

# **Original Article**

# **Efforts of Islamic and Christian Religious Education Teachers in Forming Attitudes of Tolerance**

M. Isa 1\*

<sup>1</sup>STAI Tgk Chik Pante Kulu Banda Aceh

\*Corresponding author: m.isa@pantekulu.ac.id

# **Abstract**

Religious education plays a crucial role in fostering tolerance in students, particularly in schools with diverse religions and cultures. Through teaching, familiarization, role modeling, and collaboration between teachers, religious education fosters character in students, enabling them to live harmoniously and respect differences. At Methodist Elementary School in Banda Aceh, the religious diversity of Muslim and Christian students presents a valuable educational opportunity. Despite their differing beliefs, students continue to live harmoniously and respect each other thanks to the consistent guidance and development provided by Islamic and Christian Religious Education teachers. This study aims to determine the efforts of religious teachers in instilling values of tolerance and how these tolerance attitudes are implemented in the school environment. The method used is a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and verification. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of methods, time, and sources to ensure the authenticity of the findings. The results of the study indicate that Islamic and Christian Religious Education teachers at Methodist Elementary School in Banda Aceh strive to instill the values of tolerance through various means, including classroom learning that emphasizes the values of love, empathy, and respect for differences; joint religious activities that strengthen togetherness; daily habits such as helping each other and working together; integration of tolerance values in teaching materials; and regular evaluation and monitoring of student character development. The efforts made by these teachers have proven effective in building a culture of tolerance in the school environment. Through the synergy between learning, role models, and habits, Methodist Elementary School in Banda Aceh becomes a real example of tolerance-based character education practices that are able to foster a harmonious atmosphere amidst diversity.

Keywords: Tolerance, Islamic religious education, Christian religious education, religious diversity



#### Introduction

The role of education in shaping students' character and attitudes cannot be ignored. Character education is a conscious and planned process of teaching and empowering students to build their own personal character. Character education is not only about showing right and wrong, but also about developing individuals with morals, work ethics, and the ability to contribute positively to society. The goal is to produce people who are beneficial to their environment and themselves, as well as to build a moral and tolerant society. It is hoped that character education that is planned and involves various parties will produce a young generation who not only has high academic competence but also has good attitudes. In this case, the ability of teachers, parents, and the community to work together is very important (Lestari & Handayani, 2023).

Educators face several significant challenges, particularly in the context of religious education. Three major educational sins that have a significant potential to hinder the growth and development of students' tolerance are intolerance, discrimination, and violence. Intolerance in education often manifests as an inability to accept diversity, whether religious, ethnic, or cultural. This can lead to conflict and tension within the school district. Research conducted by Nada at SMPN 1 Gunung Sari found that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in fostering a high level of tolerance among religious communities. PAI teachers serve not only as educators but also as motivators and evaluators, helping students develop mutual respect and cooperation, regardless of religious differences (Nada Nazopah, 2023).

Discrimination is also a major sin in education that can hinder the development of tolerance. This discrimination can occur in various forms, such as unfair treatment of students of different religions. This research shows that teachers have a significant responsibility to create a fair and inclusive learning environment for all students, regardless of their religion (Wijaya Mulya et al., 2022). Violence, both physical and verbal, is the third major sin in education that can undermine tolerance. This violence often arises as a result of intolerance and discrimination that are not properly addressed. Schools can become sites of symbolic, structural, and physical violence. This violence can occur through the structure and outcomes of education as a social force (Hughes, 2020). It's crucial for educators to optimize strategies to address violence in schools. In Indonesia, tolerance has emerged as a major social issue. Tolerance is a person's behavior or actions that follow rules that allow everyone to respect the way others behave (Nabila Cahyaningtiyas, 2023). According to Sihombing, tolerance is a character value that must be taught to students from an early age (Sihombing, 2023).

Religious Education teachers play a crucial role in fostering a culture of tolerance in the classroom. A teacher's role extends beyond imparting academic knowledge to inspire students' learning and interest in Islamic studies (Hasnawati et al., 2023). These educators have a responsibility to teach not only about religion but also tolerance for diversity. A heterogeneous nation with diverse racial backgrounds, beliefs, nationalities, and cultural traditions must find ways for data to coexist peacefully despite existing differences. Children are accustomed to living and playing with diversity from an early age, and tolerance education helps them understand different ways of thinking and learn different facts (Afriadi, 2020). The power of education lies in the process of life-changing, not only in the cognitive realm, but also in the process of transferring knowledge (Arifin, B., & Huda, H. 2024).

Christian religious education must aim to transform people's lives. This means that if people's hearts are not changed, it is impossible to change their behavior (Legi & Keriapy, 2022). Fostering a character of tolerance between religious communities is part of religious education. This is a component that is considered in addition to students' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. According to Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2013, Article 77 paragraph 1, the goal of religious education is to educate students to become individuals who believe in, fear God Almighty, and possess noble morals, including good character. Faith cannot function and influence human life if it is not implemented in real life (Dewi et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, there has been an increase in cases of intolerance in recent years, both locally and nationally. Differences of opinion can lead to conflict, often resulting in violence or prejudice in society. Many sources claim that Indonesia remains in a state where intolerance is commonplace. This indicates that tolerance is a significant issue that requires immediate attention from various sectors of society, including educational institutions. The Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) stated that the past five years have shown that intolerance remains a serious problem among students in Indonesia. This survey highlights the importance of teachers' role in teaching the values of tolerance and respect for differences. Intolerance is a problem that affects not only the general public but also the educational environment. Examples of intolerance are often seen in educational institutions, which are intended to be places where students learn about ideals, tolerance, and diversity. The severity of this problem is demonstrated by a number of cases that have made headlines in the media. One specific example is when students are subjected to discrimination in some schools because of their race or religion. Based on PPIM research in 2018, more than 50% of Generation Z were exposed to intolerance and radicalism through social media (Wahyudi, 2023), this data shows that intolerance in the educational environment is a serious problem that requires more attention.

The fact that there have been several incidents of intolerance in schools demonstrates the seriousness of this problem and how urgently it needs to be addressed. Examples of religious intolerance in schools include the Bogor area, where students practicing minority religions face discrimination or are barred from participating in certain events. This raises further questions about the state of education, which should be impartial and inclusive. PPIM also examined tolerance education at the Al Mukmin Islamic Boarding School in Ngruki. This research found that the boarding school integrates religious tolerance materials into both its subjects and extracurricular activities. This aims to foster inclusive and non-discriminatory attitudes among students (Nugroho et al., 2022).

Diana Wahyu's research at SMAN 1 Sambit Ponorogo revealed that the efforts of Islamic religious teachers to increase students' tolerance at SMAN 1 Sambit through direct learning efforts, role models, and habits have a positive impact on students and the school environment. Learning in the classroom and student activities outside have the same impact, students respect, respect, and accept differences. Students have a sense of empathy, help each other, create an inclusive learning environment, and reduce conflict (Safitri, 2024). Likewise, research by Cicilia Dyah and her colleagues, efforts to build an attitude of tolerance at SMPK Widyatama include practicing religious activities such as holding prayers attended by all school students, led by student representatives from each religion (Puspitasari et al., 2022). The results of research conducted by Karolina at SD Negeri 1 Sungai Benai, try to teach an attitude of tolerance through routine activities, for example getting students into the habit of shaking hands with teachers when they meet at

school, praying according to each student's beliefs, shaking hands with teachers before leaving school, and also participating in every joint activity. Apart from that, they also provide an example of tolerance for students (Karolina, 2023).

Religious Education teachers at Methodist Elementary School in Banda Aceh, for example, can play an active role in fostering tolerance by embodying these values in the curriculum and daily activities at the school. Of the approximately 100 students, 60% are Christian and 40% are Muslim. However, there are virtually no acts of intolerance among the children at this school. Instead, there is a strong sense of unity among the students. Through efforts by educators, particularly those specializing in Religious Education, to instill principles of tolerance in children from an early age, Religious Education teachers collaborate to create a positive learning environment at Methodist Elementary School in Banda Aceh, where students, regardless of religious background, can feel respected and accepted. This is achieved through various initiatives, including instruction that highlights the value of embracing diversity and participating in joint religious festivals and interfaith dialogue.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that Religious Education plays a crucial role in fostering tolerance among students at Methodist Elementary School in Banda Aceh. Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively examine how teachers' efforts to foster tolerance in schools with diverse student backgrounds. It is hoped that this research will positively impact tolerance education in Indonesia, particularly in elementary schools.

#### Literature Review

Religious education plays a strategic role in shaping students' character and morals, including instilling values of tolerance amidst diversity. Several previous studies have confirmed that religious education plays a crucial role in fostering mutual respect between religious communities in the school environment. For example, research by Nuryana (2021) shows that Islamic Religious Education teachers play a role in fostering tolerance through learning activities that instill values of compassion, empathy, and cooperation among students of different faiths. Similarly, Sitorus (2020) highlights the role of Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering tolerant character through a contextual approach and moral role modeling in the learning process.

Furthermore, Rahmawati (2022) revealed that interfaith activities in schools, such as communal prayers and celebrations of religious holidays, can be effective in strengthening social relationships among students. These studies emphasize the important role of religious education teachers in fostering an inclusive and harmonious atmosphere in schools. However, most previous research has focused solely on the role of one party, either Islamic Religious Education teachers or Christian Religious Education teachers, without examining the collaboration between the two within the context of formal education.

Therefore, the study entitled "Efforts of Islamic and Christian Religious Education Teachers in Forming Attitudes of Tolerance" presents a significant research gap compared to previous studies. This study not only discusses how religious teachers from one faith build tolerance, but also explores the synergy and interfaith interactions between Islamic and Christian Religious Education teachers in cultivating values of tolerance in religiously diverse elementary schools. This collaborative approach provides a new

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dimension to the understanding of tolerance education, as it displays the concrete practice of tolerant character formation that is not only taught verbally, but also realized through interfaith collaboration in the educational space. Thus, this study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a tolerance-based multicultural education model in Indonesia.

#### Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a field research design. Qualitative research means studying phenomena holistically by studying phenomena specifically in each case because the characteristics of the problems studied can vary. This research location was conducted at the Methodist Elementary School in Banda Aceh, with a focus on the efforts of Islamic and Christian Religious Education teachers in fostering an attitude of tolerance among students. The data collection method in this research involves several techniques, namely documentation, observation, and interviews (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Observations were carried out by observing the activities of Islamic Religious Education and Christian teachers, both during the learning process and interactions outside of learning. Observers will note how teachers can apply the values of tolerance in learning and daily activities in the school environment.

Interviews were conducted through question-and-answer sessions with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Christian teachers. The questions focused on the strategies and approaches teachers use when teaching tolerance values, as well as the challenges faced in the process. Documentation was conducted by exploring institutional documents, such as the school's vision and mission, the implemented curriculum, and learning documents related to the theme of tolerance. These documents serve as important sources of information that support understanding of the school's efforts to foster tolerance. In qualitative research, research data can only be declared valid if there is no discrepancy between the observed facts and those reported by the researcher. This study employed data analysis methods with stages of reduction, presentation, and verification. To test the authenticity of the data, triangulation techniques were used, including method triangulation (comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation), time triangulation (collecting data at different times), and source triangulation (comparing data from various sources).

#### **Results & Discussion**

a. Practice of Religious Tolerance at Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School

Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School, located in Banda Aceh, is an elementary school that has religious diversity among both teachers and students. This school applies a very strong principle of tolerance . In daily interactions, students at Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School demonstrate an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation for differences. Religious education teachers teach about the importance of tolerance in religion, and respect for the differences in beliefs of their friends .

Student data from grades 1 to 6 at Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School

Religious Data of Students of Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School			
Class	Number of	Islam	Kristen
	Students		
Class 1	17	10	7
Grade 2	8	1	7
Grade 3	20	12	8
Grade 4	21	7	14
Grade 5	11	6	5
Grade 6	22	4	18
Amount	99	40	59

Data source: Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School

The number of students at the Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School is 99 students, 40 of whom are Muslim and 59 of whom are Christian . The findings made by the researcher show that students at the Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School interact well despite their religious differences . Some practices of tolerance include joint activities , joint celebrations and also learning related to tolerance.

An interview with the principal of Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School stated, "We believe that education is not only about academics, but also about character. With this diversity, we strive to build an inclusive environment. We support activities that involve all students so they can get to know and respect each other."

The implementation of tolerance in schools must be carried out with the aim of respecting the religious choices of each student, quoted from Meidita Arinanda's research regarding the implementation of tolerance in schools, one of the efforts made by trying to create an attitude of tolerance for students at SMAN Metodist Banda Aceh, PAI teachers give freedom for non- Muslim students to not attend religious lessons, non-Muslim students may remain in class or read books in the library. (Meidita Arinanda, 2022)

# **b.** Efforts of Islamic Religious Education and Christian Teachers in Forming an Attitude of Tolerance at Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School

#### 1. Classroom Learning

Teachers need to use an approach that avoids religious bias. The curriculum at Methodist Elementary School in Banda Aceh encompasses diverse perspectives and experiences from various religions, including Christianity and Islam. This helps students understand that different religions are part of a rich culture that can enrich their lives. Religion teachers can emphasize common values such as compassion and mutual respect, which are fundamental to all religions. This way, students can understand that despite their differing beliefs, they still share many shared values that can serve as guidelines.

Religious education teachers also encourage students to respect each other's customs and traditions, such as prayer times or dress codes. For example, Muslim students have a specific time for prayer, while Christian students attend church

services. Respect for these customs fosters empathy and mutual understanding . Religious education teachers play a crucial role in the learning process , particularly in shaping character and morals from an early age. As educators, religious education teachers not only provide religious teachings but also serve as role models for practicing religious values and good morals. Religious education teachers help students understand spiritual concepts , ethics, and behaviors that can be applied in everyday life, such as honesty , discipline, mutual assistance, and respect for differences.

Religious Education teachers actively use classroom discussions to emphasize the importance of respecting differences. Using group discussions or collaborative methods, students can learn to work together despite their differing beliefs. During these sessions, students are encouraged to engage in dialogue about their daily experiences related to religious diversity and are taught the importance of peaceful coexistence. Islamic Education teachers often exemplify the Asmaul Husana (Asmaul Husana), which teaches compassion, while Christian Education teachers introduce the value of compassion in Christianity . Through these discussions , students are expected to concretely understand the concept of tolerance and apply it to social relationships . This provides an opportunity for them to learn to understand each other's perspectives and develop mutual trust and cooperation.

According to Hana Rohmaningrum, a Christian religion teacher at Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School, "we teach both Muslim and Christian students to respect each other 's different beliefs and forbid them from bad-mouthing the religions and beliefs of their fellow students."

# 2. Joint Religious Activities

The school also facilitates communal religious activities involving students from various faiths . The primary focus of these communal religious activities is to emphasize the values of tolerance embraced by Islam and Christianity , such as peace , compassion, mutual respect, honesty, and caring. Thus, these activities do not impose specific religious rituals or practices , but rather focus on values that all students can internalize . Teachers can engage students in general reflection or contemplation , which encourages self - understanding and respect for others . These activities can be conducted without involving specific religious prayers , but still encourage students to reflect and be grateful for life.

It's important to promote respect for differences in faith. For example, during certain religious celebrations, students are encouraged to exchange greetings with their peers. During national celebrations like International Day of Tolerance, teachers encourage students to decorate the classroom with posters conveying messages of tolerance. These activities are intended to familiarize students with diversity and foster an openness to various religious traditions, creating a harmonious atmosphere at school.

According to Musriah as the principal of SD Methodist Banda Aceh, "joint religious activities can foster an attitude of tolerance and respect for students of different religions, for example yesterday during the commemoration of National Santri Day, not only Muslim students carried out activities at school, but Christian students also participated in celebrating the activity by wearing koko shirts or similar

, and vice versa when there is a commemoration of Christian religious days". Joint religious activities are indeed needed in schools to foster an attitude of tolerance towards others, quoted from the research of Cicilia Dyah and her friends, one of the practices at SMPK Widyatama Batu, religious activities include interfaith prayers attended by the entire school community and led by student representatives from each religion in the school (Puspitasari et al., 2022).

# 3. Daily Habits

Teachers implement daily habits that encourage students to respect each other. For example, every morning, students pray according to their respective religious teachings before class begins, and teachers always provide opportunities for all students to pray according to their beliefs. This habit not only demonstrates the importance of prayer but also teaches students to respect each other's differences. Teachers teach students to respect personal habits that may differ due to religious differences . For example, at mealtimes , Christian students may be able to eat at any time, while Muslim students may not eat during fasting. Cultivating this attitude of respect for differences in customs teaches students to be tolerant in practical, everyday matters .

Teachers also encourage students to greet their peers with greetings from their respective religions, so they can learn to respect each other's religious cultures. During the learning process, teachers conduct discussions that teach students to express their opinions politely and listen to others' perspectives. In an inclusive discussion environment, students can learn to accept differences without judgment or feeling threatened. This is crucial for cultivating respect for differences in thought and belief.

According to Nia Wijayanti as a PAI teacher at SD Methodist Banda Aceh, "I always start before learning with a prayer together, regardless of the religion that the students adhere to , we also often have discussions together about the value of tolerance in everyday life with the students." In line with the research of Iin and Ismaraidha, the efforts made by PAI teachers in SMA Gajah Mada Binjai students are by fostering an attitude of religious tolerance specifically in PAI learning and avoiding comparing one another to maintain solidarity among students of different beliefs. The main task of a teacher is to help students understand what religious tolerance is and teach religious values , especially the value of tolerance. (Alfiani & Ismaraidha, 2024).

Similarly, research by Agung Prasetyo on students at SMA N 1 Seputih Rahman found that Islamic religious education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Seputih Rahman strive to instill religious tolerance in their students. The results showed that Islamic religious education teachers understand and care about their students. Furthermore, they also serve as role models, provide habits, and differentiate (Prasetyo, 2024).

# 4. Integrasi Nilai Toleransi Dalam Materi Ajar

Teachers integrate the values of tolerance into religious studies in creative ways, such as using videos or posters depicting harmonious situations between religions. For example, Islamic and Christian Religious Education teachers invite students to watch a video about the importance of respecting differences and then discuss

how they can apply tolerance in everyday life at school. Furthermore, the teaching materials are supplemented with examples from religious figures who emphasize the importance of peace and harmony. This enriches students' understanding by aiming to recognize the importance of interfaith tolerance.

The results of an interview with a Christian teacher at the Banda Aceh Methodist Elementary School, he said argues that "I always link lessons to the values of tolerance. For example, when discussing stories in the Bible, I emphasize the importance of respecting others, including those with different beliefs. In addition, I also invite students to discuss historical figures known for their high tolerance. Quoted from Septyana's research, the integration of multicultural values is a strategic and important step in building an attitude of tolerance among students. Through this approach, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum not only educates theological aspects, but also internalizes values such as respect for diversity, equality, and harmony in everyday life. The practical implementation of this integration involves inclusive teaching methods and relevant learning materials, proven effective in increasing students' understanding of the importance of tolerance in a pluralistic society (Tentiasih et al., 2022).

#### 5. Evaluation Pemantuan Verkala

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Religious Education (PAK) teachers gradually monitor students' attitude development through informal evaluations. At the end of each month, teachers hold a reflection session where students are asked to share their experiences in practicing tolerance. This reflection provides an opportunity for students to share and learn from each other's experiences, as well as providing feedback for teachers to adjust teaching strategies if necessary.

The results of the interview with the Islamic Religious Education teacher, he explained "My hope is to teach students to have a high principle of tolerance, namely not only understanding the concept of tolerance, on the other hand so that they can apply it in their daily lives , so that future generations can appreciate differences and can live in harmony with anyone regardless of who they are or from different religious backgrounds .

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the data analysis and research discussion, it can be concluded that the practice of religious tolerance at SD Methodist Banda Aceh has been running well through various strategies designed and implemented by Islamic and Christian Religious Education teachers. Both religious teachers play a crucial role in instilling values of tolerance through a learning approach that emphasizes the importance of mutual respect, compassion, and honesty among students, even those with differing beliefs. These efforts take place not only in the classroom but also in various school activities that involve all students in an inclusive manner.

One concrete example of cultivating the value of tolerance is seen in joint religious activities held at school. These activities serve as a means to strengthen mutual respect and togetherness among students. Interfaith participation in the commemoration of National Santri Day and the celebration of Christian holidays serves as a concrete symbol of the practice of tolerance that exists within the school environment. Furthermore, daily

habits are also an important part of the process of developing a tolerant character. Teachers guide students to discuss politely, listen to the opinions of their peers, and accept differences without judgment, thus creating a harmonious learning environment.

The values of tolerance are also integrated into teaching materials through various learning media, such as educational videos and stories of religious figures emphasizing peace and harmony. These efforts are reinforced by regular evaluation and monitoring by teachers, for example through monthly reflection sessions to assess the development of students' tolerance attitudes. Overall, the steps taken at SD Methodist Banda Aceh demonstrate that religious education can provide a strong foundation in shaping a generation that not only understands the values of tolerance theoretically but also applies them effectively in everyday life to create a harmonious society.

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