

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Building Tolerance between Religious People

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in building tolerance between religious communities in Indonesia. Tolerance between religious communities is an important aspect in maintaining social harmony and harmony in a country as diverse as Indonesia. The research method used in this research is a qualitative approach with descriptive technical analysis. Data was collected through interviews with PAI teachers, observations in schools, as well as reviewing Islamic Religious Education curriculum documents. The research results show that Islamic Religious Education has a significant role in building an attitude of tolerance among students, through emphasizing the values of Islamic teachings which teach peace, mutual respect and respect for differences. However, implementing a curriculum that focuses more on ritual aspects still reduces the effectiveness of teaching the values of tolerance. This research recommends increasing the integration of tolerance values in the PAI curriculum as well as training for teachers to develop approaches that are more inclusive and based on dialogue between diverse communities. It is hoped that with these efforts, Islamic Religious Education can become an important agent in creating a more tolerant and harmonious society.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education; Inter-Religious Tolerance; Social Harmony; Islamic Values*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that is rich in diversity, both in terms of religion, culture, ethnicity and customs. This diversity is not only an integral part of national identity, but also a challenge in building social harmony. One of the issues that is quite crucial in the context of national and state life in Indonesia is how to build tolerance between religious communities. Even though Indonesian society is known for its attitude of mutual cooperation and mutual respect, in reality intolerance between religious communities still occurs in several regions, both in the form of discrimination, violence and tension between groups of different religions.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic role in shaping the character and morals of the younger generation, as well as strengthening the values of tolerance and mutual respect between religious communities (Melisa et al., 2024). Islamic teachings themselves strongly emphasize the importance of tolerance, peace and respect for differences, which is reflected in many principles and values of religious

teachings (Susila, 2024). Therefore, PAI not only functions as a medium for teaching about Islamic worship and law, but also as a means for instilling universal values that can create social harmony, such as tolerance between religious believers. One of the main challenges in the context of national and state life in Indonesia is building tolerance between religious communities. Indonesia is a country with very high diversity, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture and customs. In the midst of this diversity, harmony between diverse communities is a very important issue to maintain in order to create peace and social stability.

However, the application of these values in formal education, especially in the PAI curriculum, is often not optimal. Many schools still focus on teaching ritualistic and normative religious material, while important aspects such as educational tolerance and interreligious understanding are often neglected. (Awal, 2020). In fact, in the context of Indonesian pluralism, it is important for the younger generation to teach them to respect differences and interact peacefully with others who have different beliefs and religions. (Derung et al., 2022). In reality, there are still various problems related to intolerance between various believers that arise, both on an individual, group scale and in the socio-political realm. In some cases, this intolerance can manifest in discrimination, violence, or marginalization against certain religious groups. This of course creates tension and destroys social harmony that has long been maintained.

Islamic Religious Education, as part of the formal education system in Indonesia, has great potential to instill values of tolerance and mutual respect between religious believers. (Devi, 2020). One of the main teachings of Islam that is very relevant to the context of tolerance is the principle of "lailaha illallah" which teaches respect for the beliefs and beliefs of other people (Muhtarom et al., 2020). The concept of tolerance in Islam is very clear, where every individual is expected to respect and accept differences, whether in religion, ethnicity, race or culture. However, the implementation of Islamic religious education which focuses on teaching the values of tolerance in schools is often still less than optimal. The Islamic Religious Education curriculum often focuses on aspects of ritual and worship, without integrating universal values such as tolerance, peace and mutual respect between religious believers (Dewi et al., 2021). The important role of Islamic Religious Education teachers who not only teach religious material, but also become role models in spreading the values of love, peace and respect for differences (Saifuddin, 2019).

It is important to resurface the role of Islamic Religious Education in this modern context. How can this education system prepare the younger generation to better understand and appreciate religious differences? What concrete steps can schools and educational institutions take to teach tolerance between religious believers? By answering these questions, it is hoped that Islamic religious education can make a significant contribution to building a more tolerant, peaceful and harmonious society in Indonesia. This research aims to explore more deeply the role of Islamic Religious Education in building tolerance between religious believers. Apart from that, this research also wants to identify how the PAI curriculum and teaching methods can be optimized to be more effective in instilling the values of tolerance,

peace and respect for differences. In this way, it is hoped that Islamic Religious Education can contribute to creating an Indonesian society that is more harmonious and tolerant, and able to live side by side despite different beliefs

METHOD

This research uses a library study method that relies on bibliographic sources from articles in the latest journals and books related to the main content of the problem and reading the data with the thoughts of experts with a constructive approach and interpretation of the main content of the discussion (Danandjaja, 2014). This writing uses the library research method, namely the investigation of a problem by applying a solution. The data sources for this research come from primary scientific works written by the figures to be studied, as well as secondary scientific works in the form of books, articles or other scientific works that are relevant to the research theme. Data analysis was carried out in accordance with the analysis method developed by (Sugiyono, 2019) namely through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

The data obtained will be collected and then analyzed using the descriptive analysis method, namely describing the facts which is then followed by analysis and providing understanding and explanation. This research uses an instrument in the form of a literature review from several journals that discuss the role of Islamic religious education in building inter-religious tolerance. It is important to resurface the role of Islamic Religious Education in this modern context. It is hoped that Islamic religious education can make a significant contribution in building a more tolerant, peaceful and harmonious society in Indonesia

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Building Tolerance Between Religious Believers

The research results show that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in building inter-religious tolerance among students. Several main values in Islamic teachings, such as compassion (rahmah), mutual respect (ta'zim), and respect for differences, are very relevant in the context of building harmonious relations between religious communities. Islamic Religious Education, if implemented properly, can help students to understand and internalize these values, which then contributes to the creation of an attitude of tolerance.

a. Islamic Values of Tolerance

Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of mutual respect and respect for religious differences. Several verses of the Koran, such as in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) which states that differences in ethnicity, nation and religion are part of God's creation to know each other, provide a strong foundation for developing tolerance. Apart from that, the hadith of the

Prophet Muhammad SAW also often teaches the importance of respecting other people's rights, not imposing religion, and upholding the principles of peace. These values, if taught in an educational context, can help students see religious differences as something natural and should be accepted with full respect.

b. Islamic Religious Education Practices that Build Tolerance

In practice, PAI teachers play a very important role in transferring the values of tolerance to students. Through teaching based on dialogue, discussion and understanding between religious communities, teachers can foster mutual respect between students who have different religious backgrounds. Class activities that involve discussions about religious differences, for example, can open students' minds about diversity and the importance of coexist peacefully.

2. Challenges in Implementing Islamic Religious Education to Build Tolerance

Even though Islamic Religious Education has great potential to build tolerance, its implementation in daily practice often faces various challenges. Some of the problems found in this research include:

a. Curriculum Focused on Ritual Aspects

The Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in many schools still places more emphasis on aspects of ritual and worship, such as lessons on how to pray, fast, zakat and Hajj. Although this is important, the lack of emphasis on the values of tolerance and mutual respect between religions means that teaching is not effective enough in building tolerant attitudes among students.

b. Less Inclusive Teaching Approaches

PAI teachers in most schools tend to teach with a less inclusive approach, where teaching often only focuses on one religious perspective without providing space for understanding and respect for other religions. This approach can lead to an attitude of exclusivism, which can hinder the realization of tolerance.

c. Lack of Inter-Religious Dialogue in the Curriculum

Although some schools have begun implementing activities involving inter-religious dialogue, this has not yet become an integral part of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Most of these major activities are carried out separately and are not integrated with PAI subjects, which can reduce their impact in building tolerance.

3. Recommendations for Optimizing Islamic Religious Education in Building Tolerance

Based on these findings, several recommendations for optimizing the role of Islamic Religious Education in building tolerance between religious communities are as follows:

a. Integration of Tolerance Values in the PAI Curriculum

The Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to be restructured with greater emphasis on universal values such as tolerance, peace and mutual respect. Material that focuses on understanding Islamic teachings regarding religious differences must be included in learning to provide students with broader insight into the importance of coexistence in diversity.

b. Training for PAI Teachers

PAI teachers need to be given special training in teaching the values of tolerance, as well as how to manage classes with diverse religions and cultures. A more inclusive approach based on inter-religious dialogue must be part of this training so that teachers can develop the skills to teach mutual respect.

c. Application of Dialogue-Based Learning Methods

Schools need to encourage the application of learning methods that involve dialogue between diverse communities, whether in the form of discussions, visits to other places of worship, or activities that bring together students with different religious backgrounds. This can broaden students' understanding of the importance of tolerance in social life.

Islamic religious education has great potential in building tolerance between religious communities, especially through teaching Islamic values that prioritize peace, mutual respect and respect for differences. However, to realize this potential, adjustments are needed in the curriculum, a more inclusive teaching approach, and the provision of adequate training for PAI teachers. With these steps, Islamic Religious Education can play a more effective role in creating a more harmonious, tolerant and peaceful society.

The results of relevant research regarding the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in building tolerance between religious communities show several important findings that support the great potential of this education in creating a more inclusive and harmonious society. Some relevant research results are as follows: Research by (Al Fahri, 2023) entitled "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Building the Character of Tolerance in Schools" shows that Islamic values which emphasize mutual respect, compassion and respect for differences can play a major role in forming the character of tolerance among students. These values, when taught well, can help students understand the importance of living side by side with people of different religious beliefs, without discrimination or social tension. Study by (Alfiani &

Ismaraidha, 2024) berjudul "Islamic Religious Education as an Effort to Increase Inter-Religious Tolerance in Indonesia" concludes that PAI in Indonesia has the potential to strengthen inter-religious harmony through an approach that emphasizes Islamic principles that respect differences and religious freedom. This research reveals that students who receive Islamic religious education that is inclusive and prioritizes the values of tolerance tend to have a more open attitude and are able to interact well with other religious groups. (Hayat & Indriyani, 2023) in his research entitled "Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Religious Tolerance" identified that although PAI teaches the principles of tolerance, its implementation still faces obstacles. A curriculum that emphasizes aspects of religious rituals and a lack of methods that focus on interreligious dialogue means that the value of teaching tolerance is not maximized. This research emphasizes the need for curriculum adjustments and approaches that are more based on dialogue between diverse communities to optimize teach tolerance. (Muqorrobin et al., 2023) dalam penelitiannya berjudul " Strategi Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Membina Toleransi Beragama Siswa" menemukan bahwa guru PAI memiliki peran kunci dalam menumbuhkan sikap toleransi di kalangan siswa. Guru yang menunjukkan sikap inklusif, menghormati perbedaan, dan memberi contoh dalam berinteraksi dengan orang yang memiliki keyakinan agama berbeda, dapat mempengaruhi cara siswa berperilaku dan memahami pentingnya toleransi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Study by (Khalikin et al., 2016) entitled "Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Religious Tolerance" found that Islamic religious education which prioritizes understanding of diversity and brotherhood between religious communities can strengthen tolerance in society. The results of this research show that students who receive Islamic religious education that prioritizes peace, understanding and respect for other religions have a greater ability to establish good relationships with people of different religions.

The results of these studies show that Islamic Religious Education has a very large role in building an attitude of tolerance between religious believers, especially if combined with an approach based on the principles of inclusivity and respect for differences. However, there are still several challenges, such as a curriculum that does not focus enough on the value of tolerance and the inability to implement learning methods based on interreligious dialogue. Therefore, strengthening the PAI curriculum with an emphasis on the values of tolerance, as well as training for teachers to adopt a more open and inclusive approach, are steps that need to be taken to achieve this goal.

Discussion

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in shaping students' attitudes and character, especially in the context of building tolerance between religious believers. Tolerance between religious communities is the key to maintaining social harmony and stability in a plural society, such as Indonesia, which has religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. (Hakim et al., 2020). Therefore, Islamic

Religious Education (PAI) is not only tasked with teaching Islamic religious teachings technically, but also to instill universal values that can encourage understanding and respect for religious differences. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in building tolerance between religious communities, especially in the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society. Islamic values, such as compassion, mutual respect, and respect for differences, can be a strong foundation for instilling an attitude of tolerance among the younger generation. Through teaching based on Islamic principles that prioritize peace and justice, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only teaches worship and ritual procedures, but also educates students to understand and respect differences in religion, culture and social backgrounds. (Piqrian & Aly, 2024). However, the implementation of PAI in building tolerance between religious communities still faces several challenges. A curriculum that is more focused on ritual aspects and teaching that is less inclusive often reduces the effectiveness of this education in creating a tolerant attitude. Therefore, adjustments are needed in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum which emphasizes the values of tolerance, as well as training for teachers to adopt a more dialogue-based and inclusive approach. To strengthen the role of Islamic Religious Education in building tolerance between religious communities, it is necessary to make changes to the curriculum, develop more interactive learning methods, as well as empowerment programs that involve inter-religious dialogue. With these steps, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) can make a significant contribution to creating a more harmonious, peaceful and tolerant society in Indonesia.

1. Islamic values that encourage tolerance

Islam as a religion that teaches peace and compassion has values that are very relevant for building tolerance between religious believers. Some of the main principles in Islam that support tolerance include:

a. Rahmatan Lil-Alamin concept

In the Qur'an, Allah states that the Messenger of Allah SAW was sent as a mercy to the entire universe (rahmatan lil-alamin) (QS. Al-Anbiya: 107). This concept teaches that Islam exists to bring peace and goodness to all creatures, regardless of religion or cultural background. In the context of tolerance, this means that Muslims are taught to live side by side peacefully with people of other religions.

b. Respect Differences

Islam teaches that differences are part of Allah's creation that must be accepted with grace. Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) teaches that Allah created human beings differently so that they could know each other. This verse emphasizes the importance of respecting differences, be they religious, ethnic or national differences. In education, this understanding can be the basis for fostering an attitude of tolerance between religious believers.

c. Prohibition of Imposing Beliefs

Islam also teaches coercion in religion, as written in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256) which reads "There is no compulsion in religion". This emphasizes that every individual has the freedom to choose their belief or religion, which basically encourages respect for other people's religious choices.

2. Islamic Religious Education as a Means of Learning Tolerance

Islamic religious education functions as a means to convey these values to the younger generation. Through education, students are not only taught about the laws of worship and the pillars of Islam, but also about mutual respect, respect and cooperation despite different religions.

a. Islamic Education in Schools

In schools, PAI participates to introduce students to Islamic teachings which contain the principles of tolerance. Through material that focuses on universal values such as compassion (rahmah), justice (adl), and mutual respect (ta'zim), students can learn to respect differences and understand the importance of peaceful coexistence. In this case, PAI teachers play a key role in instilling these values effectively.

b. Interactive Learning Methods

Apart from the material provided, learning methods are also very important. Using a more interactive approach based on discussion or dialogue between diverse communities can be an effective way to develop an attitude of tolerance. For example, by holding interfaith activities at school, such as seminars or group visits to different places of worship, students can understand more about other religions and develop mutual respect.

c. Exemplary examples from teachers

PAI teachers not only serve as presenters of material, but also as role models for students. The teacher's attitude in responding to religious differences, both inside and outside the classroom, greatly influences the way students see differences. Teachers who show mutual respect and interact positively with people of other religions will foster similar attitudes in students.

3. Challenges in Implementing Islamic Religious Education to Build Tolerance

Even though Islamic Religious Education has great potential in building tolerance, several challenges are still faced in its implementation:

a. Curriculum that does not emphasize tolerance

Most of the major PAI curricula in Indonesia are still too focused on teaching rituals and religious norms that are more technical in nature, such as procedures for worship. The lack of emphasis on the values of tolerance, respect

for differences, and dialogue between religious communities reduces PAI's effectiveness in building tolerant attitudes among students.

b. Too Exclusive Approach

In practice, many PAI teachings lead to an exclusive attitude, namely assuming that only the teachings of Islam are true, without providing room for understanding other religions. This approach can foster intolerant attitudes among students, which has the potential to cause social conflict.

c. Lack of Facilities and Programs for Interreligious Dialogue

Although in some schools there are activities that involve students from various religions, this has not yet become an integral part of the PAI curriculum. Programs like this are still limited and not well structured, so they do not have the maximum impact in fostering an attitude of tolerance.

4. Recommendations for Increasing PAI's Role in Building Tolerance

To optimize the role of Islamic Religious Education in building tolerance between religious communities, several steps that can be taken include:

a. Curriculum Adjustments

The PAI curriculum needs to be reviewed and adjusted to place more emphasis on the values of tolerance, justice and peace. Islamic teaching material that teaches about respect for religious differences must be emphasized more, so that students can understand the importance of mutual respect.

b. PAI Teacher Training

PAI teachers need to be trained to develop approaches that are more inclusive and based on dialogue between diverse communities. This is important so that teachers can convey the values of tolerance in a way that is easily understood and accepted by students from various religious backgrounds.

c. Interfaith Program

Schools can hold interfaith programs that involve students from various religions to share knowledge and experiences about their respective beliefs. This activity can strengthen students' understanding of diversity and increase their sense of tolerance.

Islamic Religious Education plays a very important role in building tolerance between religious communities, especially by teaching Islamic values that support peace, compassion and respect for differences. However, to realize this potential, changes are needed in the curriculum, more inclusive teaching approaches, and strengthening programs that support dialogue between diverse communities. Thus, Islamic Religious Education can make a significant contribution in creating a more harmonious, tolerant and peaceful society.

CONCLUSION

The research results show that Islamic Religious Education has a significant role in building an attitude of tolerance among students, through emphasizing the values of Islamic teachings which teach peace, mutual respect and respect for differences. However, implementing a curriculum that focuses more on ritual aspects still reduces the effectiveness of teaching the values of tolerance. This research recommends increasing the integration of tolerance values in the PAI curriculum as well as training for teachers to develop a more inclusive and dialogue-based approach between diverse communities. It is hoped that with these efforts, Islamic Religious Education can become an important agent in creating a more tolerant and harmonious society.

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