

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION EDUCATION VALUES AT MA'HAD AN-NIKMAH, PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

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Abstract: This study explores the implementation of religious moderation values at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, an Islamic educational institution playing a crucial role in shaping religious understanding among Cambodian Muslims. The research aims to understand how these moderation values are integrated into the curriculum and educational practices at this Ma'had and the institution's role in maintaining interfaith harmony in Cambodia. Using a qualitative approach, the study gathered data through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah plays a strategic role in promoting religious moderation through an inclusive and tolerant educational approach. The study also reveals challenges in implementing religious moderation education, including limited professional teaching staff and minimal financial support. In conclusion, religious moderation education at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah significantly contributes to maintaining religious harmony in Cambodia, but further support is needed to address existing challenges.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Moderation, Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah.

Introduction

Religious moderation education has become increasingly significant in today's global context, where religious and cultural diversity often presents unique challenges to social harmony. Religious moderation, which emphasizes tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and balance in belief, serves as a fundamental foundation for preventing radicalism and interreligious conflict. Across various parts of the world, religious moderation education is recognized as one of the most effective strategies for fostering inclusive and peaceful societies.

Cambodia, a country with a predominantly Buddhist population, exhibits complex religious diversity, with Muslims making up only about 5% of the total population. In this context, the Muslim community faces significant challenges in maintaining their religious identity while engaging with the Buddhist majority that dominates social and political life. In such a situation, religious moderation education plays a crucial role in bridging differences and creating a harmonious environment.

Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, an Islamic educational institution in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, was established with the aim of nurturing young Muslims who are not only firm in their faith but also possess a moderate and inclusive understanding of differences. This institution seeks to integrate the values of religious moderation into its curriculum and daily educational practices, with the hope of shaping graduates who can serve as agents of peace and harmony in a pluralistic society.

The urgency of this research arises from the need to understand how the values of religious moderation are implemented in the context of Islamic education in Cambodia, particularly at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, and how this institution contributes to

maintaining interfaith harmony in the country. With its unique historical and social background, Cambodia offers a valuable case study to explore the challenges and opportunities of implementing religious moderation education in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. This research aims to provide in-depth insights into strategies and best practices that can be adopted by similar educational institutions worldwide.

Literature Review

Research on the implementation of religious moderation education at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, is rooted in the concept of religious moderation as a key strategy for maintaining harmony and interfaith cohesion in a pluralistic society. This literature review will examine several key concepts related to religious moderation, Islamic education, and the socio-religious context in Cambodia.

1. Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is an approach that emphasizes inclusivity, tolerance, and balance in religious life. According to (Gulen, 2020), religious moderation teaches the importance of coexisting in diversity and respecting differences without compromising the core principles of one's faith. Amid rising intolerance and extremism, religious moderation serves as a crucial foundation for creating a peaceful and harmonious society.

Furthermore, (Azra, 2019) asserts that religious moderation in the context of Islamic education involves integrating values such as justice, humanity, and respect for human rights into the educational curriculum. Moderation not only fosters an inclusive religious attitude but also encourages active participation in interfaith dialogue. This aligns with (Rahim, 2021), who highlights that religious moderation education plays a vital role in preventing radicalism among religious communities, particularly the younger generation.

2. Islamic Education in Muslim-Minority Countries

Islamic education in countries with Muslim minorities, such as Cambodia, faces unique challenges. When Muslims are a minority, they must balance maintaining their religious identity with the need to integrate into a predominantly non-Muslim society. (Abdullah, 2022) emphasizes that, in this context, Islamic education should shape individuals who are devout in their faith yet open and tolerant toward surrounding diversity.

A study by (Moghaddam, 2020) reveals that Islamic education in Muslim-minority countries tends to emphasize values of moderation and interfaith harmony to preserve social peace. Islamic schools in minority settings often act as agents of peace by teaching mutual respect across religions and cultures.

Additionally, the challenges of modernizing Islamic educational institutions are significant. The modernization approach adopted by the Tahfidz Foundation in Medan City can serve as a model for Ma'had An-Nikmah to develop educational strategies that compete globally while retaining core Islamic principles (Asari et al., 2023).

3. Socio-Religious Context in Cambodia

Cambodia, with a majority Buddhist population, has a long history of relatively peaceful interreligious interaction. Although Islam is a minority religion in Cambodia, research by (Peou, 2021) shows that Muslims in Cambodia have successfully coexisted with Buddhists in harmony, thanks to the role of moderation in their religious practices.

The role of religious institutions, such as the Cambodian Supreme Council for Islamic Religious Affairs led by the Mufti, is crucial in maintaining this balance. Ma'had An-Nikmah

Al-Islamiyah is one institution supporting these efforts by focusing on religious moderation education. A study by (Jones, 2023) underscores the importance of religious moderation education in promoting tolerance and harmony in religiously diverse countries like Cambodia.

4. Religious Moderation Education in Cambodia

In the context of Cambodia, religious moderation is not only seen as a concept but also as a practice instilled in education, such as at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah. This institution implements an educational system inspired by the Malaysian model, focusing on values of moderation, such as tolerance and inclusivity. According to (Zulkifli, 2023), this educational model has successfully helped maintain harmony and social stability among the Muslim minority community in Cambodia.

This approach reflects the religious moderation principles practiced at Ma'had An-Nikmah in Phnom Penh, emphasizing harmony between Muslims and other communities in Cambodia. It aligns with the moderation principles advocated by Ahmad Syafii Maarif (Qorib et al., 2019).

Method

This study employed several data collection techniques to obtain comprehensive information about the implementation of religious moderation education values at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, Phnom Penh, Cambodia:

1. Data Collection Techniques

Observation: The researcher conducted direct observations at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah to understand educational practices and interfaith interactions within the school environment. **Document Study:** Relevant documents, including the curriculum, school policies, and annual reports, were analyzed to identify elements of religious moderation education. **In-Depth Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with key informants, including Ustadz Musa, Ustadz Ismail, Ustadz Harun, and Ustadz Biya, to gain deeper insights into the challenges and strategies for implementing religious moderation education.

2. Data Sources

Primary Data: Collected through in-depth interviews with internal informants from Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, including administrators and teaching staff.

Secondary Data: Obtained from document studies, including the school's annual reports, curriculum, and policies related to religious moderation, as well as data from other Islamic educational institutions in Cambodia.

3. Data Analysis Methods

Qualitative Analysis: Data from interviews and observations were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The researcher identified and categorized key themes that emerged from the data to understand how religious moderation values are implemented and the challenges encountered. **Document Analysis:** Collected documents were analyzed to assess how policies and curricula support the implementation of religious moderation education. Document data were compared with information obtained from interviews and observations.

4. Data Validity Techniques

Triangulation: To ensure data validity, triangulation techniques were used by comparing data from various sources (interviews, observations, and document studies) to obtain a consistent and valid understanding of the implementation of religious moderation education.

5. Research Procedure

The research was conducted in August 2024, and the procedures included:

- a. Preparation and planning, including determining key informants and initial data collection.
- b. Conducting observations and interviews with informants.
- c. Collecting and analyzing related documents.
- d. Compiling the research report based on the data analysis.

Result and Discussion

1. Implementation of Religious Moderation Education

The study revealed that Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah implements the values of religious moderation through several key mechanisms:

- a. **Curriculum and Teaching Methodology:** The curriculum at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah is designed to reflect the principles of religious moderation, emphasizing tolerance, mutual respect, and interfaith understanding. Classroom teaching involves open discussions and case studies that promote inclusive and moderate attitudes.
- b. **Extracurricular Activities:** The institution organizes extracurricular activities aimed at fostering interfaith dialogue and developing students' social skills in a diverse context. These include seminars and workshops featuring religious leaders from various backgrounds.
- c. **Role of Teachers and School Management:** Teachers and school administrators actively promote the values of religious moderation. They act as facilitators in discussions and convey messages of tolerance both inside and outside the classroom.

2 Challenges Encountered

The study identified several challenges in implementing religious moderation education at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah:

- a. **Resource Limitations:** There are limitations in the number of professional educators and adequate educational facilities. Some teachers, who are also members of the Supreme Council of Islam, are unpaid, which may affect the quality of teaching.
- b. **Need for Training and Development:** Teachers require additional training in teaching methodologies for religious moderation and in addressing sensitive religious issues that may arise.
- c. **Differences in Students' Perspectives:** Variations in religious understanding and practices among students, particularly between those following the Tablighi Jamaat and Salafi movements, present challenges in fostering a harmonious environment.

Discussion

1. Application of Religious Moderation Values

The findings align with the concept of religious moderation outlined in the literature review, where religious moderation education aims to develop tolerance and interfaith understanding. According to Moghaddam (2020), religious moderation emphasizes inclusive values and interfaith dialogue. The curriculum at Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah reflects efforts to integrate these principles into the educational process.

2. Challenges in Implementation

The challenges faced by Ma’had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, including resource limitations and differences in students' perspectives, highlight a gap between the ideals and practice of religious moderation. This is consistent with Azra's (2019) findings, which state that although religious moderation values are often set as educational goals, their implementation is frequently hindered by practical factors, such as limited resources and internal differences within the community.

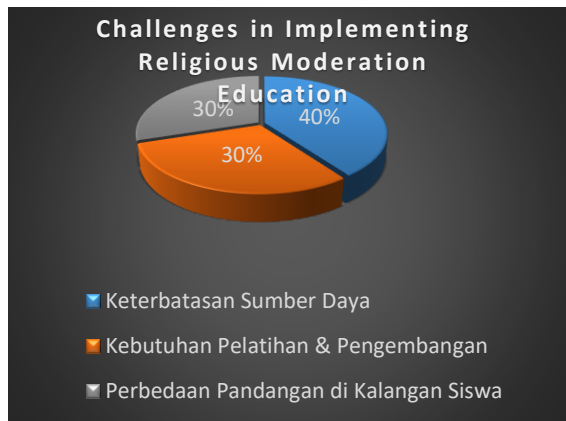
3. Role of Teachers and School Management

The active role of teachers and school management in promoting religious moderation aligns with educational theories emphasizing the importance of educators in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors (Moghaddam, 2020). Their involvement in the process of religious moderation education is a positive step, but additional support in the form of training and adequate resources is needed to enhance implementation effectiveness.

Supporting Data

Table 1: Extracurricular Activities Supporting Religious Moderation

Activity	Description	Frequency
Interfaith Seminars	Discussions between students and religious leaders from various backgrounds	Monthly
Tolerance Workshops	Training on social skills and interfaith communication	Quarterly
Discussion Forums	Open forums to discuss sensitive religious issues	Monthly



Graph 1: Distribution of Challenges in Implementing Religious Moderation Education

The graph illustrates the proportion of key challenges faced in implementing religious moderation education at Ma’had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah.

These findings and discussions provide an overview of how Ma’had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah implements religious moderation education and the challenges faced. The findings align with existing theories and offer

insights for improving the practice of religious moderation education.

Conclusion

This study aims to examine the implementation of religious moderation education values at Ma’had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Based on the analysis results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Implementation of Religious Moderation Education: Ma’had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah effectively implements the principles of religious moderation in its curriculum and extracurricular activities. The educational curriculum focuses on developing attitudes of

tolerance and interfaith understanding, supported by activities that encourage interfaith dialogue and students' social skills.

Challenges Faced: Several significant challenges exist in implementing religious moderation education, including limited resources, the need for additional teacher training, and differing views among students. Resource limitations, both in terms of facilities and teaching staff, as well as differing viewpoints among student groups, indicate a gap in the implementation of moderation principles.

Role of Teachers and School Management: Teachers and school management play a crucial role in promoting religious moderation. Although they are highly committed, there is a need for increased support through training and resources to improve the effectiveness of teaching religious moderation.

Overall, Ma'had An-Nikmah Al-Islamiyah has successfully integrated the values of religious moderation into their education. However, to achieve more optimal results, additional efforts are needed to address the existing challenges, including improving resources and training for teachers.

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