

The Role of Parents in Religious Moderation Education in Border Areas: A Case Study at MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang

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Abstract

Religious moderation education plays a crucial role in shaping the character of children in the Indonesia-Malaysia border region, given the challenges of cultural and religious diversity in the area. This research aims to explore the implementation of religious moderation education in strengthening character during the digital era, with a case study at MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, with respondents selected using purposive sampling. The main findings indicate that parental involvement is essential in supporting religious moderation education among children. Parents are responsible not only for providing basic care but also for instilling moral values and shaping their children's character. By modeling positive behavior and speech, parents can instill a sense of respect and tolerance towards religious, ethnic, and cultural differences. This approach enables children to develop a strong understanding of religious moderation and the ability to interact positively in diverse environments. The theoretical benefits of these findings include strengthening the existing literature on the importance of parental roles in character education and religious moderation. Practically, these findings provide concrete guidance for parents and educators in implementing effective educational strategies to foster moderate attitudes in children. This research also offers practical solutions for advancing understanding in the field of education, particularly in the context of social and cultural diversity.

Keywords: Border Areas; Education; Parents; Religious Moderation.

The challenge of a heterogeneous society in Indonesia lies in reducing friction and conflict between followers of different religions, communities, groups, tribes, and creating a

peaceful coexistence (Sudrajat, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to nurture, educate, and instill in every citizen the values necessary for creating a peaceful life in the nation and state.

This will contribute to the strength of the Indonesian nation's character, while still respecting differences, promoting mutual respect, and fostering a society where people live side by side, work together harmoniously, and embrace the spirit of peace amidst diversity (Ilma et al., 2023). It is also crucial to address the issue of religious extremism among teenagers and children. A moderate understanding of religion should be emphasized alongside moral teachings, especially for younger individuals.

According to Kassab et al. (2020), the digital industrial revolution 4.0 has brought about significant changes in all aspects of life, including religious practices. In this era of digital disruption, religious moderation should be seen as a formula and solution. Religion and digitalization play important roles in supporting a balanced vertical and horizontal life process. Ichwan et al., (2020) found that a peace laboratory serves as a platform for promoting religious moderation through digital spaces, countering the overwhelming flow of information on social media platforms, particularly within Islamic educational institutions.

Gouda & Gutmann (2021) argue that religious moderation should be integrated into Religious Education in Indonesia, with educational institutions playing a crucial role in promoting moderation. Driessen (2018) also highlight the importance of religious moderation in reducing extremism and radical acts within Indonesian society. The Ministry of Religion is considered a significant actor responsible for promoting religious harmony in Indonesia. However, the high rates of religious intolerance, approximately 38.4%¹ in general and 57.6%² towards other religious practices according to research by the Ministry of Education and Culture, indicate the need to prioritize religious moderation as a means to address these issues (Syahnan & Ja'far, 2021). It is essential to strike a balance between inclusive and exclusive religious practices to foster tolerance amidst the diverse Indonesian society.

By promoting religious moderation, wise student character can be cultivated. This enables students to distinguish between right and wrong, as well as develop habits that promote positive values in life. Consequently, students will possess heightened awareness, understanding, and a strong commitment to implementing policies in their daily lives (Sagramoso & Yarlykapov, 2020). Border areas face various challenges, including economic inequality, poverty, educational disparities compared to urban communities, infrastructure issues, and high social inequality. It seems that Indonesian citizens in these regions are caught between two choices, experiencing a division between their identity and love for their country.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta (MIS) Nurul Yaqin Sijang has its own distinct characteristics compared to other schools. It plays a significant role in strengthening the Republic of Indonesia's position in education, religion, economics, and culture (Shodiq et al., 2019). This is due to the region's cultural diversity, with communities practicing different religions, belonging to various ethnicities, and observing different customs. Located in the border area between Indonesia and Malaysia, specifically near the Aruk Border with Sarawak Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, which is part of the island of Borneo, MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang serves a unique community with diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds among its students' parents. This uniqueness is evident in the collaborative efforts of teachers and parents in religious activities, fostering a sense of unity within the community. The role of religious moderation in educational institutions is crucial for character development in the digital era. Basic educational institutions serve as the foundation for further educational structures (Wroblewski, 2019). This research delves into the implementation of religious moderation education in strengthening character during the digitalization era in the Indonesia-Malaysia border region, with MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang as a case study.

Religious moderation education plays a crucial role in fostering national awareness, particularly considering the growing diversity of the Indonesian landscape, which has been challenged by the emergence of extreme religious attitudes expressed by certain groups in the name of religion (Ladewi & Melati, 2020). These manifestations occur both in real-world actions and in cyberspace statements. The presence of such exclusive and intolerant groups poses a threat to the religious climate in Indonesia, as their transnational ideology tends to disregard national issues and local wisdom (Junusi et al., 2021). This exclusive religious mindset is more likely to resonate with Muslims who have limited religious understanding and a lack of awareness regarding their own nation's history. In this context, religious moderation is essential for the promotion of civilization and human solidarity.

Border areas constitute regions where two administrative areas converge, but they also serve as complementary components of a single functional system unit for regional development, facilitated by a Joint Regional Infrastructure System (Suryani et al., 2021). Additionally, borders are vulnerable points along international trade routes, often subject to cases of smuggling and the circulation of illegal goods. This situation is further exacerbated by disparities in welfare and socio-economic inequality, particularly in border areas. These disparities stem from various factors, with the most dominant and significant being inadequate infrastructure, including transportation and information technology, as well as limited resource management at the local level (Čavalić et al., 2019). Therefore, targeted interventions are necessary to address these issues.

The challenges faced by Indonesia's border areas are inseparable from developments in the strategic environment, both at the international and regional levels. In the era of globalization, the world is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent, with various aspects such as ideology, politics, economics,

socio-culture, defense, and security influenced by this interconnectivity (Ali et al., 2021). While preserving its identity and territorial boundaries, the Republic of Indonesia continues to remove all physical, administrative, and fiscal barriers that impede the movement of goods and people, reflecting its commitment to openness.

Religious moderation education in border areas plays a crucial role in shaping the character of children, especially in the context of Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity (Mutawali, 2023). However, several issues hinder the effectiveness of this education. One of the main problems is the lack of parental involvement in supporting religious moderation education. Many parents in border areas are not actively providing examples of moderate religious behavior, leaving children without real-life role models to emulate in their daily lives. Furthermore, an unsystematic approach to conveying the values of religious moderation often leads to inconsistency in children's acceptance and application of these values.

On the other hand, ineffective socialization programs between schools and parents also pose a barrier to creating the necessary collaboration to support religious moderation education. The lack of communication and cooperation between schools and parents results in suboptimal efforts in religious moderation education. Additionally, the limited understanding of parents regarding the importance of broad social interactions for their children negatively impacts the children's ability to appreciate and accept religious, ethnic, and cultural differences in their environment.

This research is essential and urgent because it addresses the primary challenge in Indonesia's heterogeneous society: reducing friction and conflict among followers of different religions, communities, groups, and tribes, and creating a peaceful coexistence. In the context of the Indonesia-Malaysia border, religious moderation education plays a strategic role in shaping the character of children and supporting social integration in regions with high cultural and religious diversity. The findings of this research

are expected to provide solutions to issues such as the lack of parental involvement in supporting religious moderation education, unsystematic approaches to conveying moderation values, and ineffective socialization programs between schools and parents. Therefore, this research contributes to strengthening the character of the Indonesian nation, promoting mutual respect, and creating a harmonious society that values diversity.

Therefore, this research aims to explore the implementation of religious moderation education in strengthening children's character in the digital era in the Indonesia-Malaysia border region, with a case study on MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang. This research will examine the effectiveness of collaboration between schools and parents, as well as systematic approaches in conveying the values of religious moderation. Additionally, it will investigate the role of religious moderation education in addressing challenges of extremism and intolerance among children and teenagers, and in supporting the development of wise and inclusive character amidst cultural and religious diversity.

Method

The research design employed in this study was qualitative with a descriptive case study approach (Longhofer et al., 2012). This method was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the role of parents in religious moderation education at MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, involving parents, teachers, and students. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation (Iosifides, 2011).

The materials for the study included interview guides, observation notes, and relevant documents related to educational activities at MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang. The interview guides were designed to explore respondents' views on religious moderation education and parental

involvement. Observation notes were used to record behaviors and interactions within the educational context. The collected documents included research journals, books, madrasah activity programs, and school meeting records. These materials were systematically processed and stored.

The research instruments included the researcher as the primary instrument, along with tools such as interview guides, observation checklists, and documentation techniques (Daly, 2007). The researcher ensured logistical and academic readiness before conducting fieldwork. The procedures began with data collection through interviews, followed by observations and documentation. The data were analyzed using techniques of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was maintained through prolonged engagement and member checks.

Results and Discussion

The results indicate that the role of parents in religious moderation education in border areas, particularly at MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang, is significant in shaping the character of their children. Based on Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and field interviews, it was found that parents play a central role in instilling moral values and attitudes of religious moderation through various means, such as providing positive behavioral models, speaking politely and respectfully, and teaching tolerance towards ethnic and religious differences. These findings are supported by statements from several respondents, such as Mrs. Yusida, who emphasized the importance of teaching togetherness and respect through parental behavior modeling. Additionally, Mr. Herlan stated that parents should encourage their children to make friends with individuals from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds to strengthen positive social relationships.

The table below presents some of the methods used by parents to support religious

moderation education at MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang:

Education Method	Brief Description
Providing Role Models	Parents demonstrate polite and respectful behavior in daily life.
Teaching Tolerance	Parents encourage children to befriend individuals from various backgrounds.
Expressing Affection	Parents show affection to build respect and recognition in children.
Supervising Daily Activities	Parents organize children's schedules and monitor their activities.

An unexpected finding in this study is the importance of expressing affection in fostering moderation attitudes in children. As noted by Mrs. Yusida, affection not only includes positive experiences but also involves making requests and offering warnings. This approach allows children to improve their behavior while feeling loved by their parents. Furthermore, Risnawati's research highlights that childhood is an optimal period for instilling daily life values and character education related to inter-religious harmony. This observation is supported by Yusida's statement, emphasizing the importance of socializing children within the broader community to introduce them to environments beyond their homes and help them adapt.

The findings above address the main gap in the research, which is the lack of parental involvement in supporting religious moderation education. Parents in the area proved to be able to provide positive role models by speaking politely, respecting differences, and teaching tolerance values, so that children can imitate moderate behavior in their daily lives. The systematic approach used by parents at MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang in conveying the values of religious moderation is also able to overcome the problem of inconsistency in the acceptance and application of these values in children. Through various methods such as modeling behavior, teaching tolerance, expressing affection, and supervising daily activities, parents can ensure that the values of religious moderation are consistently accepted and applied. This supports

Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of observation and imitation in children's learning process (Hidayah et al., 2021).

In addition, this study shows that effective socialization programs between schools and parents play an important role in supporting religious moderation education. Good communication and cooperation between schools and parents at MIS Nurul Yaqin Sijang succeeded in improving religious moderation education efforts. Narot & Kiettikunwong (2024) assert that strong partnerships between families, schools and communities can improve educational outcomes. Therefore, improving socialization programs between schools and parents can be an effective strategy to overcome barriers in religious moderation education.

The research also highlights the negative impact of a limited understanding among parents of the importance of broad social interaction for children. Parents who encourage their children to associate with individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds help children develop positive social relationships and attitudes of religious moderation. This finding is in line with the opinion of Mueller et al. (2024) who state that children's interaction with diverse social environments can enrich their social and moral development.

In addition, the importance of expressions of affection in fostering moderation in children was another important finding. Parents who show affection not only in the form of positive experiences but also through requests and warnings, allow children to improve their behavior while feeling loved. This supports Suryatna's (2023) attachment theory which emphasizes that loving and caring relationships between parents and children form the basis for healthy moral and social development.

This study supports Dzimińska's (2023) observation that childhood is an optimal period for instilling daily life values and character education related to interfaith harmony. Parents who socialize their children in the wider

community help children adapt to the environment outside the home and get to know religious, ethnic and cultural differences. Evnitskaya & Dalton-Puffer's (2023) research on socio-cognitive development also supports these findings, emphasizing that extensive social interaction can enhance children's understanding of their social world and strengthen attitudes of religious moderation.

To avoid any gaps or problems, it is suggested that parents should be more actively involved in supporting religious moderation education by being positive role models and ensuring that moderation values are conveyed consistently. Effective socialization programs between schools and parents should also be enhanced to create a strong collaboration in supporting this education. It is important for parents to understand the importance of extensive social interaction for their children to be able to appreciate and accept differences. If the concerned parties are already dealing with these gaps or problems, there is no need to worry because the solutions have been found in the results of this study. The findings of this study show that active involvement of parents and an effective socialization program can significantly address the problem.

Conclusion

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that the role of parents is crucial in

supporting the implementation of religious moderation education among children. Parents are not only responsible for providing basic care but also for instilling moral values and shaping their children's character. By modelling positive behaviour and speech, parents can instill a sense of respect and tolerance towards religious, ethnic, and cultural differences. This approach enables children to grow into individuals with a solid understanding of religious moderation and the ability to interact positively within diverse environments.

Theoretical benefits of these findings include strengthening the existing literature on the importance of parental roles in character education and religious moderation. Practically, these findings provide concrete guidance for parents and educators in implementing effective educational strategies to foster moderate attitudes in children. Additionally, this research offers practical solutions for advancing understanding in the field of education, particularly in the context of social and cultural diversity. However, this study has limitations, including a limited sample scope and data collection methods that may not encompass all relevant variables. Future research should focus on expanding the sample scope and employing more comprehensive research methods to gain a deeper understanding of the role of parents in religious moderation education.

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