

Value-Based Education of Religious Moderation for Children in Schools and Families

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the role of *Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* (Early Childhood Education – PAUD) teachers and families in implementing religious moderation-based education in Bengkulu City, as well as to identify the challenges encountered in both school and family environments. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing interviews and questionnaires distributed to PAUD teachers. The findings reveal that teachers' theoretical understanding of religious moderation remains limited, although some values are indirectly applied in classroom practices. Supporting and inhibiting factors include the family environment, lack of training, and the absence of a specific moderation-based curriculum. This study recommends structured teacher training and strengthened collaboration between schools and families to instill religious moderation values from an early age.

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Introduction

Religious moderation value-based education is an educational approach that instills balanced, tolerant, and inclusive religious values from an early age [1]. Religious moderation does not mean mixing religious teachings, but rather understanding and practicing them fairly, not excessively, and with an orientation towards humanity and peace. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, religious moderation includes four main indicators, namely national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture [2].

In early childhood, children are in a phase of moral and social development that is very sensitive to environmental influences. Therefore, moderate value education needs to be instilled early on. Healthy and moderate religiosity has a strong link to positive psychosocial development and can prevent the formation of intolerant and exclusive attitudes [3].

In the school environment, value-based education for religious moderation can be integrated through thematic learning, moral tales or stories, social games, and daily interactions that instill values such as tolerance, cooperation and empathy [4]. Teachers have a strategic role as role models who show moderate attitudes in religion [5]-[7]. The integration of moderate Islamic values in the PAUD curriculum is very important to shape the character of children who are peaceful, open, and ready to coexist with differences [8], [9].

Meanwhile, in the family environment, parents are the first and main educators who instill religious values directly [10]-[12]. Moderation value education in the family can be carried out through democratic parenting, open dialogue, and habituation of mutual respect for differences [13], [14]. Character education will be successful when supported by habituation, exemplary, and consistent communication between parents and children [15]-[18].

The value of religious moderation does not only touch on religious aspects, but is also intertwined with national, social and cultural dimensions. Early childhood needs to be introduced to diversity as an inevitable social fact, as well as instilling a positive attitude towards these differences. Strengthening religious moderation from an early age can be the foundation for forming a generation that loves peace, respects differences, and avoids identity-based conflicts. In this context, religious moderation should be seen as an integral part of children's character education.

The implementation of moderation values can be developed through the hidden curriculum, i.e. values that are instilled through school interactions and culture. For example, teachers who respect the opinions of all children without discrimination, or school activities that involve all students regardless of religious, ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Multicultural

education in the basic education system is an important strategy to develop mutual respect and strengthen social cohesion from an early age [19].

The school environment can also organize interfaith and cultural activities that are creatively designed and fun for children. Activities such as playing together, sharing stories about universal virtues, or watching educational films about tolerance can contextually instill the value of moderation. According to Mariyono [20], concrete and participatory experiences in social interactions are more effective in instilling values than just the verbal delivery of material.

Meanwhile, the family, as the first place where children know the world, plays a strategic role in shaping children's religious views. Parents need to convey religious teachings with a peaceful narrative, avoid hate speech against other groups, and model respect for all people. A study by Karbowniczek [21], shows that children who grow up in families that value diversity tend to have more open and tolerant social attitudes when entering formal education.

Furthermore, it is also important to introduce children to universal values in religion such as honesty, compassion, justice and responsibility. These values can be instilled through religious stories that are packaged in a fun and easy-to-understand way for children. The ability to think critically is one of the skills in the 21st century which is signaled to be used as a capital of readiness and reflection of the progress and development of science and technology that is increasingly rapid [22].

The implementation of religious moderation education in early childhood also requires special training for PAUD teachers and parents. They must be equipped with the understanding and skills to convey moderate values without being indoctrinative or imposing views. As stated by Nugraha [23], teachers and parents are the main actors in the process of forming children's religious views that are inclusive and peaceful.

In addition, the role of media and technology cannot be ignored. Children today live in a highly connected digital age. Therefore, it is important for schools and families to choose digital content that supports moderation values, such as educational videos, children's songs with themes of togetherness, and child-friendly religious learning applications. Parental control and assistance are needed so that children are not exposed to content that has the potential to create intolerant attitudes.

Finally, strengthening the value of religious moderation in early childhood must be done collaboratively between schools, families and communities. A supportive social environment will strengthen the internalization of values in children. If these three components synergize with each other, then efforts to build a moderate, tolerant and peace-loving generation will be more easily achieved in a sustainable manner in the life of the nation and state.

Thus, the synergy between the school and family environment is very important in instilling religious moderation values. Both must play an active role and be in line in educating children to be able to become religious individuals who are good, but still moderate, open and tolerant in social life.

Literature Review

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Meanwhile, in the family environment, parents are the first and main educators who instill religious values directly [26]. Moderation value education in the family can be carried out through democratic parenting, open dialogue, and habituation of mutual respect for differences. Character education will be successful when supported by habituation, exemplary, and consistent communication between parents and children [16].

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environment will strengthen the internalization of values in children. If these three components synergize with each other, then efforts to build a moderate, tolerant and peace-loving generation will be more easily achieved in a sustainable manner in the life of the nation and state.

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Research Method

This study employed a mixed methods design, specifically an explanatory sequential design [29], [30]. The selection of this design was based on the need to first obtain a general overview of teachers' understanding and practices regarding religious moderation, and then to explore these findings in greater depth through qualitative inquiry. This research was conducted in two formal PAUD institutions (Ar-Raudhah Kindergarten, Bengkulu City and Bilqis Kindergarten, Bengkulu City) and two non-formal PAUD institutions (Ar-Raudhah and Bilqis Playgroup) in Selebar District.

In the first (quantitative) phase, data were collected using a closed questionnaire [31] distributed to 30 teachers of PAUD in Bengkulu City. The respondents came from diverse educational institutions, both formal and non-formal. The questionnaire aimed to measure teachers' levels of understanding, practices, and perceived challenges [32] in applying religious moderation values within classroom and family contexts. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage distribution) to identify general patterns and trends [33].

In the second (qualitative) phase, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 8 PAUD teachers selected purposively to represent different educational backgrounds. The interviews explored in detail teachers' theoretical understanding, classroom practices, and challenges faced in implementing religious moderation. In addition, a document study was conducted to collect supporting evidence such as curricula, syllabi, lesson plans, and records of learning activities related to tolerance and diversity. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, where interview transcripts were coded and categorized into themes derived from the theoretical framework of religious moderation and children's moral development [34].

Finally, integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings was conducted at the interpretation stage [35]. The descriptive statistical results provided a broad overview, while the qualitative findings offered deeper contextual explanations and insights. This integration

allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the role of PAUD teachers in implementing religious moderation-based education, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors within both school and family environments.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents (N = 30). The majority of participants were within the age range of 30–39 years (40%), followed by those aged 40–49 years (26.7%), while younger respondents (20–29 years) and older respondents (50 years and above) accounted for 20% and 13.3%, respectively. In terms of gender distribution, females dominated the sample (83.3%), whereas males represented only 16.7%. Regarding teaching experience, most respondents reported 5–10 years of teaching (43.3%), with a substantial proportion having more than 10 years (33.4%), and a smaller group with less than 5 years (23.3%). Additionally, the majority of respondents were affiliated with formal PAUD institutions (60%), while 40% were engaged in non-formal PAUD institutions.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 30)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	20 – 29 years	6	20.0
	30 – 39 years	12	40.0
	40 – 49 years	8	26.7
	50 years and above	4	13.3
Gender	Female	25	83.3
	Male	5	16.7
Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	7	23.3
	5 – 10 years	13	43.3
	More than 10 years	10	33.4
Institution Type	Formal PAUD institutions	18	60.0
	Non-formal PAUD institutions	12	40.0

Table 2 presents teachers' perceptions of religious moderation. The data indicate that the majority of respondents did not fully understand the concept of religious moderation, with only 23% agreeing and 77% disagreeing with the statement. Similarly, only 40% reported having integrated religious moderation values into teaching and learning activities, suggesting that implementation at the classroom level remains limited. Furthermore, an overwhelming 83% of teachers stated that they had not received training or socialization related to religious moderation, highlighting a significant gap in professional development programs.

Support from students' families also appeared limited, as only 35% of teachers agreed that families supported tolerance values taught at school, compared to 65% who disagreed. In contrast, students themselves were perceived more positively, with 78% showing tolerant attitudes towards peers from different backgrounds. These findings suggest a discrepancy

between institutional and familial support for religious moderation and the actual behavior demonstrated by students, indicating both challenges and opportunities in strengthening the integration of tolerance values in early education contexts.

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of Religious Moderation (N = 30)

No.	Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1	I understand the concept of religious moderation as a whole	23%	77%
2	I have integrated the value of religious moderation in teaching and learning activities	40%	60%
3	I have received training or socialization related to religious moderation	17%	83%
4	Students' families support the values of tolerance taught at school	35%	65%
5	Students show a tolerant attitude towards different friends	78%	22%

Based on the results of research through interviews conducted to 8 PAUD teachers from various educational institutions in Bengkulu City. From the interviews, the following findings were obtained:

- Teachers' understanding of the concept of religious moderation, the majority of teachers do not fully understand the concept of religious moderation. They associate moderation only with "not being bigoted" and "teaching good manners," without knowing the basic principles such as tolerance, non-violence, and love for the country. "The important thing is that children know good manners, respect each other. But about religious moderation, that's a new term for me."
- The application of moderation values in the classroom, although not theoretically understood, some teachers have applied moderation values indirectly, such as through playing together without discrimination, stories about diversity, and emphasizing the importance of sharing. "We accustom children to helping each other, not choosing friends. All must get along well."
- The role of the family, teachers recognize that the values instilled at school are often not in line with parenting at home. Some parents still show an exclusive attitude or teach differences in a negative way. "Sometimes at home children are told 'don't play with that person, they have a different religion'. This is contrary to what we teach."

This research shows that the understanding of PAUD teachers in Bengkulu City of the concept of religious moderation is still relatively low theoretically, although some values such as tolerance, cooperation, and inclusive attitudes have been practically applied in learning activities. The majority of teachers have not received adequate training or socialization on religious moderation education. In addition, there is a disconnect between the values taught at

school and the values formed in the family environment, which hinders the optimal internalization of moderation values. Early childhood shows great potential in accepting the values of tolerance and diversity if supported by a consistent environment, both from school and family. Therefore, structured interventions in the form of teacher training, moderation-based learning modules, and continuous parent education programs are needed.

Based on the table above, it is known that only 23% of teachers feel that they understand the concept of religious moderation. This reinforces the results of Nasution's study [36] which states that teachers at the primary level tend not to have religious literacy that is socially inclusive. According to Najmi, religious moderation is a perspective, attitude and practice of religion in a fair, balanced manner, and avoids extremes [37]. Teachers' ignorance of this concept indicates a lack of inclusive religious literacy among early childhood educators. This finding indicates a gap between national policy on the importance of religious moderation and its implementation at the early childhood education level. PAUD teachers as the frontline in character building have not received adequate provision, so these values cannot be taught systematically.

As many as 83% of teachers have never received training or socialization from related agencies. This is an important note that national policies have not optimally reached early childhood education in the context of moderation. In fact, according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory [38], the education system (including teacher training) is an important part of the mesosystem that has a major influence on the formation of values in children. Although they do not formally understand the concept, teachers have implemented values such as tolerance, inclusiveness and cooperation in learning activities [39]. According to Vygotsky [40] in sociocultural theory, children learn through social interaction and habituation. Teachers as figures close to early childhood indirectly instill these values through role models and classroom routines. This shows that although formal training has not been given much, teachers have the potential to become agents of religious moderation through intuitive and contextual approaches. This is a local strength that needs to be facilitated through strengthening theories and policies.

Only 35% of teachers stated that students' parents support the value of tolerance at home. This corroborates Vygotsky's [38] statement that value learning is strongly influenced by a consistent and cooperative social environment. Although most children showed tolerant attitudes (78%), the learning strategies used by teachers were still not pedagogically structured within a moderation framework. This suggests the need for a module or learning guide based on the value of religious moderation that is developmentally appropriate for early childhood.

The finding that 65% of teachers stated that there was no parental support for the value of tolerance taught at school confirms that character education will not be successful if it does not receive support from the family environment. This is in line with Social Learning theory [41], which emphasizes the importance of model figures (parents and teachers) in shaping children's behavior. Children will imitate the values and behaviors that are dominant in their immediate environment. In the Ecological Systems theory by [41], children are influenced by interactions between systems in their lives, including family and school. When these systems do not run harmoniously, children will experience value confusion and difficulty in internalizing positive values. This disconnect is a major challenge. School and family must go hand in hand for value education to be effective. Therefore, a participatory and dialogic approach between teachers and parents is needed, for example through parenting classes or joint communication forums.

Data shows that 78% of teachers observed that children showed a tolerant attitude in class. This is an important asset for the implementation of the value of moderation. In Lawrence Kohlberg's Moral Development theory, early childhood is at the stage of morality based on authority (pre-conventional stage), so exemplary and consistent habituation is very influential on the formation of children's character [42]. This suggests that the formation of moderate character should begin in early childhood. Planting values at an early age will be more effective than when children are adults and have strongly embedded values.

The findings (Table 3) demonstrate a gap between policy and practice in implementing religious moderation education at the early childhood level. Teachers often lack formal knowledge but still apply values of tolerance through daily interactions, supporting Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that children learn values through social practice [43].

Table 3. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Theme	Quantitative Findings (n, %)	Qualitative Insights (Interview Quotes)
Understanding of moderation	7 teachers (23.3%) claim full understanding	"Religious moderation is a new term for me, I only teach politeness." (T7)
Application in teaching	12 teachers (40%) integrate values	"We encourage cooperation and tolerance in play activities." (T2)
Training & support	25 teachers (83.3%) lack training	"We have never received workshops on moderation." (T1)
Family role	19 families (63.3%) not supportive	"At home, some parents discourage children from mixing with others."
Children's tolerance	23 children (76.7%) show tolerant behavior	"Students happily play together without discrimination." (T3)

However, the role of families emerged as a critical barrier [44]. With 63.3% of teachers reporting that families do not reinforce tolerance at home, children are exposed to

contradictory value systems. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasizes that children's development is shaped by interactions across home and school settings.

The discrepancy between school-based efforts and family practices weakens the internalization of moderation values. While children display tolerant behavior at school (76.7%), inconsistency at home risks undermining these lessons. Thus, strengthening collaboration between schools and families is essential. Parenting workshops, family-school dialogues, and joint cultural activities are recommended to ensure consistent value reinforcement.

Conclusion

This study revealed that teachers of Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (Early Childhood Education – PAUD) in Bengkulu City have a limited theoretical understanding of religious moderation. Although most teachers have not received structured training, they intuitively apply tolerance, cooperation, and inclusiveness in daily classroom practices. Quantitative findings showed that only 23.3% of teachers understood religious moderation fully, while 83.3% had never participated in training programs. Nevertheless, 76.7% observed tolerant behavior among their students. A key finding concerns the role of families: 63.3% of teachers reported that parents did not support tolerance values taught in school. This lack of alignment between school and home creates inconsistencies in value transmission, highlighting the crucial need for stronger collaboration. Without synergy between teachers and families, children may experience confusion in internalizing values of moderation. The findings suggest the urgency of developing teacher training programs on religious moderation, alongside family empowerment initiatives such as parent workshops and family-school dialogues. Schools cannot work in isolation; value education must be reinforced consistently at home. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the significance of the family dimension in supporting early childhood religious moderation, a factor often overlooked in previous studies that focus mainly on teachers. The research involved a relatively small sample of 30 teachers from one city, which limits generalizability. The findings are context-specific to Bengkulu City. Further studies should adopt larger and more diverse samples across regions, employ longitudinal designs to examine changes over time, and experiment with intervention programs that combine teacher training and family engagement in promoting religious moderation from early childhood.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no financial or other substantive conflicts of interest could be construed to influence the results or interpretation of this manuscript. No financial support was received for the conduct of this study or the preparation of this manuscript.

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