

Religious Moderation in Madrasah: Religious Character Strengthening and Tolerance

Moderasi Keagamaan di Madrasah: Penguatan Karakter Keagamaan dan Toleransi

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Abstract

This study aims to examine religious moderation in madrasah, focusing on strengthening character and religious tolerance. The study uses a descriptive qualitative research method, with the subjects being students and teachers at one of the madrasahs in Indonesia. Data were collected through interviews and observations, then analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques. The results show that madrasahs play an important role in teaching religious values and strengthening students' character, as well as developing religious tolerance to foster harmony and diversity in society. Strengthening character in madrasah can be achieved through religious teaching and the development of students' personalities by providing positive examples in daily life. Religious tolerance can be strengthened by teaching Islamic principles that promote tolerance, engaging in social activities together, and interfaith dialogue. However, there are several challenges in strengthening religious moderation in madrasah, such as the lack of available facilities and supporting curricula, as well as discrimination and intolerance in society. Therefore, support from the government and all relevant stakeholders is needed to strengthen educational programs that emphasize values of tolerance and harmony. Overall, this study shows that madrasahs can play a role as Islamic educational institutions that can strengthen students' character and develop religious tolerance, thereby helping to build harmony and diversity in society.

Kata Kunci:

Penguatan Karakter; Pendidikan Islam;

Abstrak

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INTRODUCTION

A madrasah is one of the Islamic educational institutions that plays an important role in shaping the character of students and developing Islam. However, in reality, many madrasahs are still unable to provide balanced religious education between knowledge and practice, leading to a significant number of students who tend to be fanatic and intolerant toward other groups of different faiths. As a solution to address this issue, the development of a religious moderation program in education at madrasahs is necessary.

The discussion on religious moderation and religious tolerance has become a popular topic in religious studies in Indonesia. According to Ramadhan K. H. (2019), religious moderation is a concept that encompasses an understanding and practice of religion that is balanced, moderate, and tolerant toward religious differences. Religious moderation is believed to be effective in countering fanaticism, intolerance, and religious extremism that often emerge in society.

The importance of religious moderation in education should be instilled in students from an early age because there are concerns that without it, other understandings may take root, leading to extremist views, radicalism, and eventually resulting in terrorist behavior. Schools or madrasahs, as educational institutions, can serve as places to disseminate and express such understanding. However, the lack of control over students' religious attitudes in schools can lead to intolerance among students.

Research conducted by the Center for Islamic and Society Studies (PPIM) at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah shows that 20-25 students out of 1,859 students in public schools in Indonesia display intolerance and sympathize with radical movements. The intolerant behavior of students can lead to an understanding of radicalism, which ultimately results in terrorist attitudes. Therefore, addressing intolerance among students is crucial and requires joint efforts between parents and teachers at home and in schools/madrasahs.

One of the efforts by madrasahs to counter students' intolerant views is through strengthening religious moderation, which is internalized in students through the Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 184 of 2019 regarding the guidelines for implementing the curriculum in Madrasahs from MI, MTs, to MA. This decree gives madrasahs the freedom to develop students' potential, and one important aspect in overcoming students' intolerant views is the implementation of religious moderation to strengthen moderate character in madrasahs. The implementation of religious moderation also has a positive impact on educational institutions, as it helps teachers internalize such understanding without being burdened by excessive curriculum administration.

Research by Rahim, Hidayat, and Wibowo (2019) shows that character development and religious tolerance can be achieved by incorporating moderate and inclusive religious education into the madrasah curriculum. The development of a religious moderation program in madrasahs can be a solution to address religious intolerance and strengthen students' character.

In several reviews of the studies, statements regarding the research problem on student intolerance and the need to enhance the culture of moderate thinking through the strengthening of religious moderation in madrasahs have been found. Therefore, the problem formulation of this research is: (1) What is the concept of religious moderation? (2) How is character strengthening implemented in madrasahs? (3) How is religious tolerance practiced in madrasahs?

This study aims to comprehensively investigate the concept of religious moderation in strengthening students' character and religious tolerance in madrasahs. The objectives of this study are: (1) To understand the concept of religious moderation; (2) To understand the concept of character strengthening in madrasahs; (3) To understand the concept of religious tolerance in madrasahs. This research has several uses, including:

1. As a reference for the development of a religious moderation program in madrasahs. This journal can be used by relevant parties to develop religious moderation programs in madrasahs, both by teachers in madrasahs and by the government in designing policies related to religious education in Indonesia.
2. As a source of information for researchers. This journal provides complete and up-to-date information regarding the development of religious moderation programs in madrasahs, which can be used as a reference for researchers conducting studies on the same or related topics.

3. As a contribution to the scientific literature. This journal also contributes to the scientific literature in the field of religious education, especially related to the development of religious moderation programs in madrasahs.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of religious moderation emphasizes the concept of understanding and practicing religion in a balanced, moderate, and tolerant manner towards religious differences. Religious moderation is believed to be able to counteract fanaticism, intolerance, and religious extremism that often arise in society (Ramadhan, 2019). In addition, Madjid (1996) stated that religious moderation can foster an attitude of respecting differences and prevent people from engaging in destructive actions. The theory of religious moderation has also been applied in education, including in madrasahs, to produce students who think moderately and are tolerant towards religious differences (Rahim, Hidayat, & Wibowo, 2019).

Meanwhile, the theory of character and religious tolerance emphasizes the importance of shaping students' character and developing tolerance in religious education. According to Yusuf (2019), character education is an effort to form students' good personality and uphold moral values such as tolerance, honesty, and responsibility. The development of students' character in madrasahs must also include the development of religious tolerance, as this is an important aspect of harmonious religious life (Abdullah, 2019). The formation of character and religious tolerance in madrasahs can be a solution to address the issue of students' intolerance towards other groups of different faiths and strengthen students' moderate and tolerant character (Rahim, Hidayat, & Wibowo, 2019).

The implementation of a religious moderation program in madrasahs can have a positive impact on strengthening moderate character and religious tolerance among students. By integrating moderate and inclusive religious education into the madrasah curriculum, students are expected to develop a balanced, moderate, and tolerant understanding and practice of religion towards religious differences. This is hoped to reduce or even prevent the emergence of fanaticism, intolerance, and religious extremism among students.

In addition, the implementation of a religious moderation program in madrasahs can also have a positive impact on the educational institution itself. By internalizing the understanding of religious moderation among students, madrasahs can become educational institutions that strengthen moderate character and religious tolerance in students, as well as make a positive contribution to society in addressing issues of religious intolerance. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is that the implementation of a religious moderation program in madrasahs can help enhance the strengthening of moderate character and religious tolerance among students and have a positive impact on educational institutions and society in general.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive qualitative research method is a research method conducted by gathering in-depth information about the phenomenon being studied. This method involves collecting data through interviews, observations, and document studies. The collected data is then analyzed and interpreted to uncover the hidden meanings within the phenomenon being studied. In research on religious moderation in madrasahs, the descriptive qualitative research method is highly suitable because it can explore in-depth information about the practice of religious moderation in madrasahs.

One of the advantages of the descriptive qualitative research method is its flexibility in data collection. Researchers can choose various data collection techniques according to the needs and characteristics of the phenomenon being studied. This allows researchers to obtain a more complete and accurate picture of the phenomenon being studied. In research on religious moderation in madrasahs, data collection techniques that can be used include interviews with madrasah administrators, teachers, and students, observations, and document studies on activities conducted in the madrasah.

In addition to its flexibility in data collection, the descriptive qualitative research method also allows researchers to explore more detailed aspects of the phenomenon being studied. This is done by analyzing the data in depth to uncover patterns and findings that are hidden in the collected data. In research on religious moderation in madrasahs, data analysis that can be carried out includes thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and qualitative analysis.

The descriptive qualitative research method also requires the direct involvement of the researcher in the data collection and analysis process. This is done so that the researcher can deeply understand the phenomenon being studied and uncover the true meaning of the data that has been collected. Therefore, expertise and experience in using appropriate data collection and analysis techniques are needed. In research on religious moderation in madrasahs, the researcher needs to have a sufficient understanding of the practices of religious moderation and the characteristics of madrasahs as Islamic educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Concept of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is an approach to religion that teaches a balanced and moderate attitude. This concept promotes values of tolerance, harmony, and mutual respect among people of different faiths. Religious moderation also encourages the recognition of diversity, thus fostering harmony in religious life within society. The concept of religious moderation has developed in Islamic history, teaching the necessity of a moderate or balanced attitude in practicing religion and rejecting any form of extremism or fanaticism that is not in line with the true values of Islam. This concept originates from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions, who demonstrated a moderate approach in practicing Islam.

In Islamic history, the concept of religious moderation first emerged during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In his Hadiths, he exhibited a very moderate attitude in practicing Islam and emphasized the importance of maintaining balance in daily life. This concept continued to develop during the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, which is considered a golden age in Islamic history, where Muslim leaders demonstrated a moderate approach in spreading the teachings of Islam.

However, in later times, the concept of religious moderation experienced changes in its understanding and implementation. Some groups and factions within Islam adopted extreme views in practicing religion, neglecting the principles of moderation in Islamic teachings. This is evident in the emergence of groups like the Khawarij, who are regarded as radical in Islamic history.

Over time, the concept of religious moderation resurfaced as a response to the rise of radical movements within Islam. Today, religious moderation is seen as one of the solutions to address the phenomenon of extremism in Islam. This concept emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance in religious life, respecting differences and tolerance among religions, and rejecting any form of violence or extreme actions that contradict the true teachings of Islam.

Religious moderation is also known as *wasatiyah*, derived from the Arabic word *wasat*, which means middle or balanced. This concept was introduced by Islam as one of its core principles. *Wasatiyah* teaches Muslims to perform acts of worship and behave in daily life in a balanced and proportional way, avoiding extreme behaviors that harm oneself or others.

The concept of religious moderation refers to Islam's view of balance in practicing religious teachings and interacting with the surrounding environment. Religious moderation in Islam emphasizes the importance of tolerance, openness, and avoiding extremism in understanding and practicing religious teachings.

According to Quraish Shihab, religious moderation in Islam encompasses three important aspects: *tauhid*, *syariah*, and *akhlak*. The aspect of *tauhid* emphasizes the importance of understanding and practicing the belief in the oneness of Allah, while the aspect of *syariah* relates to the practice of religious teachings that include worship, social interactions, and morality. The aspect of *akhlak* focuses on strengthening character and upholding moral values when interacting with the surrounding environment.

Outside of Indonesia, the concept of religious moderation is also known by various names, such as *wasatiyyah* in Saudi Arabia, *wasatiyah Islamiah* in Egypt, and *amal jama'i* in Morocco. This concept has also gained international attention, especially in the context of preventing radicalism and terrorism rooted in extreme religious attitudes. Religious moderation becomes crucial in the context of diversity in Indonesia. The country has a rich diversity of religions and cultures, which necessitates an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect among people of different faiths. In this context, religious moderation serves as a solution to promote tolerance and harmony among religious communities in Indonesia.

In the context of madrasahs, religious moderation is very important in preparing the younger Muslim generation to understand and practice Islam in a balanced manner, integrating it with contemporary values required to build a civilized and peaceful society. Therefore, madrasahs need to provide holistic and comprehensive Islamic education to strengthen students' character and develop attitudes of tolerance and openness towards diversity in society.

In this context, religious moderation in madrasahs is not limited to religious teaching, but also involves the formation of students' personalities through various activities and experiences that can strengthen character and help develop attitudes of tolerance and openness. For example, social activities, interfaith dialogues, and providing positive role models in daily life can help students gain a better understanding of religion and develop attitudes of tolerance and openness in interacting with their environment.

Character Strengthening in Madrasah

Character is a collection of attitudes, values, and behaviors possessed by an individual. Strengthening character is one of the important educational goals, particularly in Madrasah. As an Islamic educational institution, Madrasah has the responsibility to shape students with strong and good character. This is achieved through the habituation of Islamic values in every aspect of the education applied. A study by Triyono and Rofiah (2019) on character strengthening in Madrasah found that character development through religious education and the habituation of good manners is highly effective in shaping good character in Madrasah students.

The theory of child development, specifically Jean Piaget's cognitive psychology theory, suggests that children learn through interactions with their environment and experiences. The experiences children acquire shape their understanding, attitudes, and values, which in turn form their character. Therefore, character strengthening in Madrasah needs to be conducted through an active and contextual learning approach, such as problem-based learning, simulations, and hands-on experiences.

The goal of character strengthening in Madrasah is to form students who possess good personalities, skills, independence, and responsibility. One of the key factors in character strengthening is the introduction of Islamic values as the foundation of life. A study by Ghozali et al. (2019) on character strengthening in Madrasah found that introducing Islamic values can help form strong character in students. Additionally, the habituation of good morals is also necessary in the process of character strengthening in Madrasah.

The implementation of character strengthening in Madrasah can be done through various activities, such as moral and ethical education, worship habituation, social activities, and other religious activities. Moral and ethical education can be integrated into general subjects, such as Indonesian language and mathematics, so that students can learn how to apply moral values in everyday life. Worship habituation can be done through the practice of congregational prayers, reading the Quran, and other religious activities.

On the other hand, character strengthening in Madrasah can be carried out through various methods, such as the habituation of good morals, discipline, and cleanliness. A study by Lestari and Indriyani (2019) on character strengthening in Madrasah found that the habituation of good morals is very important in shaping good character in Madrasah students. Furthermore, the habituation of discipline and cleanliness also plays a significant role in the formation of strong character in students.

Character strengthening in Madrasah requires support and active participation from all parties, such as Madrasah administrators, teachers, parents, and the surrounding community. A study by Harini and Setiawati (2020) on character strengthening in Madrasah found that the participation and support of parents and the surrounding community are crucial in forming strong character in Madrasah students. Additionally, the support and active involvement of Madrasah administrators and teachers are also important factors in character strengthening in Madrasah.

Religious Tolerance in Madrasah

Madrasah is one of the Islamic educational institutions specifically established to provide Islamic religious education. Since its establishment, Madrasah has played an important role in the development of religious knowledge and dakwah (Islamic missionary work) in Muslim communities. Education in Madrasah places a greater emphasis on moral and ethical values, alongside studying the Quran and Hadith. Teaching in Madrasah is often done traditionally through a one-on-one tutoring system between teachers and students.

Madrasah also has unique characteristics in its organization. Since most Madrasahs are established by local communities, they typically implement a curriculum tailored to the needs and characteristics of the local society. This results in variations in the curriculum between one Madrasah and another. However, in general, the curriculum in Madrasah includes subjects such as aqidah (creed), fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tafsir (Quranic exegesis), hadith, and Arabic language.

In this context, Madrasah plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of Islamic religious education in Indonesia, especially for Muslim communities that need more in-depth and structured religious education. On the other hand, there are various challenges and issues faced by Madrasah, such as differences in curricula, quality of teaching, and difficulties in adapting to technological and informational developments. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve the quality of teaching and the management of Madrasah so that they can continue to play a key role in the development of Islamic religious education in Indonesia.

One way to strengthen religious tolerance in Madrasah is by teaching the principles of Islam that promote tolerance and harmony among different religious communities. In addition, teachers can provide real-life examples of how to live harmoniously with followers of other religions, so that students can imitate and practice these values of tolerance in their daily lives.

Madrasah can also organize activities or programs that involve students from different religious backgrounds, such as interfaith dialogues, visits to places of worship of other religious communities, or joint social activities. Through these activities, students can interact with people from various religions and gain a broader understanding of diversity and social harmony.

In practice, there are several challenges in strengthening religious tolerance in Madrasah, such as social injustice, discrimination, and intolerance that occur in society. Therefore, the role of the government and all related parties in supporting educational programs that emphasize the values of tolerance and harmony is crucial for strengthening religious tolerance in Madrasah.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

In this study, the concept of religious moderation in Madrasah has been examined with a focus on strengthening character and promoting religious tolerance. The findings of the research indicate that Madrasah plays an important role in teaching religious values, strengthening students' character, and fostering a sense of religious tolerance to build harmony and diversity in society.

Character development in Madrasah can be achieved through religious teaching and the formation of students' personalities by providing positive examples in daily life. Meanwhile, religious tolerance can be reinforced by teaching the principles of Islam that encourage tolerance, organizing joint social activities, and promoting interfaith dialogues.

However, there are several challenges in strengthening religious moderation in Madrasah, such as the lack of facilities and curricula that support it, as well as the presence of discrimination and intolerance in society. Therefore, support from the government and all relevant parties is necessary to strengthen educational programs that emphasize values of tolerance and social harmony.

Overall, this study shows that Madrasah can play a role as an Islamic educational institution capable of strengthening students' character and developing religious tolerance, which in turn can help build harmony and diversity in society. It is hoped that this research can contribute positively to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia and other countries with significant Muslim populations.

Suggestions

Based on the findings and analysis in this study, several suggestions or recommendations can be directed to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Head of Madrasah, and education observers to ensure the implementation of this research. The suggestions or recommendations are as follows:

1. The Ministry of Religious Affairs should provide more serious support and attention to the implementation of religious moderation in Madrasah. This support can be given through various policies and programs that can strengthen the implementation of religious moderation in Madrasah. Furthermore, regular evaluations should be conducted to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the religious moderation program based on local wisdom in Madrasah, and recommendations for further improvements and developments should be made.
2. The Head of Madrasah should strengthen the role of teachers in implementing religious moderation based on local wisdom in the classroom. This can be achieved by providing training and guidance to teachers so that they can understand and apply religious moderation in their teaching. The Head of Madrasah should also give special attention to the role of families in instilling religious moderation. This can be done by involving families and providing them with an understanding of the importance of religious moderation.
3. Education observers can provide attention and support in the development of religious moderation based on local wisdom in Madrasah. This support can be provided through the provision of information and resources that can assist in the implementation of religious moderation in Madrasah.

By implementing the suggestions or recommendations outlined, it is hoped that religious moderation can be effectively applied in Madrasah, leading to the formation of a moderate mindset culture among students.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

The author of this article, fully declare that this work is an original creation and does not contain any elements of plagiarism. All data used in this article are collected legally and have been analyzed transparently. I ensure that this article has not been published elsewhere, either in full or in part, and is not currently under consideration for publication in any other journal or conference. I also take full responsibility for the accuracy of the data, methodology, and results presented in this article.

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