



Internalization of Religious Tolerance Values through Islamic Religious Education in Multicultural Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the internalization of religious tolerance values in Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang. The research employed a qualitative multisite approach involving observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation techniques. The participants included Islamic Religious Education teachers, school principals, vice principals, and students from diverse religious backgrounds. Data were analyzed using interactive analysis techniques through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the internalization of tolerance values was implemented through contextual learning, teacher exemplification, habituation activities, multicultural interaction, and inclusive school culture. Islamic Religious Education teachers integrated values of justice, empathy, equality, and peaceful coexistence into classroom instruction and daily social interaction. Teachers also functioned as moral role models who demonstrated inclusive attitudes toward students from diverse religious backgrounds. Habituation programs such as collaborative extracurricular activities, social service, and school cultural programs strengthened students' awareness of diversity and social harmony. Supporting factors included teachers' commitment, positive school culture, and multicultural interaction among students, while inhibiting factors involved social media influence, exclusive family environments, and limited instructional time. The study concludes that tolerance education becomes more effective when cognitive understanding, social interaction, and moral exemplification are integrated simultaneously within educational practices. Therefore, schools play strategic roles in strengthening multicultural harmony and preventing intolerance among students in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: religious tolerance, Islamic Religious Education, multicultural education, school culture, character education.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis internalisasi nilai-nilai toleransi beragama dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda dan SMP Negeri 1 Bontang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif multisitus dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Informan penelitian terdiri atas guru Pendidikan Agama Islam, kepala sekolah, wakil kepala sekolah, serta peserta didik dari berbagai latar belakang agama. Analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan secara interaktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi nilai toleransi dilakukan melalui pembelajaran kontekstual, keteladanan guru, kegiatan pembiasaan, interaksi multikultural, dan budaya sekolah inklusif. Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam mengintegrasikan nilai keadilan, empati, persamaan, dan hidup damai dalam proses pembelajaran maupun interaksi sosial sehari-hari. Guru juga berperan sebagai teladan

moral yang menunjukkan sikap inklusif terhadap peserta didik dari berbagai agama. Program pembiasaan seperti kegiatan ekstrakurikuler bersama, bakti sosial, dan budaya sekolah memperkuat kesadaran peserta didik terhadap pentingnya keberagaman dan harmoni sosial. Faktor pendukung meliputi komitmen guru, budaya sekolah yang positif, serta interaksi multikultural antarsiswa, sedangkan faktor penghambat meliputi pengaruh media sosial, lingkungan keluarga eksklusif, dan keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan toleransi akan lebih efektif apabila pemahaman kognitif, interaksi sosial, dan keteladanan moral diintegrasikan secara bersamaan dalam praktik pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: toleransi beragama, Pendidikan Agama Islam, pendidikan multikultural, budaya sekolah, pendidikan karakter.

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Introduction

Religious tolerance has become one of the most crucial issues in contemporary Indonesian education, particularly within the context of a multicultural society and the growing challenges of religious polarization in the digital era. Indonesia is recognized as a pluralistic nation consisting of diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religions that coexist within a shared national identity. This plurality requires educational institutions to play a strategic role in fostering mutual respect, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence among students from different religious backgrounds. However, recent social phenomena indicate that intolerance, discrimination, hate speech, and exclusive religious attitudes continue to emerge within educational and social environments, including among adolescents and students (Azra, 2021; Huda & Wahyudi, 2022). The rapid expansion of digital media has further intensified the dissemination of radical narratives and identity-based polarization, which potentially influence students' perspectives on religious diversity (Maarif, 2023). Consequently, strengthening religious tolerance through education has become an urgent necessity in Indonesian schools.

Education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge but also a medium for cultivating moral values, social awareness, and democratic character. In this regard, Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) possesses a central role in internalizing values of moderation, inclusivity, and tolerance among students. Islamic education should not be oriented solely toward doctrinal understanding but must also encourage students to appreciate diversity and develop humane attitudes toward people of different faiths (Roqib, 2020). The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has also emphasized religious moderation as an essential educational agenda to prevent extremism and strengthen social harmony within educational institutions (Kementerian Agama RI, 2021). Therefore,

PAI teachers are expected to function not only as transmitters of religious knowledge but also as facilitators of moral transformation and social integration.

From the Islamic perspective, tolerance constitutes an integral part of religious teachings. The Qur'an explicitly recognizes religious diversity and prohibits coercion in matters of faith, as reflected in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 256 and QS. Al-Kafirun verses 1-6. These verses underline the importance of respecting religious differences while maintaining one's own theological convictions. According to Abdullah (2021), Islamic tolerance emphasizes coexistence, justice, compassion, and mutual respect rather than syncretism or relativism. Similarly, Nurcholish Madjid argued that Islamic teachings encourage Muslims to build harmonious social relationships with individuals from different religious backgrounds while preserving Islamic identity and principles (Madjid, 2019). Such perspectives demonstrate that tolerance education within Islamic learning is fundamentally compatible with the broader goals of multicultural and democratic education.

The role of teachers becomes particularly significant in shaping students' attitudes toward religious diversity. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering classroom instruction but also serve as role models whose behaviors, communication patterns, and interactions directly influence students' character formation (Mulyasa, 2020). In multicultural schools, the ability of PAI teachers to internalize tolerance values through pedagogical strategies, daily interactions, and school culture becomes essential for creating inclusive educational environments. Internalization itself refers to the process through which values become embedded within students' consciousness and are reflected in their attitudes and behaviors (Muhaimin, 2019). Therefore, tolerance education requires not only cognitive understanding but also continuous habituation, exemplary conduct, emotional engagement, and social practice within students' everyday experiences.

Several previous studies have discussed religious moderation and tolerance within educational contexts. Research conducted by Fauzi and Anam (2021) revealed that multicultural-based Islamic education contributes positively to reducing students' exclusive attitudes in public schools. Similarly, Sulaiman (2022) found that school culture and collaborative activities among students from different religions strengthen social harmony in secondary education. Another study by Rahman and Yusuf (2023) emphasized that the implementation of religious moderation programs significantly influences students' attitudes toward diversity. However, these studies primarily focused on general school policies, multicultural education, or religious moderation programs without specifically examining the pedagogical strategies employed by PAI teachers in internalizing tolerance values within multicultural classrooms. Furthermore, limited studies have explored comparative multisite contexts involving public junior high schools with diverse religious communities, particularly in Eastern Indonesia.

This research, therefore fills an important research gap by specifically analyzing the strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers to internalize religious tolerance among students in two multicultural public junior high schools, namely SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang. Unlike previous studies that mainly emphasized institutional policies or general moderation programs, this study focuses on the practical pedagogical processes conducted by teachers through classroom instruction, habituation, role modeling, interpersonal communication, and school cultural activities. The multisite approach also provides a broader understanding of how tolerance values are implemented across different educational and social settings. Consequently, this study offers a new perspective on tolerance education by integrating Islamic educational values, pedagogical strategies, and multicultural school practices within the framework of religious moderation.

Empirically, both SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang represent multicultural educational environments where students from different religious backgrounds interact within daily academic and social activities. Preliminary observations indicate that students generally demonstrate harmonious relationships despite religious differences. At SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda, for instance, non-Muslim students actively participate in school organizational activities and receive equal opportunities in leadership roles, including participation within the student council. Likewise, SMP Negeri 1 Bontang promotes inclusive educational practices through collaborative school programs emphasizing respect, dialogue, and social solidarity among students. Nevertheless, challenges related to stereotypes, social segmentation, and the influence of external religious narratives still exist, thereby requiring continuous educational efforts to strengthen tolerance among students.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education discourse by reinforcing the importance of value internalization within contemporary religious education. This study also expands the discourse of religious moderation by positioning PAI teachers as key agents in promoting inclusive and peaceful Islamic education within multicultural societies. Practically, the findings are expected to provide recommendations for educational institutions, teachers, and policymakers in designing more effective tolerance-based educational strategies capable of addressing the challenges of pluralism and religious polarization in contemporary society.

Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to analyze the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education teachers in internalizing religious tolerance among students at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang, identify supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the internalization

process, and examine the implications of these strategies for strengthening students' social harmony and multicultural awareness within school environments.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach using a multisite case study design to explore the strategies implemented by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in internalizing religious tolerance among students at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang. Qualitative research was selected because it enables researchers to understand social phenomena deeply through participants' experiences, interactions, and interpretations within natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The multisite case study design was used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of tolerance internalization practices across two multicultural public junior high schools with diverse religious backgrounds. According to Yin (2018), a case study approach is appropriate for investigating contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. These schools were purposively selected because they represent multicultural educational environments where students from different religious affiliations interact within academic and social activities. The participants of this study consisted of school principals, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, guidance and counseling teachers, and students from diverse religious backgrounds. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement and understanding of tolerance-related educational practices within the schools (Sugiyono, 2022). The inclusion of multiple participants aimed to obtain rich and varied perspectives regarding the implementation of tolerance values in school environments.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies regarding tolerance internalization. Observations focused on classroom learning processes, teacher-student interactions, school activities, and students' social behaviors reflecting tolerance practices. Documentation included school regulations, lesson plans, religious moderation programs, photographs, and institutional records related to multicultural and religious activities. The triangulation of these techniques was intended to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

The data analysis employed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data were continuously analyzed throughout the research process to identify patterns, themes, and relationships related to teachers'

strategies in fostering religious tolerance. To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied source triangulation, technique triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking. Ethical considerations were also maintained by obtaining participants' consent, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting participants' rights during the research process.

Results And Discussion

Result

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang implemented various strategies to internalize religious tolerance among students through classroom learning, exemplary behavior, habituation, and multicultural school culture. The process of internalizing tolerance was not merely carried out through theoretical instruction but was continuously reinforced through daily interaction, school activities, and educational practices that encouraged respect for diversity. Based on observations conducted during the research process, students from different religious backgrounds interacted harmoniously in both academic and social activities. They worked together during classroom discussions, participated collectively in extracurricular programs, and demonstrated mutual respect during religious activities within the school environment. Observation findings also showed that teachers consistently maintained inclusive attitudes toward all students regardless of religious identity, thereby creating a safe and comfortable learning atmosphere within the schools.

The implementation of tolerance values within classroom instruction became one of the main strategies employed by PAI teachers. During classroom observations at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda, teachers were found integrating discussions concerning diversity, social harmony, and peaceful coexistence into Islamic Religious Education lessons. Rather than presenting Islamic teachings in a rigid doctrinal manner, teachers encouraged students to understand Islam as a religion promoting compassion, justice, and respect toward humanity. One PAI teacher explained during an interview:

"We always teach students that Islam respects differences. We explain that diversity is part of God's creation, and students should not insult or discriminate against friends who have different religions."

This statement was strengthened by observation findings showing that teachers frequently related Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions to contemporary social realities involving multicultural interaction. During several learning sessions, teachers encouraged students to discuss social issues such as intolerance, bullying, and hate speech circulating on social media. Students were invited to express opinions openly while maintaining respectful communication

with others. Classroom interaction patterns reflected democratic dialogue, where students from different backgrounds felt comfortable participating in discussions without fear of discrimination.

At SMP Negeri 1 Bontang, similar findings emerged regarding contextual learning approaches used by teachers to strengthen students' understanding of tolerance. Based on interview data, one teacher stated:

"Tolerance cannot only be taught theoretically. Students must see real examples in school life. Therefore, we try to build communication and interaction among students so they learn directly how to respect differences."

This statement corresponded with observational data indicating that teachers frequently used collaborative learning activities involving students from diverse religious backgrounds within the same discussion groups. During observations, students appeared accustomed to cooperating regardless of their religious identities. Documentation data in the form of lesson plans and character education programs further showed that tolerance values had been integrated into learning objectives and school character-building activities.

The findings also reveal that teachers played an important role as moral role models for students. Observations demonstrated that teachers consistently showed fairness, politeness, and respect toward all students without discrimination. Students observed teachers interacting positively with colleagues and school staff from different religious backgrounds, which indirectly influenced students' social attitudes. One student explained during an interview:

"Teachers here treat everyone equally. Even though students have different religions, teachers never differentiate between us. That makes us feel respected and comfortable."

This interview finding was reinforced through field observations showing that teachers immediately responded whenever discriminatory jokes or exclusionary attitudes emerged among students. Teachers preferred persuasive and educational approaches when addressing such situations, emphasizing empathy and mutual respect rather than punitive measures. Documentation data also indicated that school regulations explicitly prohibited bullying and discriminatory behavior related to ethnicity, religion, race, or social background.

Habituation strategies constituted another important aspect of tolerance internalization within both schools. Based on observation findings, students regularly participated in collective school activities designed to strengthen solidarity and togetherness. These activities included environmental programs, social service activities, national celebrations, sports competitions, and collaborative extracurricular programs involving students from all religious backgrounds. During observations at SMP Negeri 1 Bontang, students were seen cooperating naturally during school-cleaning activities and social programs without displaying social segmentation based on religious identity.

One vice principal explained during an interview:

"We intentionally create school activities that involve all students together because tolerance grows through interaction. If students are accustomed to working together, they will naturally learn to respect differences."

Observational data confirmed that students demonstrated strong social cohesion during these collective activities. Students communicated openly, shared responsibilities, and showed mutual assistance regardless of religious affiliation. Documentation in the form of school activity schedules, photographs, and reports further supported the existence of inclusive educational programs aimed at strengthening multicultural awareness among students.

Religious activities within the schools also reflected inclusive educational practices. Observations indicated that Muslim students were provided opportunities to perform congregational prayers and other Islamic activities, while non-Muslim students received equal respect and freedom to practice their own religious beliefs. During religious events, teachers consistently reminded students about the importance of respecting worship practices and maintaining harmonious relationships among peers. One teacher explained:

"We teach students that respecting other religions is part of Islamic ethics. Even if beliefs are different, students must maintain good manners and social harmony."

Documentation findings, including school regulations and character education guidelines, showed that both schools actively promoted principles of inclusivity, equality, and mutual respect. These institutional commitments strengthened the implementation of tolerance values not only at the classroom level but also within broader school culture.

The study further found several factors supporting the successful internalization of tolerance values. One major supporting factor involved a strong commitment among teachers and school leaders in promoting inclusive education. Based on interview findings, teachers demonstrated high awareness regarding the importance of religious moderation within multicultural educational settings. School principals also actively supported programs emphasizing character education, social harmony, and collaborative student interaction.

Another supporting factor was the multicultural composition of the students themselves. Daily interaction among students from diverse religious backgrounds provided direct opportunities for students to learn tolerance through real social experiences. Observation findings revealed that students generally demonstrated openness and flexibility in social interaction. One student stated during an interview:

"We are already used to having friends from different religions. We study together, joke together, and help each other, so differences are not a problem."

Parental support and community acceptance also contributed positively to tolerance education within both schools. Several parents acknowledged during interviews that schools had successfully cultivated positive social attitudes among students. Documentation from school-parent meetings further showed continuous communication between schools and parents regarding character education and student behavior.

However, several inhibiting factors were also identified during the research process. Teachers explained that the influence of social media and digital platforms frequently exposed students to intolerant narratives and exclusive religious perspectives. One teacher stated:

“Students sometimes receive misleading information from social media. Some online content contains hate speech or extreme religious views, so teachers must continuously guide students to think critically.”

Observation findings confirmed that some students occasionally reproduced stereotypical statements influenced by external social narratives. Teachers, therefore needed to provide clarification and strengthen students’ understanding regarding tolerance and religious moderation during learning activities.

Another obstacle involved differences in students’ family backgrounds and parenting patterns. Some students originated from relatively exclusive social environments, making adaptation to multicultural interaction more challenging. Teachers explained that these differences sometimes affected students’ openness toward peers from different religious backgrounds. In response, teachers continuously encouraged dialogue, collaboration, and inclusive interaction within school activities.

Limited instructional time within formal Islamic Religious Education classes also became a challenge in implementing deeper discussions related to tolerance and multiculturalism. Consequently, teachers relied heavily on extracurricular activities, school culture, and informal interaction to strengthen tolerance values beyond classroom instruction. Despite these obstacles, the findings overall indicate that the internalization of religious tolerance at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang has been implemented effectively through collaborative educational strategies involving instructional processes, teacher exemplification, habituation practices, and inclusive school culture. The combination of these strategies contributed significantly to strengthening students’ awareness of diversity, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and social harmony within multicultural educational environments..

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the internalization of religious tolerance in Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP

Negeri 1 Bontang was implemented through integrative educational practices involving classroom learning, teacher exemplification, habituation, social interaction, and multicultural school culture. These findings confirm that tolerance education cannot be separated from the broader educational environment because students construct social attitudes not only through theoretical instruction but also through lived experiences within their daily interactions. The schools involved in this research successfully positioned Islamic Religious Education not merely as a doctrinal subject but as a transformative educational process aimed at strengthening peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies. This finding supports the argument that education functions as a social instrument for building democratic and pluralistic values within multicultural communities (Banks, 2019).

The integration of tolerance values into Islamic Religious Education learning reflected a contextual and moderate educational orientation. Teachers did not present religious teachings through rigid exclusivist approaches but emphasized universal Islamic values such as compassion, justice, equality, and humanity. This finding supports the perspective of James A. Banks who argues that multicultural education should encourage students to understand diversity as a social reality requiring democratic attitudes and mutual respect (Banks, 2019). In this study, tolerance was not only introduced as abstract moral discourse but was contextualized through discussion of students' real social experiences within multicultural school environments.

The findings also align with the theory of religious moderation promoted by the Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, which emphasizes balance, tolerance, inclusivity, and rejection of extremism within religious life (Kementerian Agama RI, 2021). Teachers consistently encouraged students to understand Islam as a religion of mercy and social harmony. Such educational orientation is highly important within Indonesian multicultural society because intolerance often emerges from narrow and textual interpretations of religious teachings. The research findings indicate that when Islamic education is presented through dialogical and contextual methods, students become more open toward differences and more capable of building positive social interaction. This result strengthens previous findings showing that moderate Islamic education contributes significantly to preventing radicalism among adolescents (Azra, 2020).

From the perspective of social learning theory proposed by Albert Bandura, the findings regarding teacher exemplification become highly significant. Bandura explains that individual behavior is largely formed through observation and imitation of role models within social environments (Bandura, 1986). In this research, students observed how teachers treated individuals fairly, communicated respectfully, and demonstrated inclusive attitudes toward people from different religious backgrounds. These behaviors indirectly shaped students' own social

attitudes. The findings therefore confirm that teachers function not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral agents whose daily behavior strongly influences students' character formation.

The role of teacher exemplification found in this study further strengthens previous findings by educational scholars emphasizing that character education becomes effective when values are practiced consistently by educators themselves (Lickona, 2013). Students are more likely to internalize tolerance when they witness teachers practicing equality, empathy, and respect in real interaction. Observation findings showing teachers responding persuasively to discriminatory behavior indicate that moral education within these schools emphasized awareness-building rather than punitive discipline. Such approaches are important because tolerance cannot be formed through coercion but through reflective understanding and continuous social practice.

The implementation of habituation strategies through collective school activities also supports the theory of experiential learning proposed by David A. Kolb. Kolb explains that learning becomes meaningful when individuals directly experience and reflect upon social interaction (Kolb, 2015). In the context of this research, collaborative activities involving students from different religious backgrounds created practical experiences that strengthened empathy, cooperation, and social solidarity. Students learned tolerance not merely through verbal explanation but through direct participation in shared activities such as social service programs, extracurricular activities, environmental campaigns, and school celebrations.

These findings indicate that multicultural interaction within school environments can reduce social prejudice and strengthen intergroup relationships. This result corresponds with the contact hypothesis developed by Gordon Allport, which explains that positive interaction among groups under supportive conditions can reduce stereotypes and discrimination (Allport, 1954). In both schools, students interacted intensively within inclusive educational settings characterized by equality, collaboration, and institutional support. Consequently, religious differences became normalized aspects of social life rather than sources of conflict. Similar findings were reported by Abdullah (2021), who found that inclusive school interaction contributes significantly to strengthening social harmony among students from different religious backgrounds.

The findings also reveal the importance of school culture in shaping students' tolerance attitudes. School culture in both institutions reflected inclusive educational principles where all students received equal respect regardless of religious identity. This finding supports organizational culture theory suggesting that institutional values significantly influence member behavior and social norms (Schein, 2017). In this research, tolerance was embedded within school regulations, educational

programs, teacher practices, and daily interaction patterns. Such institutional consistency contributed to creating educational environments conducive to peaceful coexistence.

From the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, the findings demonstrate that tolerance education is deeply rooted within Islamic teachings themselves. Teachers frequently connected tolerance values with Qur'anic teachings emphasizing justice, compassion, and respect for humanity. This educational orientation reflects the Islamic concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, where Islam is understood as mercy for all creation. The findings therefore challenge assumptions that religious education necessarily promotes exclusivism. Instead, when implemented through moderate and contextual approaches, Islamic Religious Education can become a powerful instrument for strengthening multicultural harmony and preventing radicalism among students (Nata, 2020).

The study further shows that communication played a central role in strengthening tolerance internalization. Teachers consistently encouraged open dialogue and democratic discussion within classrooms. Students were given opportunities to express opinions while learning to respect differing perspectives. This finding aligns with communicative action theory proposed by Jürgen Habermas, which emphasizes the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding in constructing democratic social relationships (Habermas, 1984). Through communicative educational practices, students learned that differences should be addressed through dialogue rather than hostility.

Another important finding concerns the influence of social media and digital environments as challenges to tolerance education. Teachers acknowledged that students were increasingly exposed to intolerant narratives, hate speech, and extremist religious content through online platforms. This finding corresponds with contemporary studies indicating that digital media often accelerates ideological polarization among youth (Setara Institute, 2022). Consequently, tolerance education within schools must also include digital literacy and critical thinking skills so students can evaluate information responsibly and resist radical narratives circulating online.

The influence of family background identified in this study also confirms ecological theories of human development proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner argues that individual development is shaped through interaction between various environmental systems including family, school, and wider society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Students originating from exclusive or less tolerant family environments sometimes demonstrated greater difficulty adapting to multicultural interaction. Therefore, schools played an essential role as balancing social institutions capable of introducing inclusive values and facilitating broader social experiences.

The findings additionally reveal that tolerance education requires collaborative involvement among schools, families, and communities. Although schools implemented inclusive educational strategies effectively, external social influences remained significant factors affecting students' attitudes. Therefore, strengthening tolerance cannot rely solely on classroom instruction. Broader social collaboration involving parents, religious leaders, and communities is needed to create consistent social environments supporting multicultural harmony. This finding strengthens the argument that multicultural education requires collective social responsibility to produce sustainable character transformation (Tilaar, 2012).

This study also contributes theoretically to the development of Islamic education discourse in multicultural societies. The findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education possesses substantial potential to strengthen social cohesion when implemented through contextual, dialogical, and humanistic approaches. Religious education should not focus exclusively on ritualistic or doctrinal dimensions but must also address social ethics, humanity, citizenship, and peaceful coexistence. Such orientation is particularly important within plural societies like Indonesia, where educational institutions play strategic roles in maintaining national integration and social harmony (Maarif, 2019).

Practically, the findings suggest several important implications for educational institutions. First, teachers should continuously integrate tolerance values into learning processes through contextual discussion and collaborative activities. Second, schools should strengthen inclusive school culture through institutional policies promoting equality and anti-discrimination principles. Third, educational institutions need to improve digital literacy programs to help students critically evaluate intolerant content circulating through social media. Fourth, cooperation between schools and families should be strengthened to ensure consistency of tolerance education within students' broader social environments.

Overall, this study confirms that the internalization of religious tolerance among students becomes effective when educational processes combine cognitive understanding, moral exemplification, social habituation, and multicultural interaction simultaneously. Tolerance is not formed instantly through theoretical teaching alone but develops gradually through continuous educational experiences within supportive social environments. Therefore, schools play highly strategic roles not only as academic institutions but also as social and moral communities responsible for preparing students to live peacefully within diverse societies.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the internalization of religious tolerance in Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 8 Samarinda and SMP Negeri 1 Bontang was implemented through integrative educational strategies involving contextual classroom learning, teacher exemplification, habituation activities,

multicultural interaction, and inclusive school culture. Islamic Religious Education teachers played significant roles not only as instructors but also as moral role models who continuously demonstrated values of justice, empathy, equality, and respect toward diversity. Through collaborative learning, democratic dialogue, and character-based educational practices, students gradually developed awareness that religious differences should not become sources of conflict but should instead strengthen social harmony within multicultural society. The findings further show that tolerance education becomes more effective when supported by positive interaction among students, institutional commitment, and continuous reinforcement through school culture.

This study also reveals that the successful internalization of tolerance values was influenced by several supporting factors, including teachers' commitment to inclusive education, positive multicultural interaction among students, supportive school leadership, and collaborative educational activities promoting social solidarity. However, several obstacles were identified, particularly the influence of intolerant narratives circulating through social media, differences in students' family backgrounds, and limited instructional time for deeper multicultural discussion within formal Islamic Religious Education classes. These findings confirm that tolerance education cannot rely solely on theoretical instruction but requires continuous social practice, critical digital literacy, and cooperation among schools, families, and communities to strengthen students' inclusive attitudes and social awareness.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education discourse by demonstrating that Islamic Religious Education can function as an effective medium for strengthening multicultural harmony when implemented through contextual, dialogical, and humanistic approaches. Practically, the study recommends that schools strengthen inclusive school culture, improve collaborative and reflective learning methods, expand digital literacy programs, and encourage active cooperation between teachers and parents in supporting tolerance education. Nevertheless, this research is limited to two public junior high schools in East Kalimantan and focuses primarily on qualitative analysis of educational practices. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve broader educational settings, comparative approaches, and quantitative measurement of students' tolerance attitudes to enrich the understanding of multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia.

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