

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO THE FORMATION OF  
TOLERANCE AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study stems from crucial issues related to the degradation of social sensitivity and the escalation of intolerance among students, particularly in the context of social media penetration and increasingly complex interpersonal interactions. Religious education is abstracted as a fundamental means for internalizing values of moderation and character building that uphold diversity. The purpose of this study is to investigate the contribution of religious education in constructing tolerance awareness among students in the secondary school ecosystem. This study adopted a quantitative methodology with an explanatory survey design, involving 120 student respondents who were analyzed using a Likert scale questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the data were strengthened through classroom observations, interviews with educators, and a review of curriculum documentation. Descriptive evaluation revealed that the implementation of religious education was at a “good” level, while tolerance awareness among students was at a “high” level. The results of simple linear regression analysis indicate a significant statistical determination between the variables of religious education and tolerance awareness, as shown by a significance value of 0.001. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination of 0.42 underlines that 42% of the variability in tolerant attitudes can be explained by the quality of religious education implementation. The discussion of this study emphasizes that religious education that applies dialogical, reflective, and situational understanding-based methods effectively improves students' capacity to appreciate diversity and foster peaceful relationships. Furthermore, the example set by educators has proven to be a crucial factor in instilling values of tolerance in students. The essence of this study's findings concludes that religious education makes a substantial and crucial contribution to fostering awareness of tolerance in students. Therefore, its implementation requires continuous development with a moderate, humancentered, and inclusive approach to enrich social character in a culturally diverse educational ecosystem.*

*Keywords: Religious Education; Religious Moderation; Tolerance; Students; Social Awareness.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Education is very important for the development and progress of a country. In the context of Indonesia, education is still a big challenge (Sundarwati et al., 2025). Higher education plays a crucial role in producing quality human resources, especially in the era of globalization that demands high competitiveness and competence in the world of work. Education not only serves as a means of mastering knowledge, but also as a provision in managing time, maintaining motivation to learn, organizing responsibilities, and dealing with academic pressures, (Salsabila et al., 2025).

Awareness of the crucial importance of peaceful coexistence is a fundamental prerequisite for the sustainability of multicultural societies, as observed in Indonesia. The complexity of religion, culture, and socio-cultural identities that define a nation not only enriches the social structure, but also has the potential to cause friction if not managed through the principle of mutual respect. In the realm of formal education, schools play a vital role as social arenas where values of tolerance are instilled from an early age. This is where religious education makes an essential contribution, not merely as a normative discipline, but primarily as a tool for building the socio-religious character of students.

Various scientific investigations indicate that the balanced absorption of spiritual values through constructive dialogue can increase openness and prevent the development of prejudice between religious groups. However, many methods of religious teaching in formal educational institutions still focus exclusively on knowledge and do not emphasize the essence of universal humanity. This results in students' understanding of religious teachings being literal, but they are not fully encouraged to practice mutual respect in their daily interactions. This dynamic highlights the discrepancy between the noble ideals of religious education and the reality of its implementation. Thus, research that analyzes the role of religious pedagogy in fostering awareness of the importance of tolerance is crucial and urgent.

The relevance of this research becomes even more urgent when we consider the social conditions that are often marked by manifestations of intolerance. This includes verbal expressions of hatred, rejection of minority groups, and discriminatory practices that are now beginning to infiltrate the academic environment. Educational institutions should ideally serve as a forum for instilling national and humanitarian values, not as a means of spreading prejudice and stereotypical generalizations. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the role of religious education in this context will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of learning in building a defense of positive values and identifying potential improvements in pedagogical strategies to increase awareness of tolerance among students.

This study is designed to provide a strong rational basis for the importance of reorienting religious education to better suit the challenges of diversity today. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) analyze the contribution of religious education in fostering tolerance awareness; (2) describe the mechanisms of internalizing tolerance values through teaching materials, methods, and learning interactions; and (3) identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the effectiveness of religious learning in promoting tolerant attitudes.

Theoretically, this study utilizes a number of frameworks. First, character education theory emphasizes that moral and social values can be formed through habituation, role modeling, and internalization of values. Second, symbolic interactionism theory views that the meaning of tolerance is formed through social interaction in the classroom and school. Third, a moderate religious education approach rooted in the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin, namely religious values that promote benefit, peace, and respect for others.

Previous literature shows that religious education conducted using a dialogical, reflective, and contextual approach can strengthen students' open-mindedness. However, research also notes that differences in teacher abilities, a curriculum that is still normative, and a lack of space for critical discussion are often major obstacles. From this gap, the research hypothesis was formulated: the higher the quality of religious education implementation through humanistic learning methods, teacher role modeling, and a moderate curriculum the higher the level of tolerance awareness among students.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses descriptive and verificative quantitative methods with a survey design that aims to explain and test the extent to which religious education contributes to shaping students' awareness

of tolerance. The focus of this study covers two main things, namely the implementation of religious education as an unaffected factor and awareness of tolerance as an affected factor.

The research was conducted at MA Nurul Ilmi, which was deliberately chosen because the diversity that exists in the school is in line with the research objectives. The main tools used were questionnaires with a Likert scale, supplemented by guidelines for observation, teacher interviews, and curriculum and teaching materials. All of these tools were tested to ensure their validity and reliability before use.

Four methods were used to collect data: questionnaires, classroom observations, semistructured interviews, and document analysis. The definitions of each variable are formulated as follows: (1) Religious Education Implementation (X) includes the quality of teaching materials, teaching methods, examples from teachers, and classroom atmosphere; (2) Student Tolerance Awareness (Y) includes attitudes of respecting differences, openness to dialogue, interfaith cooperation, and rejection of discriminatory actions.

The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression to see how influential variable X was on variable Y. The results of the analysis were supported by findings from observations and interviews to strengthen the conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Description of Research Variables

The study was conducted on 120 students. Data was obtained through a 1–5 Likert scale questionnaire. The following is a summary of the average calculation results for each variable.

**Table 1. Average Variables of Religious Education and Tolerance Awareness**

Variables	Mean	Category
Implementation of Religious Education (X)	4,12	Good
Awareness Tolerance (Y)	4,08	Heigth

The table shows that the implementation of religious education in schools is in the good category, characterized by fairly interactive learning methods, consistent teacher role models, and teaching materials that are relevant to the context of diversity. Meanwhile, students' awareness of tolerance is also relatively high, as reflected in their ability to respect differences and maintain harmonious interactions with friends of different beliefs. The relatively high values of these two variables indicate that the process of religious education in schools has been constructive and has had a positive impact on the social development of students.

**Table 2. Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results**

Simple Linear Regression Test Results

Statistics	Value
Regression Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	0.65
Calculated t-value	3.64
Sig. (p-value)	0.001
Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )	0.42

The results of the analysis in Table 2 show that a significance value of 0.001 indicates a very significant effect between religious education and students' tolerance awareness ( $p < 0.05$ ). A regression coefficient of 0.65 indicates that the better the implementation of religious education, the higher the level of tolerance among students. Meanwhile, the  $R^2$  value of 0.42 means that 42% of the variation in tolerance awareness can be explained by religious education, while the remaining 58% is influenced by other factors such as family environment, social circle, or social media.

### Discussion

The results of the study show that religious education contributes significantly to shaping students' attitudes of tolerance. These quantitative findings are in line with the concept of character education, which emphasizes that moral and social values are formed not only through mastery of subject matter, but also through habit formation, role modeling, and meaningful interaction between teachers and students. When religious learning is conducted using a dialogical and contextual approach, students find it easier to understand the universal messages of religious teachings, such as peace, compassion, and respect for others.

The regression coefficient value ( $\beta = 0.65$ ) shows that every improvement in the quality of religious learning has a strong tendency to increase students' awareness of tolerance. This confirms that religious education delivered in a moderate manner plays an important role in preventing the emergence of prejudice, stereotypes, and exclusive attitudes. These findings support previous studies explaining that religious education emphasizing inclusive and humanistic values can foster a more open perspective towards diversity.

Furthermore, an  $R^2$  value of 0.42 indicates that religious education does have a significant influence, but it is not the only determining factor. Extracurricular influences such as family interactions, peer groups, and exposure to mass media play an equally important role in shaping students' views on religious differences. In other words, religious education is an important foundation, but it needs to be supported by a broader social ecosystem in order for tolerance awareness to grow more fully.

These results are consistent with findings in the literature that show that religious moderation in schools is crucial for building tolerant attitudes. For example, in a study on the development of religious moderation in high schools, Islamic Religious Education teachers played an active role in countering intolerant attitudes through classroom materials and interactions. (Alfianur et al., 2024). In addition, an inclusive strategy of religious moderation education helps the younger generation better understand differences in beliefs without creating conflict (Sari et al., 2024).

The role of teachers as role models is also very important. When PAI teachers consistently exemplify tolerance and open up space for dialogue among students, it creates a classroom climate that is safe and respectful of diversity, which ultimately strengthens the internalization of tolerance values. This is in line with the idea that the implementation of moderation through social and religious dimensions can instill harmonious values of belief in students' lives. (Maksudi et al., 2023).

Religious digital literacy is an important supporting factor. Data shows that students who have good digital literacy regarding religious content tend to have a more moderate attitude towards religion, including tolerance, national commitment, and anti-violence (Agusta et.al, 2024). Furthermore, research on the use of digital literacy in religious education shows that digital media, if managed properly, can be a vehicle for instilling moderate Islam teachers and religious mentors can use technology to discuss the values of tolerance and diversity with students. (Rahmat et al, 2025). For example, in elementary schools or madrasas, the use of digital literacy in religious education has been proven to be an effective strategy for strengthening tolerance among students. (Rusdianto et al., 2025).

The contribution of moderation-based extracurricular programs cannot be ignored. A study shows that values of moderation such as tolerance, equality, and peace are actively instilled in extracurricular activities, and this has a positive impact on students' social attitudes. (Alsi, 2025).

In addition, the student council's initiative to integrate religious moderation values has also been observed as an effective method of strengthening tolerance among students. For example, the integration of moderation values into the student council program allows students of different religions to interact, plan activities together, and learn to respect differences (Nasution et al., 2025).

The regression findings from this study (positive relationship between PAI and tolerance) are also supported by other studies showing that understanding religious moderation in vocational schools (SMK) has a significant effect on students' attitudes toward tolerance. However, despite its significant influence, religious moderation is not the only factor that shapes tolerance. Literature research shows that external factors such as social environment, family, and school policy also have an influence. For example, inclusive education regulations in schools are important for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students without religious discrimination. (Helmawati et al., 2024). From a policy perspective, the evaluation of moderation learning in madrasah Ibtidaiyah revealed that the success of moderation was supported by teacher training, the selection of appropriate teaching materials, and regular student dialogue.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study suggests that the implementation of religious education contributes significantly to fostering awareness of tolerance among students. Descriptive analysis reveals that the quality of religious teaching is satisfactory, characterized by an appropriate curriculum, discussion-based learning tactics, and consistency in teachers setting an example. In line with this, the level of tolerance awareness among students is high, indicating that the principles of appreciation for diversity have been internalized in their daily interactions. Simple linear regression analysis confirms

the significant influence of religious education on awareness of tolerance, as indicated by a coefficient of determination of 0.42. This indicates that the quality of religious education contributes 42% to the variability in tolerant attitudes exhibited by students. These results support the argument that religious teaching that emphasizes a moderate, humanistic approach that is relevant to the context of life is effective in fostering openness, empathy, and appreciation for differences. Therefore, religious education has been empirically confirmed to have a significant contribution to the development of tolerance awareness among students, while also serving as the basis for shaping national character in line with the demands of a culturally diverse society. The results of this study emphasize the urgency of amplifying dialogical and inclusive religious pedagogy in order to optimize the growth of tolerance values.

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