

Transforming Religious Moderation in the Education World

1st Suwendi¹, 2nd Mesraini,² 3th Farkhan Fuady³

{suwendi@uinjkt.ac.id¹, mesraini@uinjkt.ac.id², farkhan.fuady22@mhs.uinjkt.ac.id³}

Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

Abstract. Education is an important instrument, including in fostering love for the country. However, several studies show that there are special problems, especially regarding the perspective of education stakeholders on religious and national issues. This research aims to analyze the transformation of religious moderation as a solution to religious and national problems in the field of education. The research methodology uses qualitative methods and recording techniques with descriptive-analytical data analysis on religious moderation and educational mainstreaming. The results of this research found that education stakeholders tend to juxtapose religious interests and national interests. This is attributed to excessive (extremist) religious perspectives, attitudes, and practices, claims of absolute truth in interpreting religion, and religious fervor that contradicts the ideology of Pancasila. Therefore, as one of the solutions to religious and national issues, religious moderation must be integrated into education. This can be achieved through prioritizing tolerance, designing learning experiences that develop multiple literacies, and intensifying multicultural education.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Education, Diversity, Stakeholders.

1 Introduction

Education serves as a potent tool for imparting valuable knowledge and instilling character traits, including the cultivation of national consciousness and patriotism. This holds true in nearly every corner of the globe, where education goes beyond the mere transfer of information and skills to produce graduates with a strong sense of national identity. The underlying principles and beliefs of a nation are perpetuated through the educational system, ensuring that educational institutions align with the national ideology and do not promote conflicting values.

This transmission of ideological foundations from one generation to the next is a core function of education. The role of education in various state policies, such as foreign policy, is increasing, especially with the transformation of the global economy and the game of dominance. Education not only spreads cultural, ideological, and social values, but it can also facilitate the development of global networks and collaborative efforts. Educational strategies tailored to target audiences will further strengthen the impact of educational presence [1].

In recent decades, several research findings indicate a significant challenge for the education system. The world is experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic, which is having an impact on the world of education. At that time, educational institutions were encouraged to carry out

educational transformation by digitizing the education and training processes. In these conditions, stakeholders are encouraged to provide quality education, innovate, and quickly adapt to existing conditions[2]. The presence of digital transformation has recently been integrated into organizations, becoming a new paradigm and example that needs to be had in increasing excellence in the world of education[3]. Educational institutions need to innovate in providing educational experiences and explore ways to respond to future needs[4]. Other sectors, such as ideological challenges, also need to be paid attention to by educational institutions.

Contradictory attitudes and perspectives with the national ideology within educational institutions are becoming increasingly prevalent. In their research, Suadi et al. found that, for example, the Aceh Government Education Service has not yet developed a standard concept for peace education. This research adds that education in Aceh and non-governmental institutions, both national and international, have stepped forward and implemented it [5].

A study conducted by PPIM (Center for Islamic Studies and Society) at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta titled "Religiosity of School/Madrasah Teachers in Indonesia" (2018) stated that intolerant opinions of teachers towards followers of different religions and beliefs are as follows. When examining teachers' tolerance scores using implicit (IAT) and explicit (questionnaire) measures, the results show that 63.07% of teachers hold intolerant opinions towards followers of other religions. Meanwhile, using the questionnaire, 56.90% of teachers have narrow-minded opinions towards followers of other faiths. In terms of radical opinions, whether using IAT or questionnaires, the results show that using the IAT, 14.28% of teachers hold very extreme or radical opinions. Meanwhile, using questionnaires, 46.09% of teachers have very radical or radical opinions [6].

A research conducted by Lakpesdam-PBNU (2019) titled "Mapping the Level of Religious Moderation and its Development in State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN)" took 1,200 respondents from 12 PTKIN in Indonesia. This research found that the acceptance of PTKIN students towards the Pancasila ideology and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) is not very satisfactory, with only 63.9% agreeing with the Pancasila ideology and 74.3% agreeing with the NKRI as an ideal form. Therefore, the tendency of PTKIN students to advocate for Islamic ideology and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate state in Indonesia is quite significant. 36.1% of PTKIN students agree with the Islamic doctrine, and 25.7% wish to establish an Islamic caliphate in Indonesia [7].

This attitude aligns with their response when asked to react to the statement, "Pancasila as the foundational state ideology of the Indonesian nation is final." Only 52.3% of PTKIN students strongly agree, 39.8% agree, 5.3% are unsure, 2.5% disagree, and 0.2% strongly disagree [7].

Several research facts indicate specific problems, especially concerning the perspectives of educational stakeholders on religious and national issues. Religion and nationality are understood as biased and unproductive constructs. Similarly, the facts of Indonesian pluralism have yet to be fully realized.

This article analyzes the factors contributing to these occurrences, including education. Then, what is the solution? What should the education system do?

This research is a literature review using qualitative methods. The literature sources are primarily based on research on intolerance and extremism, especially in education. Additionally,

several studies on religious moderation and mainstreaming education in building religious and national harmony serve as the primary sources for this article. Note-taking techniques with descriptive-analytical data analysis are an integral part of this research.

2 Methods

Penelitian This research is library research or library research using qualitative methods. Library research turns library data into a research source. Library sources such as books, scientific articles, papers, manuscripts and so on. In this research, books or research reports are a source for analyzing research problems. Through these various sources, note-taking techniques are used to record important information that helps researchers answer research questions. Descriptive-analytical analysis is used to analyze data through library data. Data analysis is used to describe and analyze religious moderation and educational mainstreaming.

3 Result and Discussion

This research has identified three problems that significantly challenge education and society. Firstly, there is a growing trend of excessive religious perspectives, attitudes, and practices (extremism). This perspective has skewed the essence of spiritual teachings that uphold human dignity. Secondly, there is an increasing prevalence of subjective truth claims and the imposition of interpretations of religion. Society needs help managing the diversity of religious interpretations effectively. When one performance is claimed as the sole truth, it can easily lead to blaming other arrangements, potentially triggering conflicts. Moreover, if claims of religious interpretation intersect with economic and political interests, the potential for conflict becomes even sharper and more destructive. Thirdly, a growing religious fervor differs from a love for the nation within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia [8].

This includes a need for more awareness regarding the pluralistic facts of Indonesia, encompassing aspects of ethnicity, culture, regional languages, religion and beliefs, race, and inter-group relations. Apart from increasing awareness about diversity, resistance to extremism does not only focus on individuals and requires attention to the role of structures or policymakers. Institutions also play a role in a person's resilience and understanding of the wrongness of extremist attitudes. A paradigm shift seen through social-ecology can direct the discourse on resilience in fighting extremism [9].

These religious challenges are basically correlated with national commitments. Religious issues have an impact on the national spirit. If spiritual issues are left unchecked, horizontal conflicts between citizens will quickly occur and ultimately erode national unity. The challenge of extremism is not only a problem for one country; in its development, this emergence has become a global problem, such as the jihadist movement[10]. Cases of negative, antisocial jihadist movements can cause fear and estrangement in religious and national relations.

Therefore, aligning religious and national relations appropriately is a necessary response. Strengthening the relationship between religion and the state includes fostering an awareness of Indonesia's identity, which is synonymous with pluralism (diversity) and simultaneously religiosity (religiosity). This awareness of pluralism and religiosity is manifested into a formula

for managing the diversity and complexity of Indonesian identity, turning it into a means to achieve a religious and national life that is tolerant, humanistic, and peaceful for the nation's progress[8]. This is what is referred to as religious moderation, which encompasses perspectives, attitudes, and practices in communal life by embodying the essence of spiritual teachings – safeguarding human dignity and constructing common welfare – based on the principles of fairness, balance, and adherence to the constitution as a national consensus [8].

Indonesia's rich diversity and strong religiosity have deep historical roots in the archipelago. The country's blend of social diversity and abundant natural resources, combined with a strong religious presence, is harmonized through a national perspective and ideology centered on Pancasila. As a nation, Indonesia acknowledges and respects this diversity by safeguarding differences in opinions, traditions, local heritage, and various socio-political perspectives within the framework of Pancasila. Similarly, the religious fervor within society should be effectively managed. This entails not only allowing moderate expressions of religious beliefs in public spaces but also ensuring fair treatment and access to spiritual life for all religious communities. Moreover, this religious devotion should not run counter to the fundamental principles of national life based on Pancasila and its associated regulations.

Religious moderation does not erase the distinctions between various religions, nor does it assert exclusive absolute truths. Instead, it serves as a tangible approach to prevent the disregard of diversity, which has the potential to evolve into religious extremism. In accordance with Hashim Kamali's perspective, religious moderation is seen as a valuable quality that fosters social cohesion in the midst of Indonesia's religious diversity[11]. A moderate position in the theological dimension by showing and highlighting the image of God, who is full of love for His people, is one form of preventing religious extremism [12].

Given an understanding of diversity and faith, the realm of education should underscore the importance of tolerance, openness, and honoring differences, particularly in matters of religion, as an essential component of the educational journey. In essence, religious tolerance can be defined as "an individual's readiness to acknowledge the civil rights of fellow individuals or groups with different religious beliefs, even if these beliefs are not personally favored or endorsed." This form of tolerance entails a willingness to respect their expressions or actions, even when they may not align with one's own preferences or approval [13].

Religious moderation should incorporate an educational framework that promotes multiple literacies to expand perspectives. Emphasizing the development of religious and humanistic literacy is crucial for gaining a deeper and more comprehensive insight into various aspects of religion, drawing from a range of Islamic literary sources. Within educational units, the learning process should go beyond simply imparting knowledge or rote memorization. Its primary focus should be on enabling students to comprehend the content and foster independent thinking. In managing diversity, educational institutions should not limit their efforts to merely helping students grasp the concept of diversity. They should also aim to empower students to understand the real-world implications of diversity within their surroundings and society as a whole, and guide them in engaging appropriately in such diverse environments [14].

Education emphasizing uniformity and neglecting diversity can have more negative impacts than positive ones. Standardization stifles creativity and can lead to intolerant attitudes and perspectives and social conflicts. Therefore, establishing educational units that value pluralism (diversity) is an essential requirement that cannot be negotiated.

Based on this foundation, educational institutions should amplify their commitment to multicultural education, presenting an alternative approach by employing strategies and educational principles rooted in the utilization of the diverse elements present in society. This diversity encompasses aspects such as ethnicity, culture, language, religion, social status, gender, and more. It is imperative that all parties involved in educational institutions believe in the importance of not only acknowledging but also genuinely respecting and upholding diversity in both words and actions.

Dr. Zuly Qodir emphasizes that if our approach to diversity remains merely rhetorical, our society will foster narrow-minded intolerance and exclusionary attitudes. One way to promote appreciation for differences is by implementing multicultural education that encourages the development of lifestyles characterized by respect, authenticity, and tolerance towards the various cultural elements within society. In contrast to monocultural education, which often overlooks individual uniqueness and the existence of multiple perspectives, thus stifling critical and creative thinking, multicultural education enables the expression of every facet of diversity within society, as long as these expressions do not infringe upon the rights of others.

Hence, educational institutions should take several fundamental steps. Firstly, they ought to encourage rich social experiences and interactions among religious groups within their academic environments. Secondly, they should work towards cultivating a social atmosphere within the institution that promotes religious tolerance among the academic community and demonstrates a commitment to respecting diversity and minority groups. Thirdly, any initiatives or policies aimed at fostering religious tolerance within educational institutions should take into account the specific social context of the institution and the socio-demographic backgrounds of the students. More concretely, these institutions should incorporate educational approaches that encourage students to engage with various religions in an intellectual and academic manner, equipping them with essential knowledge about these religions. This approach aims to cultivate appreciative attitudes towards religious differences and the richness of diverse interpretations within the realm of religion [14].

Educational units carry out a critical aspect to develop religious moderation and enhance human resources, such as educators. An educator should have broad insights and an open-minded approach to the diversity present in Indonesia. Thus, teachers can explain events accurately or prepare students to anticipate events in the field. Educators have a strategically crucial role in enhancing the capability of religious moderation for students in the educational unit's environment. At the very least, there are four essential roles for educators. Firstly, an educator must be able to adopt a democratic attitude, both in words and actions, that is non-discriminatory. Secondly, educators should have a high level of concern and sensitivity for specific events related to religion. In addition, they should have broad insights and wise attitudes in responding to students' questions so as not to appear as if they are biased or discrediting other parties. Educators should be able to explain specific events or cases in the context of managing diversity. Thirdly, educators should understand and be able to explain that the essence of religious teachings is to create peace and prosperity for all human beings. Disputing other religions and any form of violence is something prohibited by religion [15]. Fourthly, educators should be able to provide an understanding of the importance of dialogue and consultation in resolving various problems related to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Awareness of diversity must indeed start with each individual. From there, awareness of diversity in society can be heightened to cultivate a tolerant attitude [14].

Conclusion

This article has identified the existence of imbalanced perspectives among educational stakeholders regarding religious and national issues. Religion and nationality are understood as unproductive constructs. This is, at least, caused by three main factors: the proliferation of excessive (extremist) religious perspectives, attitudes, and practices; the assertion of subjective truth claims and the imposition of interpretations of religion; and the growth of religious fervor that is not in harmony with a love for the nation within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. These three causes ultimately stem from a loss of awareness of Indonesia's indigenusness, namely pluralism (diversity) and religiosity (faith). Therefore, as one of the solutions for religious and national issues, religious moderation must be integrated into education.

Prioritizing tolerance, openness, and respect for differences is crucial to the educational process. Similarly, designing learning experiences that cultivate multiple literacies is imperative to broaden perspectives. Furthermore, the academic sphere should intensify multicultural education by implementing strategies and educational concepts based on the utilization of diversity present in society, such as ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, social status, gender diversity, and others.

References

- [1] P. Gauttam, B. Singh, S. Singh, and S. Lal, "Education as a Soft Power Resource : A Systematic Review," *Heliyon*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. e23736, 2024, doi: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e23736.
- [2] V. J. Garcia-Morales, A. Garrido-Moreno, and R. Martin-Rojas, "The Transformation of Higher Education After the COVID Disruption: Emerging Challenges in an Online Learning Scenario," *Front. Psychol.*, vol. 12, no. February, pp. 1–6, 2021, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.616059.
- [3] N. C. Jackson, "Managing for Competency with Innovation Change in Higher Education: Examining the Pitfalls and Pivots of Tigital transformation," *Bus. Horiz.*, vol. 62, no. 6, pp. 761–772, 2019, doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2019.08.002.
- [4] C. A. Bonfield, M. Salter, A. Longmuir, M. Benson, and C. Adachi, "Transformation or Evolution?: Education 4.0, Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age," *High. Educ. Pedagog.*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 223–246, 2020, [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2020.1816847>
- [5] Suadi, Saifuddin, and Fadli, "Incorporating Peace Education into Aqidah Akhlak Subject in East Aceh," *Emerald Reach Proc. Ser.*, vol. 1, pp. 467–472, 2018, doi: 10.1108/978-1-78756-793-1-00013.
- [6] H. Hasuhi and A. (editor), *Pelita yang Meredup Keberagamaan Guru Sekolah/Madrasah di Indonesia*, no. 5. 2018.
- [7] L. R. Team, *Pemetaan Tingkat Moderasi Beragama dan Pengembangannya di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN)*. Jakarta: Lakpesdam-PBNU, 2019.
- [8] R. M. T. Force and M. of R. A. of the R. of Indonesia, *Peta Jalan (Roadmap) Penguatan Moderasi Beragama 2020-2024*. Jakarta: Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020.
- [9] W. Stephens, S. Sieckelink, and H. Boutellier, "Preventing Violent Extremism: A Review of the Literature," *Stud. Confl. Terror.*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 346–361, 2021, doi: 10.1080/1057610X.2018.1543144.

- [10] J. Torregrosa, G. Bello-Orgaz, E. Martínez-Cámara, J. Del Ser, and D. Camacho, A survey on Extremism Snalysis Using Natural Language Processing: Definitions, Literature Review, Trends and Challenges, vol. 14, no. 8. Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2023. doi: 10.1007/s12652-021-03658-z.
- [11] A. Mayskhur et al., Gerak Langkah Pendidikan Islam untuk Moderasi Beragama: Potret Penguatan Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin Melalui Pendidikan Islam. Jakarta: Directorate General of Islamic Education, 2019.
- [12] S. Wibisono, W. R. Louis, and J. Jetten, “A Multidimensional Analysis of Religious Extremism,” *Front. Psychol.*, vol. 10, no. November, pp. 1–12, 2019, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02560.
- [13] P. U. Jakarta, *Kebhinekaan di Menara Gading: Toleransi Beragama di Perguruan Tinggi*. Jakarta: PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2021.
- [14] Suhadi, L. K. Pary, F. M. Imamah, and M. (editor) Tahun, *Mengelola Keragaman di Sekolah: Gagasan dan Pengalaman Guru*. Yogyakarta: SRCS (Center For Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies) Program Studi Agama dan Lintas Budaya, Sekolah Pascasarjana, Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2016.
- [15] P. U. Jakarta, “Convey Report Kebinekaan di Menara Gading: Toleransi Beragama di Perguruan Tinggi,” vol. 4, no. 5, 2021.