

Tolerance, Inclusiveness, and Balance as Predictors of Religious Moderation among Junior High School Students in Batang Natal

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance on students' attitudes toward religious moderation at SMP Negeri Batang Natal. Religious moderation is a strategic value in character education that fosters a just, balanced, and respectful religious attitude in a pluralistic society. The study employed a quantitative approach with a survey design. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to one hundred students and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings reveal that all three independent variables tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance have a significant effect on students' religious moderation. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.999, indicating that nearly all variance in students' moderate religious attitudes can be explained by these three variables. Among them, inclusiveness contributed the most to religious moderation. These results highlight the importance of embedding values of moderation in secondary education as a means of strengthening students' religious character in a respectful and harmonious manner.

Keywords: *religious moderation; tolerance; inclusiveness; balance*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh toleransi, inklusivitas, dan keseimbangan terhadap sikap moderasi beragama siswa di SMP Negeri Batang Natal. Moderasi beragama merupakan salah satu nilai strategis dalam pendidikan karakter yang mendorong sikap keberagamaan yang adil, seimbang, dan menghargai perbedaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain survei. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner tertutup dengan skala Likert yang dibagikan kepada seratus siswa, dan dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketiga variabel independen toleransi, inklusivitas, dan keseimbangan berpengaruh signifikan terhadap sikap moderasi beragama. Nilai koefisien determinasi (R^2) sebesar 0,999 menunjukkan bahwa hampir seluruh variasi sikap moderat siswa dapat dijelaskan oleh ketiga variabel tersebut. Di antara ketiganya, inklusivitas memberikan kontribusi paling besar terhadap moderasi beragama siswa. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya menanamkan nilai-nilai moderat dalam pendidikan sekolah menengah sebagai bagian dari penguatan karakter siswa yang religius, terbuka, dan harmonis.

Kata Kunci: *Moderasi Beragama; Toleransi; Inklusivitas; Keseimbangan*

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation is an approach to viewing and practicing religious teachings in a way that avoids extremism and maintains a balance between spiritual beliefs and social life within a diverse society. In the context of Indonesia, which is known for its religious and cultural diversity, religious moderation is a crucial issue that needs to be understood and applied across all levels of society, especially among the younger generation. (Amri, 2021). In schools, particularly at the junior high school level, fostering religious moderation is highly relevant, as students at this age are undergoing critical stages of social and identity development. Developing a healthy attitude of religious moderation at this stage lays a strong foundation for the younger generation to live harmoniously within a pluralistic society (Rohman & Waskito, 2025). Therefore, it is important to understand the extent to which junior high school students possess attitudes of religious moderation, as this can influence how they interact with others of different religions and cultures. The concept of religious moderation in this study encompasses several dimensions, including tolerance toward religious differences, an inclusive attitude toward diversity, and the ability to maintain a balance between religious values and social life. Religious moderation is not only related to tolerance, but also to an individual's ability to avoid radicalization and extremism that can undermine social harmony (Faisal et al., 2022).

In the context of education, schools play a strategic role in instilling the values of religious moderation. As institutions responsible for educating the younger generation, schools have the obligation to provide a deep understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect for differences, particularly in the context of religion (Awalita, 2024). In many countries, education for religious moderation has been incorporated into national education curricula. In Indonesia, this is reflected in the Islamic Religious Education and Civic Education curricula, both of which emphasize the importance of tolerance and interreligious harmony (Mustaqim, 2019).

However, the extent to which such curricula can truly influence students' attitudes and behaviors in daily life remains a major question. With the increasing number of cases of intolerance and religious radicalization around the world, it is essential for education to provide deeper learning about religious moderation. An education that fosters openness, respect for differences, and a strong understanding of moderate religious principles will significantly contribute to future social harmony (Messakh et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the phenomenon of intolerance and religion-based violence occasionally manifests in various forms, such as attacks on religious minority groups, discrimination against certain faith communities, and violence in public spaces. This study aims to examine whether religious moderation education can reduce such potentials among the younger generation (Atmanto & Muzayanah, 2020).

Several previous studies have shown that a strong understanding of religious moderation can contribute to reducing radicalization among adolescents. For example, a study conducted by (Malthaner, 2017) showed that religious moderation can reduce the potential for extremism among young people, particularly those exposed to the influence of social media and radical content. However, the measurement of religious moderation attitudes at the primary and secondary education levels remains limited. Many studies have focused more on the phenomenon of extremism, while understanding of religious moderation attitudes is often overlooked (Sfetcu, 2020). Therefore, this study will make a significant contribution by exploring religious moderation attitudes among junior high school students in Indonesia.

One important aspect of measuring religious moderation attitudes is identifying the factors that influence such attitudes. These factors may include the influence of family, peers, media, and the educational curriculum received by students (Sa'idah et al., 2024). This study will explore these factors to provide a clearer picture of the dynamics that influence religious moderation attitudes among adolescents. It is also important to present this research within the context of Indonesia's evolving social

dynamics. With more than 17,000 islands and over 600 ethnic groups, Indonesia is home to immense cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Therefore, religious moderation becomes a crucial element in maintaining national harmony and unity (Islamy, 2022). By measuring religious moderation attitudes among junior high school students, this study aims to provide useful recommendations for the development of education policies in Indonesia. The findings are expected to contribute to the formulation of more responsive educational policies that address the challenges of promoting religious moderation among students.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with the aim of measuring religious moderation attitudes among students at SMP Negeri Batang Natal. The quantitative method was chosen because it allows the researcher to collect numerical data that can be statistically analyzed to identify patterns or tendencies in students' attitudes toward religious moderation. This approach also enables more objective measurement and allows the findings to be generalized to a broader population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey design to measure religious moderation attitudes among students at SMP Negeri Batang Natal. The survey was conducted by distributing questionnaires to 100 students. A random sampling technique was used to select participants, ensuring representation of the school's social and religious diversity. The instrument consisted of a 30-item questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, designed to assess religious moderation based on three dimensions: tolerance, inclusiveness, and the balance between religious beliefs and social life. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were tested, yielding a high reliability coefficient ($r = 0.85$). Data were collected directly from respondents and analyzed statistically. The study also adhered to ethical standards by ensuring voluntary participation and maintaining the confidentiality of respondents' data. (Tarsito, 2014).

RESULT DAN DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of data analysis obtained from 100 student respondents at SMP Negeri Batang Natal, analyzed using a quantitative approach through multiple linear regression techniques. The main objective of this analysis is to examine the extent to which the variables of tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance simultaneously and partially influence students' attitudes toward religious moderation. The presentation of results is accompanied by statistical interpretation, theoretical explanation, and critical discussion that connects the empirical findings with relevant literature. Thus, this section not only provides numerical data but also offers meaningful insights into the context of character education and the development of students' religious attitudes in a secondary school environment.

Based on the results of multiple linear regression analysis, it was found that:

Table 1. Hasil Analisis Statistik

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	1.000 ^a	.999	.999	.00264

a. Predictors: (Constant), Keseimbangan, Toleransi, Inklusivitas

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.962	3	.321	45909.640	.000 ^b
	Residual	.001	96	.000		
	Total	.963	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Skor_Moderasi_Beragama

b. Predictors: (Constant), Keseimbangan, Toleransi, Inklusivitas

		Coefficients^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.005	.011		.467	.641
	Toleransi	.335	.001	.622	230.560	.000
	Inklusivitas	.333	.001	.675	249.758	.000
	Keseimbangan	.331	.002	.457	169.303	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Skor_Moderasi_Beragama

The results from the model summary show an R value of 1.000 and an R Square (R^2) of 0.999, indicating that the three independent variables collectively explain 99.9% of the variance in students' religious moderation scores. This value reflects an exceptionally high model fit, which is rarely found in social and educational research. It also suggests that the research instrument used a 30-item questionnaire with a reliability score of 0.85 is highly valid in measuring the dimensions of religious moderation. Furthermore, the ANOVA test yielded an F value of 45,909.640 with a significance level of less than 0.001, reinforcing that the regression model is statistically significant. This means that, simultaneously, the three independent variables tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance have a substantial and measurable effect on students' attitudes toward religious moderation. The coefficient table also shows that all variables have significance values below 0.001, indicating that each variable individually has a significant influence. Among them, inclusiveness contributes the most to religious moderation ($\beta = 0.675$), followed by tolerance ($\beta = 0.622$) and balance ($\beta = 0.457$).

These results indicate that students with a high level of inclusiveness those who are able to accept differences and respect diverse beliefs are more likely to exhibit moderate religious attitudes. This finding aligns with the perspective of Khoirudin (2024), who emphasized that inclusiveness is a key indicator in progressive Islamic

education, as it serves as a bridge between religiosity and a pluralistic social life. Meanwhile, the variable of tolerance, which holds the second-highest beta value, reflects students' ability to respect the existence of others with different beliefs. This corresponds to students' moral maturity, as explained in Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which underscores the importance of empathy and justice in social interactions. Zakariyah and Arif (2022) support this view by stating that Islamic Religious Education curricula should incorporate tolerance education as a foundational value within the broader context of nationhood and humanity.

To further substantiate the importance of inclusiveness and tolerance in fostering religious moderation, it is essential to explore how these values contribute to the development of students' broader worldviews. Inclusiveness, as discussed by (Faiz et al., 2024), not only encourages acceptance of religious diversity but also nurtures the ability to engage in intercultural dialogue. This competency is crucial in a world that is increasingly interconnected and diverse, where understanding and cooperating with people from different backgrounds are paramount for social harmony. Additionally, inclusiveness in education can promote critical thinking, allowing students to question rigid ideologies and develop a more nuanced understanding of their own religious beliefs in relation to others. As a result, inclusive educational practices not only contribute to individual growth but also to the strengthening of social cohesion in pluralistic societies.

Tolerance, as reflected in Kohlberg's theory of moral development, has profound implications for students' ethical decision-making processes. Kohlberg's theory posits that moral reasoning evolves through stages, with the highest stage emphasizing universal ethical principles such as justice, empathy, and respect for others. This framework aligns with the concept of tolerance, which is a core aspect of moral maturity. Tolerance enables students to not only accept others' differences but to appreciate and defend their right to exist as they are, regardless of religious or cultural

disparities. Research by (Riaz et al., 2023) further emphasizes the role of tolerance education in Islamic schools, asserting that the promotion of tolerance aligns with Islamic teachings on mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. By incorporating tolerance into educational curricula, students are prepared to become more responsible citizens who contribute positively to their communities, fostering a culture of peace and understanding.

Although the variable of balance contributes the least among the three, it still plays a significant role in shaping students' religious moderation. In this context, balance refers to students' ability to harmonize religious teachings with the demands of modern social life. This is essential to prevent religiosity from falling into exclusivist or extremist tendencies. Amtiran and Kriswibowo (2024) state that education grounded in balance produces individuals who are not only spiritually devout but also capable of engaging healthily in social life. In the context of secondary education, this finding suggests that character education based on moderation cannot rely solely on textual instruction, but must also be accompanied by concrete social experiences. Extracurricular activities, interfaith collaborative projects, and democratic school practices can serve as effective means to internalize these values. Albana (2023) notes that a school environment that fosters inclusive and tolerant values has a significant influence on students' religious attitudes.

From an educational policy perspective, these findings reinforce the urgency of implementing the Religious Moderation Program initiated by Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs, as outlined in the Grand Design for Religious Moderation (2019–2024). The three variables shown to be influential in this study tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance are also core components of the Islamic Wasathiyah values, which emphasize justice, balance, and respect for differences (Bahijah & Ishak, 2022). These findings also have implications for the development of religious assessment instruments. With a quantitative approach proven to be both valid and reliable, it

becomes possible to measure religious attitudes more objectively. This is crucial, considering that many previous studies relied solely on qualitative methods and were unable to statistically capture changes in attitudes.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the concept of Wasathiyah as proposed by Azyumardi Azra (2006) and Nasir & Rijal (2021), who argue that religious moderation is not merely about taking a middle ground, but is the result of a systematic values-based education that instills balance, tolerance, and openness. Such education does not only produce individually pious individuals, but also citizens who uphold national values. Socially, these findings are highly relevant in light of growing concerns over increasing intolerance among students. A report by Andrade & Teixeira (2017) revealed a rise in religion-based intolerance incidents in schools. Therefore, educational models grounded in tolerance and inclusiveness need to be further promoted and strengthened.

Furthermore, this regression model can serve as a foundation for developing contextual Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning modules. Such modules should not only focus on religious texts, but also incorporate case studies, social reflection, and cross-perspective discussions to foster students' moderate reasoning. In this context, teachers play a crucial role as role models who embody moderate attitudes in their daily practices. If integrated into school programs, the value of inclusiveness can be developed through interfaith forums or community service activities; tolerance can be cultivated through anti-discrimination classes and conflict resolution training; and balance can be promoted through an integrative approach between religious education and the social sciences.

Fostering a moderate religious identity in young learners can play a pivotal role in shaping a harmonious society. Research suggests that students who are educated to appreciate diversity and practice tolerance tend to have more balanced and respectful views on religion. This educational approach is crucial, particularly at the junior high

school level, when students are still in the formative stages of their moral and religious development. By focusing on key values such as tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance, educators can help students develop not only religious knowledge but also the social skills necessary to interact constructively with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Studies have highlighted the importance of integrating these values into the curriculum, as it enhances students' ability to navigate and embrace religious diversity without compromising their own beliefs (Imamah, 2023; Alfisyah et al., 2024).

Overall, this study demonstrates that religious moderation attitudes can be measured, analyzed, and strengthened through appropriate educational strategies. The three variables tested tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance showed high significance and near-perfect predictive power, indicating that junior high school students have substantial potential to become a generation of moderate and religious individuals when guided with effective pedagogical approaches. Thus, the findings not only answer the research questions but also open up opportunities for policy formulation and character education programs in schools, particularly at the secondary level. Efforts to promote religious moderation among students must become a shared agenda among teachers, parents, policymakers, and the broader community.

The study's findings underscore the critical role that educational strategies play in shaping religious attitudes among young learners. As the research highlights, incorporating values like tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance into school curricula can significantly contribute to the formation of a generation that is not only religiously aware but also socially responsible. In light of these results, it is important to develop policies that encourage collaboration between educators, families, and local communities. This collaboration ensures that religious moderation is not solely an academic pursuit but also a shared cultural and moral goal. Furthermore, the study paves the way for future research to explore the long-term impact of religious moderation education and its potential to reduce intolerance, extremism, and religious

conflict in society. By continuing to refine and implement these educational practices, schools can contribute to fostering a more peaceful and equitable society.

These findings affirm that students' religious moderation is not an isolated outcome, but is significantly shaped by their levels of tolerance, inclusiveness, and ability to balance religious values with social realities. These three elements interact and contribute meaningfully to the formation of a moderate religious character, as reflected in the model's high level of statistical significance and explanatory power. Therefore, the study provides not only strong empirical insights into the key factors that influence students' religious moderation, but also a conceptual foundation for developing character education policies based on wasathiyah values within secondary school environments. By reinforcing these three dimensions through educational practices, schools can become strategic spaces for shaping a young generation that is religious yet inclusive, tolerant, and socially balanced in their approach to faith and community life.

The findings of this study emphasize the crucial role of tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance in shaping religious moderation among students. By integrating these values into school curricula, educational institutions can foster a generation that is both religiously committed and socially responsible. However, challenges remain in implementing these strategies, particularly in diverse school settings. Future research should explore the long-term effectiveness of such educational approaches and their broader societal impact, ensuring that education continues to promote tolerance and coexistence in a pluralistic world.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students' attitudes toward religious moderation are strongly influenced by tolerance, inclusiveness, and balance. These three factors contribute significantly to shaping religious attitudes that are open, fair, and non-extremist. Among them, inclusiveness emerged as the most dominant factor,

highlighting the importance of accepting differences in building religious moderation. Therefore, schools must reinforce moderation values through both instructional content and school culture. Teachers are expected to serve as role models in demonstrating inclusive and tolerant behavior. In addition, education policies should support character education that fosters religious moderation by actively involving families and the broader community.

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