

Multicultural Education Approach as a Strategy for Strengthening Religious Moderation

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Volume: 4 ISSN: 2963-5489 KEYWORD Education, multiculturalism, religious moderation, globalization, tolerance.	The era of globalization brings challenges to the world of education, particularly in terms of cultural and religious diversity. An increasingly pluralistic society and open access to information pose challenges such as radicalism and the weakening of local wisdom. Education is required not only to produce academically intelligent generations, but also to foster tolerance, openness, and peaceful coexistence in diversity. One relevant approach is the integration of multicultural education and religious moderation. This study uses a literature review to examine relevant literature. The results of the study show that the values of religious moderation, such as tolerance, justice, and inclusiveness, are in line with multicultural education. The implementation of both is carried out effectively through schools acting as laboratories of tolerance with supporting curricula such as the Pancasila Profile and collaboration between various parties. This approach becomes the foundation for building a harmonious, peaceful, and inclusive society.

1. Introduction

The era of globalization presents challenges and opportunities in education, especially in terms of cultural diversity. Some of the impacts of globalization are increased interaction between cultures, leading to an increasingly pluralistic and diverse society. In this era, it poses new challenges to education systems around the world, including in Indonesia, to prepare young people who not only have academic abilities, but also have an attitude of tolerance, appreciation for cultural diversity, and the ability to adapt amid differences. (Anton et al. 2024). One of the main challenges in today's digital age is the spread of radicalism through social media, which threatens religious harmony and unity. Modernization, as part of the global trend, has weakened local wisdom that was previously deeply rooted in society and gradually changed the face of culture. In the context of globalization and increasing religious plurality, the issues of tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and peace are becoming increasingly urgent to be prioritized (Robi'a Qolby and Kholifah 2025). Diversity, if not managed wisely, can be a source of conflict. Therefore, it is important to build cross-faith understanding and foster a spirit of harmony in diversity. Tolerance should be understood not merely as passive acceptance, but as active actions that reflect respect, empathy, and openness to differences. These efforts are key to preventing religious conflict and building a just, peaceful, and harmonious society (Robi'a Qolby and Kholifah 2025). From the above description, it can be seen that various challenges arise in the era of globalization, from the spread of radicalism, the weakening of local wisdom, to the increase in plurality and diversity, which requires appropriate measures to minimize conflict by promoting active tolerance and interfaith dialogue. This can be done through religious moderation. The definition of moderation is avoiding extreme behavior and choosing the middle path by considering the views of others. Moderation has two dimensions, namely tawassuth at-tawazun or al-wasatiyyah, which means the middle path

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between two opposing poles. The attitude of *tawassut* means an attitude that is related to the principle of life that upholds justice and righteousness in the midst of togetherness.

Moderate has the same meaning as the word moderation, which is the reduction of violence or avoidance of extremism. (Saihu 2022). The importance of religious moderation has become increasingly relevant in the era of globalization, where information moves quickly and often causes polarization in society. One example is social media, which has become a space for the emergence of narratives of intolerance and extremism that can influence the way young people think (Nanda, et al, 2025). Religious moderation is a definite step in guiding the Indonesian people towards peace. Religious moderation itself has existed since the time of our ancestors, so this is not something new, but rather something that is urgent at this moment, namely how to preserve and maintain religious moderation so that it remains on a path that can lead the nation towards peace, both in terms of maintaining unity and integrity. However, the most important aspect of all this is human resources in realizing this goal. The roles of institutions, the government, and society must be optimized. Expanding dialogue is also important due to the prevalence of hoaxes (Rifnawati n.d.). Therefore, the presence of multicultural education is a way to strengthen the approach and application of religious moderation through the values instilled in education, which emphasize several aspects that are not much different from the values of religious moderation.

2. Literature Review

According to Banks in Somantrie, multicultural education is an integrated field of study and discipline with the important goal of creating equal educational opportunities for students from different racial, ethnic, social class, and cultural groups. In this regard, Banks further states that the goal of this type of education is to help all students effectively master the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed in a diverse and interactive democratic society, as well as to negotiate and communicate with different people or groups, thereby creating a civil and moral community that is in harmony with general principles (Somantrie 2011). Multiculturalism views a society as having a common culture that resembles a mosaic. This mosaic encompasses all the cultures of the smaller communities that make up the larger society, which has a culture like that mosaic (Ibrahim, 2013). It is known that culture essentially has values that are passed down and implemented in line with social changes that occur within society. Culture cannot be separated from religiosity, because the inherent values are proof of the interaction of society with cultural diversity. The presence of culture and ancestral values is a means of building religiosity and spirituality towards a civil society. Religion and culture are two different things but cannot be separated. Both have a relationship in creating harmony and conflict. However, both cannot be avoided because the dialectic of religion and culture presents different symbols, patterns, and meanings. Religion provides color and spirit in culture, while culture provides richness to religion. (Haidar, et al 2023) In essence, multicultural education seeks to ensure that every student, regardless of diversity, has the same learning opportunities and is taught to live in harmony. The goal is none other than to form a civil society. In line with this, moderation also has the same values as multiculturalism but places more emphasis on religion. However, these two things cannot be separated from one another. This is in line with several pieces of literature related to multicultural education that are integrated with the values of religious moderation, thereby providing a more complex understanding of the two topics. Research conducted by Lince Hartanti Sihombing shows that multicultural education based on religious tolerance is grounded in several theories and conceptual frameworks that combine the values of multiculturalism, tolerance, and human rights principles.

Multicultural theory emphasizes the importance of celebrating cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, while tolerance promotes the recognition of an individual's right to practice their religious beliefs without discrimination and upholds human rights principles as the main foundation for ensuring that every individual's right to practice their beliefs is respected. Through this approach, multicultural education in Indonesia seeks to create an inclusive environment that allows all students, regardless of religious beliefs, to feel accepted and valued (Sihombing et al. 2024). This is also supported by a spirit of multiculturalism that is expected to strengthen social harmony and consistency in a diverse society with different cultural backgrounds, including religious differences. With a spirit of multiculturalism, communities are able to live together peacefully. Fostering this spirit requires several strategies aimed at strengthening the spirit of multiculturalism in the dynamics of interfaith relations, namely strengthening the tradition of dialogue, regulating religious broadcasting activities (*dakwah*), strengthening the spirit of tolerance through educational institutions, reorienting official religious institutions, and strengthening the principles of constitutionalism (Umam 2016). This description is based on community studies, while in educational studies, multiculturalism and religious moderation are closely related. One example is the research conducted by Abdul Wahid, which integrates the values of religious moderation into multicultural education so that students become more sensitive to the religious and cultural differences around them. In addition, students will learn to appreciate and respect differences, build mutual respect, and

tolerance. In implementing this, cooperation is needed from several parties, such as the government, educational institutions, the community, and parents(Wahid 2024).

3. Methodology

This article uses library research, more commonly known as literature research. Data collection techniques involve reviewing books, journals, articles, and other writings relevant to the topic of discussion.

4. Results and Discussion

The root word of multiculturalism is culture. According to experts, culture means diversity, but in this context, culture itself is viewed from the perspective of its function as a guideline for human life. Therefore, from this perspective, multiculturalism is an ideology that can be a means to improve the human condition and humanity. Multiculturalism recognizes and expresses differences in equality, both individually and culturally. Meanwhile, multicultural education is a process of developing all human abilities or potential that values plurality and heterogeneity as a consequence of cultural, ethnic, tribal, and religious diversity. (Rustam Ibrahim 2013). The National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 accommodates human rights values and the spirit of multiculturalism. These values in the law form the basis for the implementation of education in Indonesia. This is included in Chapter III, Article 4, Paragraph 1, which states that education is carried out democratically and fairly without discrimination based on human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national diversity (Husna and Mahfuds 2022). Thus, there are multicultural values in the implementation of education in Indonesia that are currently being applied. Some of these values are implemented for students to achieve educational goals. Some of the multicultural values in education include tolerance, which is key to preventing conflict, violence, and aggressive behavior among children.

Teaching children the value of tolerance enables them to learn to respect the opinions of others, resolve problems peacefully, and build good relationships with their peers. The teaching of tolerance has certainly been instilled at all levels of education, including early childhood education (Rusmiati 2023) Elementary school (Elita, Maulida, and Wahyuni 2024), junior high school (Muhtarom et al. 2024), up to the university level(Mohammad Rudiyanto, Abi Muhlisin 2024). One of the multicultural values that needs to be internalized and developed in education is the value of justice or equality. Justice or equality in life and social interactions is certainly very easy to say but difficult to implement. Sometimes what is said cannot necessarily be done fairly. This value implies balance. A simple example is the analogy of a scale, where the load on the scale cannot be uneven but must be balanced. Justice is related to harmony. If schools are unable to be fair in their decision-making, then harmony will not be achieved (Suardika, Mas, and Lamatenggo 2022)

Empathy is one of the values or attitudes that is often instilled in education. Empathy for others is demonstrated by the desire to help others. Therefore, this is certainly important in humanity, as humans understand and feel the feelings of others (Dirs 2021). Next is inclusivism, which means understanding that truth does not lie with only one party but with all parties, including religion. Inclusive education itself is a concept that focuses on the participation and acceptance of all individuals, reflecting the fundamental principles of justice and equality in Islamic teachings. Referring to the inclusive system, it provides opportunities for all students, whether they have disabilities or special talents, to be able to participate in education and learning in one environment together with students in general (Parnawi and Syahrani 2024). The above multicultural values provide a unique perspective in the implementation of multicultural education that refers to diversity, thereby fostering mutual respect and forming a harmonious society.

In addition, the implementation and efforts to foster multicultural values in education are also carried out through a project. This project is held in the current learning curriculum known as P5. The application of the Pancasila student profile in Indonesian education is very important to achieve the national education goal of creating a young generation that is intelligent, has good character, is virtuous, and is able to contribute to a diverse society. Some fundamental aspects of the Pancasila student profile are having strong faith, commendable character, independence, social spirit, critical thinking skills, and high creativity. It is hoped that these aspects will become a strong foundation for the attitudes and behavior of students throughout Indonesia. To implement this, a comprehensive approach is needed, namely P5. P5 is designed as an approach that integrates various components of education to support students in deeply mastering the values of Pancasila in their daily lives (Uswan, Suhartono, and Wiyono 2025).

The application of multicultural values in education is inseparable from religious aspects. In this case, based on the concept of multiculturalism, the Ministry of Religious Affairs strives to maintain Indonesian unity and religious harmony, giving rise to the term religious moderation (Haidar, et al 2023). Religious moderation is an action to maintain balance in religion so that it does not stray and lead to extremism or liberalism. The concept of religious moderation emphasizes tolerance, respect for diversity, and avoidance of fanaticism. In Islam, religious moderation is in line with the principle of *wasatiyyah*, which focuses on fairness and balance in religion. The reference point for religious moderation lies in attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts that prioritize religion as a source of peace, tolerance, and inclusiveness while respecting the essential values of religious teachings. This concept requires an understanding of one's own religion while being open to respecting existing diversity (Nanda et al, 2025).

Religious moderation in Indonesia is very important and necessary as an effort to build a harmonious society. The spirit of religious moderation, such as justice, tolerance, and balance, is a prerequisite that must be upheld in managing the reality of a pluralistic society in this country. (Sufratman 2022). To instill the values of religious moderation, it is necessary to adopt both approaches, namely multicultural education and religious moderation, in developing education and achieving the desired goals. One of the approaches taken is to make schools laboratories of tolerance. Schools are said to be multicultural communities because they have the ability to manage diversity. Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that respects and recognizes the presence of diverse groups in organizations and communities, understands and appreciates their socio-cultural civilizations, and encourages and supports them to make sustainable contributions in the context of an inclusive culture that empowers everyone in the organization or community. Meanwhile, the essence of multicultural education itself is the ability to work with others in a way that transcends burdens and leads to unity and diversity, so that schools have an important role in instilling multicultural values in students from an early age (Reski and Alam 2024). The key to implementing multicultural education is that it must not only reflect diversity in the curriculum, but also encourage students to actively think critically about social issues around them. In the current era, there are still many curricula that are normative in nature and do not open up in-depth dialogue between cultures. Assessments also still focus too much on cognitive aspects, while affective and social aspects are neglected. Ideally, the curriculum should encourage the development of tolerant character, cross-cultural communication skills, and social empathy (Fazira, Batubara, and Saputra Siregar 2024).

There are three types of curricula implemented in Indonesia's inclusive education system, namely the national standard curriculum, the accommodative curriculum below the national standard, and the accommodative curriculum above the national standard. The national standard curriculum is a curriculum implemented for all students with standards in accordance with those applied in all schools nationwide. The accommodative curriculum below the standard is the national standard curriculum that has been adapted to the talents, interests, and potential, needs, and abilities of students with special needs. Meanwhile, the accommodative curriculum above the national standard must be developed based on the results of student identification and assessment so that its implementation can be tailored to the characteristics, needs, and abilities of the students themselves (muchamad irvan 2018). Furthermore, the independent curriculum can currently be said to be relevant to multicultural education. This can be seen from several indicators of this curriculum, such as the development of basic skills, differentiated learning, Pancasila student profiles, and the suitability of local content. This is the basis for the implementation of integrated multicultural education in the independent curriculum. In the independent curriculum, the value of religious moderation is also implied in textbooks, particularly in Phase E Islamic religious education, such as *At-Tawassuth* (Moderation), *I'tidal* (Balance), *Tsamuh* (Tolerance), *Asy-Syura* (Deliberation), *Al-Ishlah* (Improvement), *Al-Qudwah* (Exemplary Behavior), *Al-Muwathanah* (Love for the homeland), *Al-La'unf* (Anti-violence), and *I'tiraf Al-Urf* (Cultural friendliness) (Salamudin and Nuralamin 2024).

In addition to schools, which serve as a forum for instilling tolerance through an appropriate curriculum, there is a need for roles that can apply this concept. Therefore, the next approach is collaboration between teachers, parents, and policy makers in instilling the value of religious moderation. Religious moderation is an important concept for maintaining harmony in Indonesia's diverse society. The goal of religious moderation is to avoid excessive or radical attitudes and to encourage tolerance and cooperation among religious communities (Destian et al. 2024). Teachers play a significant role in conveying the values of religious moderation to students. Teachers are not only responsible for providing learning materials but also for guiding students to understand the importance of moderation in religious life (Rodiyah 2024). A study by Ina Damayanti on the collaboration between schools and parents in shaping students' moderate religious attitudes found that this depends heavily on the collaboration between these two parties. Teachers play a central role as mediators by integrating tolerance into their teaching, while parents help shape their children's character to be open-minded and able to appreciate differences through setting an example and instilling good habits at home (Damayanti 2025). Religious moderation has been a hot topic and a major focus of government policy in recent years. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has implemented programs aimed at strengthening

moderate values in society. One such program is religious moderation-based education, which has been implemented by educational institutions with the aim of instilling values of tolerance from an early age (Adi Muflih Adi et al. 2025). From the above description, multicultural education has a very good goal for societies that are diverse in culture, ethnicity, and religion, which can be implemented through schools and the curriculum approach used. Meanwhile, religious moderation has a similar goal, which is to promote harmony in society, especially among religious communities, through education that provides teaching materials on this topic.

5. Conclusion

Globalization poses challenges to cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia. Therefore, education needs to integrate multicultural values and religious moderation in order to shape a tolerant and inclusive generation. Schools play a role as laboratories of tolerance through the Merdeka curriculum and P5 program. Values such as justice, empathy, and anti-violence must be instilled from an early age. Collaboration between teachers, parents, and the government is also very important. This integration is a strategic step in creating a harmonious, peaceful society that is able to live harmoniously in diversity.

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