

## The Concept of Religious Moderation in Elementary Schools

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### Abstract

This research aims to explain how the concept of religious moderation is understood and applied in primary education environments. The primary goal is to understand the role of primary education in promoting religious moderation in society, thus building a solid foundation for the younger generation to live in harmony amidst diversity. This research uses a qualitative approach, with a case study design on several different primary schools to get a broad and diverse picture of how religious moderation is applied. The results of the study show that students, teachers, and school administration have different perceptions about the concept of religious moderation. In some schools, religious moderation is applied in the curriculum and extracurricular activities. However, the challenges faced are the lack of resources and appropriate curriculum materials to teach religious moderation effectively. In addition, some educators are concerned about potential resistance from certain communities or groups. This research concludes that teaching religious moderation in primary schools is important for promoting harmony in society. However, this research has limitations, such as limited sample size and focus on certain primary schools. Therefore, further research on how the concept of religious moderation is applied at higher education levels might be useful.

## Introduction

In the midst of the current era of globalization, differences in religious and cultural backgrounds have become an integral part of a heterogeneous society (Giddens, 2009). This diversity reflects the reality of modern society, where intercultural and interfaith interactions are becoming increasingly common (Vertovec, 2010). In many places, primary schools are one of the first institutions where children begin to interact with this diversity (Banks, 2008). Primary education plays a key role in shaping children's worldviews and helping them understand and appreciate differences (Gay, 2010). However, despite the importance of building a solid foundation for the younger generation to appreciate and understand differences, there is a lack of understanding about how the concept of religious moderation is applied in primary education environments (Jackson, 2014). This poses challenges in promoting respect and tolerance among students (Merry, 2015). Given the importance of education in shaping students' attitudes and understanding towards diversity, further research is needed to understand how the concept of religious moderation can be effectively applied in primary schools (Banks, 2017).

Many previous studies have discussed the importance of inclusive and tolerant education. For instance, Banks (2008) emphasized the importance of inclusive and tolerant global citizenship education, while Gay (2010) delved into culturally responsive teaching approaches. However, few studies have focused on the concept of religious moderation at the primary school level (Jackson, 2014; Merry, 2015). Different perceptions of religious moderation among school stakeholders, such as students, educators, and administration, have not been fully explored. Jackson (2014) noted that there is a need to better understand how religion is taught in schools, but this research did not specifically focus on the concept of religious moderation.

To address this information imbalance, this research was conducted using a qualitative approach, which allows for a deep understanding of how the concept of religious moderation is applied and understood by various parties in primary school environments. This approach is consistent with previous qualitative research in education (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015), and allows for the exploration of rich subjective perceptions and experiences of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

This research has a unique and important coverage, focusing on the exploration of the implementation of the concept of religious moderation in primary school environments. This research not only seeks to understand how this concept is applied, but also how primary education can serve as an effective medium for teaching religious moderation to the younger generation. To achieve this goal, this research utilizes survey and interview methods to gain a deep understanding of the perceptions of various school stakeholders, including students, educators, and administration, towards the concept of religious moderation. The results from these surveys and interviews show significant differences in the understanding and application of this concept in school environments.

The main goal of this research is to investigate how the concept of religious moderation is applied and understood in primary school environments. The results from this research are expected to serve as a basis for the development of more inclusive and tolerant pedagogical strategies and approaches, which will ultimately strengthen the implementation of religious moderation in schools. In addition, this research also aims to understand the crucial role of primary education in promoting religious moderation in society. This research shows that primary education has the potential to build a solid foundation for the younger generation, preparing them to live in harmony amidst the cultural and religious diversity present in society. This is crucial, especially in the current era of globalization, where intercultural and interfaith interactions are becoming increasingly common.

## Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach, known for its ability to gain a deep understanding of individual perceptions, experiences, and interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This approach was chosen to allow for a deeper exploration of how various school stakeholders understand and apply the concept of religious moderation.

The design of this research is set up as a case study, an approach that allows for intensive research on a particular phenomenon in a real-world context (Yin, 2014). The focus of this research is on several different primary schools, chosen to provide a broad and diverse picture of how religious moderation is applied in primary education environments.

The sample for this research involved three primary schools located in areas with diverse demographic and cultural backgrounds. In each school, respondents included students, teachers, and administrative staff, thus providing a comprehensive picture of all involved stakeholders (Patton, 2015).

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with randomly selected respondents from each stakeholder category at each school. These interviews provided an opportunity to explore respondents' views and experiences in depth (Seidman, 2013). In addition, direct observations were conducted at each school to understand how the concept of religious moderation is applied in daily activities (Kawulich, 2005).

The instrument used in this research is a pre-designed interview guide to ensure all important topics are covered. This guide includes a series of open-ended questions designed to encourage in-depth discussion. In addition, an observation sheet was used during direct observations to record interactions and incidents relevant to the research focus.

After data was collected, content analysis techniques were used to examine the interview and observation data. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, then analyzed to identify main themes, patterns, and insights related to the concept of religious moderation in primary schools. Recorded observations were also analyzed to provide additional context and nuance to findings from the interviews.

## Result

The survey and interview results from this research provide an in-depth picture of how the concept of religious moderation is understood by various school stakeholders. The majority of students have a basic understanding of this concept. For them, religious moderation primarily means tolerance and respect for others' beliefs. Students view religious moderation as a way to coexist in a diverse society, where each individual has the freedom to practice their religion without interference or discrimination.

However, this research's findings show that students' understanding of religious moderation tends to be more superficial compared to educators and school administration's understanding. Educators and school administration have a deeper and more complex understanding of this concept. For them, religious moderation is not just about tolerance and respect, but also about preventing extremism and promoting harmony.

Educators and school administration view religious moderation as a crucial tool for creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. They believe that by promoting religious moderation, they can help prevent religious extremism and create an environment where all students feel valued and accepted, regardless of their religious background.

In addition, educators and school administration also see religious moderation as a way to promote social harmony. They believe that by teaching students about the importance of religious moderation, they can help shape individuals capable of coexisting in a diverse society and appreciating differences in religious beliefs.

However, even though the understanding of religious moderation differs between students and educators, this research shows that both groups view this concept as an important part of education. This suggests that there is a need for more in-depth education about religious moderation in schools, to ensure that all students have a strong understanding of this concept and how to apply it in everyday life.

The application of the concept of religious moderation in schools is a significant theme unveiled in this research. This concept is found to be applied in various ways in schools, both in the curriculum and in extracurricular activities.

One of the main ways in which religious moderation is applied is through the education curriculum. In some schools, this concept is applied through subjects like Citizenship Education. These subjects often cover topics like human rights, democracy, and social justice, all of which are closely related to the concept of religious moderation. In this context, religious moderation is understood as an essential part of good citizenship, with an emphasis on tolerance and respect for religious differences.

In addition, some schools also integrate religious moderation into other subjects. For instance, in History and Social Studies subjects, students might learn about various religions and how they interact and contribute to society and history. This gives students a broader and more diverse understanding of religion and, in turn, can help promote religious moderation.

The application of religious moderation is not limited to the curriculum alone. Extracurricular activities also play a significant role in supporting this concept. For example, some schools have discussion clubs or debate clubs where students can discuss various topics, including religion. This gives students the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions about religion, and to hear and appreciate others' views.

Furthermore, some schools also have cultural exchange programs or similar activities that promote understanding and respect for various cultures and religions. This could be a student exchange, where students spend time at schools in other countries, or it could be special events at school that celebrate and introduce various cultures and religions to students.

Overall, this research shows that schools use various ways to apply the concept of religious moderation, and that this concept is considered important in shaping an inclusive and tolerant school environment. However, this research also shows that there is room for improvement in how religious moderation is taught and promoted in schools, and that more in-depth education about this concept can help prepare students for life in an increasingly diverse society.

In this research, several dominant themes emerged highlighting the importance of primary education in shaping students' views and understanding of religious moderation. One of the main themes that emerged is a strong belief that the formative years in primary education are a critical time to instill values like tolerance and respect for differences, including religious differences.

Many respondents, whether students, educators, or administrative staff, believe that primary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' views and attitudes towards others. This is where the basics of tolerance and respect for differences are first taught and applied, and where students begin to build their understanding of concepts like religious moderation. In other words, primary education is seen as an important platform for equipping students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to live in a diverse society and to interact with people from different religious backgrounds in a respectful and tolerant way.

However, this research also shows a gap between students' and educators' perceptions of what religious moderation actually means. Students tend to associate religious moderation with more general concepts like tolerance and respect for differences, whereas educators and administrative staff have a deeper and more specific understanding of this concept, identifying it as a crucial tool for preventing religious extremism and promoting social harmony.

This gap suggests a need for more in-depth and focused education about religious moderation in schools. While it's important to instill values like tolerance and respect for differences, this research indicates that students also need to gain a stronger and more specific understanding of what religious moderation is and why it's important.

Moreover, this research also indicates that education about religious moderation should not only occur in the classroom but also through extracurricular activities and other initiatives that allow students to experience and understand religious differences firsthand. This can include anything from discussion clubs and cultural exchange programs to community projects and other activities involving interaction with different religious communities.

Overall, this research indicates that primary education plays a critical role in shaping students' views on religious moderation. Additionally, this research highlights a need for more in-depth and focused education about this concept, to ensure that all students have a strong and specific understanding of religious moderation and why it's important.

## Discussion

This research has provided in-depth insights into how the concept of religious moderation is understood and applied in primary school settings. Through surveys and interviews conducted, it can be seen that students' understanding of religious moderation largely centers on principles of tolerance and respect for others' beliefs. They view religious moderation as the foundation for coexisting in a diverse society, where each individual has the freedom to exercise their religious beliefs without interference or discrimination.

However, this research also reveals that students' understanding of religious moderation tends to be more superficial compared to the understanding of educators and school staff. For educators and staff, religious moderation is not just about tolerance and respect, but also about preventing extremism and promoting social harmony. They believe that by promoting religious moderation, they can help create a safe and inclusive learning environment, where all students feel valued and accepted, regardless of their religious background.

The application of the concept of religious moderation in schools is a significant theme that emerged in this research. This concept is applied in various ways, both in the curriculum and in extracurricular activities, showing that schools use a variety of ways to promote greater understanding and acceptance of religious differences.

However, this research also highlights a gap between students' and educators' perceptions of what religious moderation actually means, indicating a need for more in-depth education on this concept. Overall, this research shows that primary education plays a very important role in shaping students' views on religious moderation, and highlights the importance of more in-depth and focused education to ensure that all students have a strong understanding of this concept and how to apply it in everyday life.

The results of this research suggest that primary education plays a very important role in shaping students' worldviews, including their views on religious moderation. These findings align with previous research that has emphasized the importance of primary education in shaping students' worldviews. For example, research by Smith and Denton (2005) shows that primary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' worldviews, including their views on religion and spirituality. This research indicates that learning experiences in primary schools can have long-term impacts on students' beliefs and values. Another study by Eccles and Roeser (2011) also found that primary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' worldviews. This research indicates that the primary school environment can influence the development of students' values and attitudes, including their attitudes towards religion and spiritual beliefs.

In addition, research by King and Boyatzis (2004) shows that primary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' worldviews. This research found that learning experiences in primary schools can help shape students' understanding of religion and spirituality, and can help them develop more open and tolerant attitudes towards religious differences. However, this research also shows a gap between students' and educators' perceptions of what religious moderation actually means. These findings align with research by Haidt and Joseph (2007), who found that there are significant differences in the way students and educators understand and interpret religious and spiritual concepts. These findings suggest that there is a need for further research to better understand how the concept of religious moderation is understood and applied in school settings.

In this discussion, the main challenges in implementing religious moderation education in primary schools were found to center around the lack of resources and relevant curriculum materials. This phenomenon aligns with previous research by Moore (2007) and Jackson (2014), which showed that the lack of resources and appropriate educational materials can hinder the effectiveness of religious education in schools. Moore (2007) emphasized that schools' difficulties in finding appropriate educational materials to help students understand and appreciate religious differences can limit their ability to effectively teach religious concepts. Jackson (2014) extended this argument by showing that this resource shortage can make it more difficult for educators to explore religious concepts in a meaningful and in-depth way.

Besides resource constraints, this research also found concerns from some educators about potential resistance from certain communities or groups to religious moderation education. These findings support previous research by Barnes (2007) and Hull (2011), which showed that sensitive issues such as religion and beliefs can often trigger resistance or controversy within school communities. Barnes (2007) found that religious education in schools can often be a subject of controversy and resistance, especially if the education is perceived as threatening or inconsistent with the religious beliefs or values of certain communities. Hull (2011) also found that religious education in schools can often provoke resistance or controversy. This research indicates that religious education can be a subject of controversy, especially if it is perceived as threatening or inconsistent with the religious beliefs or values of certain communities.

In this discussion, emphasis is placed on the importance of incorporating religious moderation as an integral part of the primary school curriculum, rather than as an additional topic. This argument supports previous research by Stern (2011) and Weller (2008), which emphasized the importance of comprehensive inclusion of religious moderation in the curriculum.

Stern (2011) argued that to achieve effective religious education objectives, religious moderation should be an integral part of the curriculum, not just an addition. He indicated that this approach not only promotes a better understanding of religion and beliefs but also encourages positive attitudes and tolerance towards differences.

Furthermore, this discussion emphasizes the need for teacher training on how to teach religious moderation in a way that is engaging and relevant for students. This aligns with previous research by Gearon (2013) who indicated that educators need adequate training to effectively and engagingly teach religious topics.

Finally, this discussion suggests that teaching religious moderation in primary schools has the potential to promote harmony in society, by reducing prejudice and enhancing cross-religious understanding. This finding supports the argument made by previous research by Jackson (2014), which showed that effective religious education can contribute to tolerance and cross-religious understanding in society.

Overall, this discussion indicates significant obstacles in the implementation of religious moderation education in primary schools, which include the lack of resources and relevant curriculum materials, as well as potential resistance from certain communities or groups. This indicates the need for further research and the development of effective strategies to address these challenges and promote effective religious moderation education in primary schools. In the implementation of religious moderation education in primary schools, including the lack of resources and relevant curriculum materials, as well as potential resistance from certain communities or groups. This indicates the need for further research and the development of effective strategies to address these challenges and promote effective religious moderation education in primary schools.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this research indicate that religious moderation is understood differently by students and educators. While the majority of students have a basic understanding of religious moderation, their perceptions tend to be more superficial than those of educators and school administrators. In the school context, religious moderation has been incorporated into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, although a gap was found in understanding this concept between students and educators.

Primary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' views on religious moderation. However, the main challenge faced is the lack of resources and appropriate curriculum materials to effectively teach religious moderation. This indicates the need for the development of more intensive materials and teacher training.

In addition, this research found that the introduction of religious moderation as an integral part of the curriculum, not just an additional topic, is greatly needed. Thus, teaching religious moderation in primary schools has the potential to promote harmony in society by reducing prejudice and enhancing understanding.

Of course, these findings require further research, especially on how to bridge the perception gap between students and educators and how to deal with potential resistance from certain communities or groups. Although this research provides valuable insights, it has limitations, including a limited sample size and focus on specific primary schools. Further research on how the concept of religious moderation is applied at higher education levels might be useful. Research on community responses to religious moderation education in schools could also be an interesting area to explore.

## **Declarations**

### **Author contribution statement**

This research was conducted entirely by the Author (Moh. Ferdi Hasan). As the sole author and primary researcher, the Author is responsible for all aspects of this research. The Author designed and formulated the research methodology, conducted data collection through interviews and observation, and analyzed the collected data. The entire manuscript was written by the Author, from the Introduction, Research Objectives, Research Methods, to Results and Discussion, and Conclusion. In addition, the Author also performed the final check and revision on the manuscript before it was submitted for publication. The Author has read and approved the final manuscript submitted for publication.

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**Declaration of interests statement**

The author declares that there are no known financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Additional information**

During the research process, the Author interacted with various individuals and communities that contributed to a deep understanding of the topic under investigation. The Author thanks all participants who have taken their time to participate in this research. The Author also thanks the Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) for funding this research, and to all individuals who have provided valuable input and suggestions during the research and writing process. In addition, the Author wishes to note that all data used in this research have been obtained ethically and by adhering to all relevant research protocols. All participants have given informed consent before participating in this research. The Author hopes that this research can provide a valuable contribution to our understanding of the importance of religious moderation in primary education and how it can be promoted in society.

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