does not only occur in schools, but also at home as the first and main place for children to learn about the values of life. Parents, as the main figures in a child's life, are responsible for providing good examples of tolerance and mutual respect. In addition, parents can actively discuss the values of tolerance and religious moderation in everyday life, both through simple conversations and in the actions they show in interacting with others. This approach can shape children's attitudes to be more accepting of differences in society and reduce the potential for conflict that arises due to intolerance.

Nasrullah and Basri (2023) stated that collaboration between formal education provided in schools and non-formal education provided in the family is very important to achieve the goals of inclusive and moderate education. In this context, the roles of teachers and parents cannot be separated, but must support each other and work together to create an environment that is conducive to the formation of attitudes of tolerance in children. The involvement of both parties in forming children's attitudes of tolerance will greatly influence the success of religious moderation education, because children will more easily absorb these values if they receive consistent messages from both teachers and parents.

In addition, this collaboration is also important to provide real examples to children about how tolerance should be applied in everyday life. When children see their teachers and parents working together to maintain and introduce the values of religious moderation, they will be better able to internalize the message and apply it in their relationships with friends and others around them. In this case, teachers and parents not only provide verbal teaching, but also become role models who provide examples of behavior that is in accordance with these values. With the synergy between formal education in schools and non-formal education at home, it is hoped that children can grow into individuals who not only understand their religious teachings well, but also have the ability to interact harmoniously with others, respect diversity, and resolve differences peacefully. This will prepare them to be part of an inclusive, tolerant society that is able to face increasingly complex social challenges.

4. Challenges and Opportunities in Religious Moderation Education in the Digital Era

One of the main challenges identified in this study is the gap between the education taught in schools and the practices that occur at home or in the child's social environment. Although many early childhood education institutions have implemented a curriculum for religious moderation education, challenges arise when children are exposed to digital content that conflicts with these values. In addition, not all parents have a uniform understanding of the importance of religious moderation education, which can cause disharmony between formal and non-formal education. However, the digital era also offers opportunities to create more interesting and interactive teaching materials. Technology can be used to create more in-depth

educational content about tolerance, such as educational videos, learning applications, and social media that support interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Azizah (2023) emphasized that the wise use of technology can strengthen character education based on religious moderation, as long as it is supported by proper guidance.

5. Practical Implications for Early Childhood Education

This study provides very important practical implications regarding the need to integrate the values of religious moderation in every aspect of early childhood education, both at school and at home. Holistic education based on moderate religious values will produce children who not only understand their religion well, but also develop the ability to appreciate the religion and culture of others (Rahmadina et al., 2021). In this context, education not only aims to form a deep religious understanding, but also to develop an open and inclusive attitude towards the differences around them. Through education that introduces the concept of religious moderation, children are taught to respect differences in opinion, beliefs, and habits without reducing respect for the values they adhere to (Nudin, 2020).

Children who grow up with this kind of education will gain strong mental and social provisions to maintain social harmony amidst diversity (Sri Asri, 2018). They will be better prepared to face various social challenges in the future, both in everyday life and in cyberspace which is often more complex and full of information that can influence their views. In this increasingly diverse environment, the ability to interact with various groups with mutual respect becomes very important. Education that focuses on religious moderation allows children to understand that differences do not have to be a source of conflict, but can be a source of wealth and opportunities to learn more about the world and each other. The importance of education that prioritizes tolerance and religious moderation from an early age is also stated by Hidayat (2021), who emphasizes that childhood is a very effective period for forming character. At an early age, children have an extraordinary ability to absorb certain values and attitudes that will shape their personality in the future (Famularsih & Arif Billah, 2014). Therefore, education that instills an attitude of tolerance and respect for differences at this time will have a very big impact on children's social and psychological development. Thus, teaching religious moderation from an early age not only introduces the concepts of diversity, but also equips children with social skills that are very important for living harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

Furthermore, education based on religious moderation helps children develop critical thinking skills in dealing with the diversity around them. They will not only become more tolerant individuals, but also wiser in responding to differences of opinion, both in social life in the real world and in the increasingly developing digital space. In this increasingly advanced digital era, children are exposed to various kinds of information that can influence their views of the world. Therefore, religious moderation education that is implemented wisely will help children to maintain a balanced view, not to fall into extremism or intolerant views (Ainurahma & Setiawan, 2022). Thus, the integration of religious moderation values in early childhood education will not only form individuals who understand and live the teachings of their religion, but also individuals who can appreciate and adapt to the diversity of cultures and beliefs of others. Children who are equipped with this kind of education will be better prepared to face the ever-evolving social dynamics and contribute to the creation of a harmonious, inclusive and tolerant society.

Conclusion

This study confirms that religious moderation education is very important in forming a tolerant generation in the digital era, especially for early childhood. This education introduces

the values of tolerance, respect for differences, and understanding of diversity from an early age. The digital era provides challenges and opportunities, because children are exposed to various content that can influence their attitudes. Therefore, the role of teachers and parents in guiding children is very crucial. The main challenges include the mismatch between formal education and the negative influence of digital content, but the opportunity to strengthen moderation education through technology is wide open. Religious moderation education has great potential in forming a generation that is intelligent, has character, and respects differences amidst technological advances.

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