

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION,  
DIVERSITY, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION:  
A Case Study of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia  
Lab School in Building a Culture of Tolerance and  
Interreligious Dialogue

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**Abstract:** Building a culture of tolerance and interreligious dialogue is one of the important agendas for creating religious harmony in various contexts. This study analyzes the concept of religious education and conflict resolution initiated by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia Lab School in building a culture of tolerance and interfaith dialogue among Muslim and non-Muslim students. UPI Lab School is an educational institution with diverse students from different religious backgrounds. This research used a qualitative approach and descriptive case study method by collecting data through interviews, observation, and documentation. The data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman procedure framework through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The result showed several findings: 1) the internalization of religious moderation is manifested in the school's curriculum and learning process, 2) the learning model is based on freedom and non-coercion and builds a moderate and dynamic discussion space, 3) the school carries out conflict resolution and inter-religious dialogue by communicating with non-Muslim parents and external parties to avoid misunderstanding, and 4) the strengthening of religious identity is built through open discussion based on freedom of opinion for every student, without any form of coercion and discrimination.

**Keywords:** Religious education; conflict resolution; tolerance; interfaith dialogue.

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**Introduction**

The role of religious education in a curriculum is often associated with promoting tolerance and celebrating diversity between religions and cultures.<sup>1</sup> However, teaching Islam in schools faces challenges for teachers and stakeholders who encourage their students to engage in religious conversation through open inquiry. Religious education is often considered controversial and has formed opinions about religion that are stereotyped, racist, or misinterpreted in the media.<sup>2</sup> In 2016, Alexander Carlile surveyed 220 religious individuals from England and Ireland. His analysis showed that religious tolerance values could be developed in modern society. Although religious intolerance is our reality, he argued that it does not rule out the possibility that a culture of tolerance and building spaces for dialogue among religious people can be realized through structured and planned efforts.<sup>3</sup> This tolerance issue has become a serious discussion among scholars in recent decades.<sup>4</sup> One of the main ideas

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn Revell, "Religious Education, Conflict and Diversity: An Exploration of Young Children's Perceptions of Islam," *Educational Studies* 36, no. 2 (2010): 207–215.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> A Carlile, "Religion as a Source of Tolerance and Intolerance: Exploring the Dichotomy," *International Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Learning* 10, no. 2 (2020): 89–104.

<sup>4</sup> C Williams, "Religion, Conflict, Violence, and Tolerance in Global Perspectives: The Isa/Rc22 Abuja 2012 Conference and Its Contribution to the Politology of Religion," *Politics and Religion Journal* 6, no. 1 (2012): 163–168; C C Njoku, "Religion

to counteract problems of radicalism, terrorism, and extremism is religious moderation.<sup>5</sup>

This research explores how religious education, diversity, and conflict resolution become possible considering that religion is an axis, the centrality of a source of calm and peace for a pluralistic society. Indonesia University of Education Laboratory School is an open educational institution that accepts students from all over Indonesia with different religious backgrounds. The meeting of religious homogeneity in one learning community is feared to trigger tension among students. In addition, some also argue that the globalization of education, technological acceleration, and the influence of social media add conflict potential to cause friction with ideological differences as motives. However, we see that the argument is not necessarily correct. Throughout the study, we found that this institution has successfully navigated and built good management in propagating religious moderation and tolerance to minimize the seeds of conflict. Hence, this research is significant as it analyzes: 1) the model of religious education in strengthening religious identity in both minority and majority conditions, 2) the way religious teachers demonstrate the concept of tolerance towards students of different religions, bearing in mind that negative stereotypes always appear in the theological context of the teacher, 3) a religious learning model that is friendly to students in conflict resolution, 4) the role of teachers in navigating the wishes of non-Muslim parents' expectation for their children.

In Indonesia, the diversity of ethnicities, races, religions, and differences in language and life values often lead to various conflicts. Global modernization has given rise to anxiety among religious leaders regarding the tension between modern socio-cultural contexts

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in a Secular State and State Religion in Practice: Assessing Religious Influence, Tolerance, and National Stability in Nigeria and Malaysia,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 13, no. 39 (2014): 203–235.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Irfan Helmy, Achmad Darajat Jumadil Kubro, and Muhamad Ali, “The Understanding of Islamic Moderation (Wasatīyyah Al-Islam) and the Hadiths on Inter-Religious Relations in the Javanese Pesantrens,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 377–401; Faizah Zakaria, *Review of Nur Amali Ibrahim, Improvisational Islam: Indonesian Youth in a Time of Possibility*, *Contemporary Islam*, vol. 14 (Contemporary Islam, 2019); Syaiful Arif, “Moderasi Beragama Dalam Diskursus Negara Islam: Pemikiran KH Abdurrahman Wahid,” *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 13, no. 1 (2020): 73–104.

and religion.<sup>6</sup> Historically, the first act of terrorism that shocked Indonesia was the Bali Bombing on October 12, 2002, which caused severe damage. Two hundred-two people died in the tragedy. Then there was the Thamrin Bombing. The act took place in the area of MH. Thamrin Street on January 14, 2016. Then there was the Surabaya Bombing. The bombs exploded three Surabaya churches near the entrance to the Surabaya Metropolitan Police Force, East Java, on May 13, 2018. Other terrorism was the Sidoarjo Flats bombing and the Tugu Kartosuro Pospam bombing committed by individuals calling themselves Muslims. The acts of terrorism above triggered the government to strengthen the idea of moderation in religion as a preventive solution to avoid the spread of radicalism and extremism.

### Literature Review

The trend of religious moderation resonates with the increase of brutality, anarchism, and acts of terrorism intensified by extreme groups in the name of Islam. Globalization, modernization, and technological developments provide everyone easy access to online media, which is seen as a factor causing the rise of radical movements both nationally and internationally. Borrowing from the functionalism theory proposed by the sociologists Robert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Parsons, and Merton, the condition of society as a system consists of structures or parts that are significantly related that function and operate in harmony.<sup>7</sup> Relating this functionalist theory to the global emergent religious moderation movement, the basic assumption is to examine the emergence of extremist movements such as Salafi Jihadi. According to Fuad's research which is also found in Bruinessen's investigation in his article "*Ghazwul fikri* or Arabisation? Indonesian Muslim Responses to Globalization", Salafi Jihadi movement with their Islamism first appeared in the public

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<sup>6</sup> Nancy Ammerman, *No Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Ayala Fader, *Mitzvah Girls: Bringing up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); John O'Brien, *Keeping It Halal: The Everyday Lives of Muslim American Teenage Boys* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017); Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Marc Olshan, Donald, and Kraybill, *The Amish Struggle with Modernity* (Hanover: Univeristy Press of New England, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Henry L Tischler, *Introduction to Sosiology* (USA: Wadsworth, 2011).

sphere around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

Diverse ethnicities, races, religions, languages, and life values in Indonesia often lead to conflicts and trigger the birth of radicalism. Modernization has given rise to anxiety among religious leaders regarding the tension between the modern socio-cultural context and religion.<sup>9</sup> Indonesia is also known as a country that upholds its religious values and teachings. Pancasila is the nation's philosophy that unites diversity under the auspices of the nation-state and becomes a positive force to create unity and oneness. The emergence of extremist movements in Indonesia, accompanied by brutal actions, strengthened after the collapse of the Soeharto regime in 1998. The incident of the massacre of Indonesian clerics was followed by the tragedy in Poso in 1998 and the tragedy in Ambon in 1999. Then, the terrorist act reoccurred in the Bali Bombing on October 12, 2002, which caused severe damage and an international boycott of Indonesian tourism activities, resulting in a decline in the country's foreign exchange earnings. There were also the Thamrin Bombing taking place in the area of Thamrin Street (January 14, 2016), the Surabaya Bombing (May 13, 2018), the Sidoarjo Flats bombing, and the Tugu Kartosuro Pospam bombing. After the bombings, the Indonesian government began propagating the concept of religious moderation to the public.

The word moderation can be interpreted as abandoning any elements of violence or extremism, balancing beliefs and morals, and having good character when treating other individuals and state institutions. Moderation is a form of adaptation, a desire to cooperate or compromise, and a focus on finding interests or ideological tools

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<sup>8</sup> Ai Fatimah Nur Fuad, "Da'wa and Politics: Lived Experiences of the Female Islamists in Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 14, no. 1 (April 1, 2020): 19–47; Samuli Schielke and Late Th, "Hegemonic Encounters: Criticism of Saints-Day Festivals and The Formation of Modern Islam In Late 19th And Early 20th Century Egypt," *Die Welt des Islams* 47 (2007): 3–4; P. G. Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 2007); P. G. Mandaville, *Islam and Politics*, 2nd editio. (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Ammerman, *No Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*; Fader, *Mitzvah Girls: Bringing up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn*; John O'Brien, *Keeping It Halal: The Everyday Lives of Muslim American Teenage Boys*; Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*; Olshan, Donald, and Kraybill, *The Amish Struggle with Modernity*.

to create moderation.<sup>10</sup> Moderation also means something progressive and non-violent, while government and violence are part of the ongoing stages of moderation practice. Regarding religion, moderation is interpreted as a kind of adaptation, a willingness to cooperate or compromise and focus on discovering which interests or ideological attributes can make it happen.<sup>11</sup> However, moderation seems to be aimed exclusively at Muslims. In Western media and political discourse, “moderation and moderate” often denotes calls and demands specifically for Muslims and rarely addressed to other religions. Theoretically, scholars often use moderation as lecture material to describe Islam’s ideology. Besides that, moderation is also used as a guide for policymakers to fight against narratives of Islamic terrorism.<sup>12</sup>

Muslim scholars widely associate moderation in Islam with the Arabic word *wasāta* or *wasatīyyah* derived from the Quran and interpreted as a comprehensive concept or method of moderation in Islam. The word *wasatīyyah* is terminologically used as a theoretical and practical concept in several Muslim countries, especially in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam.<sup>13</sup> Etymologically, *wasatīyyah* is derived from the base word *wasāta* (middle), meaning *al-‘adl* (fair) or a middle position between two sides. Meanwhile, Ibn ‘Asyur interprets it as Islamic values built on truth, justice/balance, and moderation. The study of Islamic moderation has developed into various dimensions and approaches, previously only discussed in the field of Quranic interpretation. Islamic moderation has now been approached from multiple areas, such as linguistics, socio-psychology, Islamic development, and Islamic capital market, within the scope of the religious context and socio-political strategy.

The famous Islamic words *rahmat lil-‘ālamīn* justify that moderation is the Quranic call for humans to have an attitude of tolerance, mutual respect, and respect for others.<sup>14</sup> Yusuf al-

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<sup>10</sup> Murat Somer, “Moderation of Religious and Secular Politics, a Country’s ‘Centre’ and Democratization,” *Democratization* 21, no. 2 (2014): 244–267.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal, “Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 213–241.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibnu Jarir Ath-Thabari, “At-Tafsīr Ath-Thabari: Jāmi’ Al-Bayān ‘An Ta’wīl Al-Qurān” (Lebanon Beirut: Muassasah Ar-Risalah, 1994); Muhammad Sayyid

Qardhawi, a contemporary charismatic cleric, stated that Islam rejects various forms of brutality, anarchism, radicalism, and terrorism. According to him, Islam is a religion that is filled with love.<sup>15</sup> It safeguards individual rights. It unites, not divides, a faith that brings people closer together, not drawing a distance. Islam essentially teaches the principle of religious moderation.<sup>16</sup>

This article analyzes the role of UPI Lab School in grounding the principle of religious moderation in its learning process where students have different religions. According to some experts, religious differences trigger tension among its adherents. However, we found that the students live in harmony, respect each other, and have an attitude of tolerance. Hence, we want to explore further how this UPI Lab School can make it happen. In addition, to the best of the author's knowledge, there has never been a case study on this topic.

## Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the concept of religious education and conflict resolution built by UPI Lab School in creating a culture of tolerance and interfaith dialogue among Muslim and non-Muslim students. According to Cresswell's definition, the qualitative approach is an approach to search, explore, and understand a central phenomenon. Qualitative research is based on the post-positivism philosophy, viewing social reality as something holistic/whole, dynamically complex, full of meaning, and interactive symbol relationships. It aims to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspective. In this case, Participants were interviewed, observed, and asked to provide data, opinions, thoughts, and perceptions. Understanding is obtained through an analysis of the

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Thanthawi, "At-Tafsir Al-Wasith Lil Quran Al-Karim" (Maidan Ahmad: As-Sa'adah, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Amir Maliki Abitolkha and Muhamad Basyrul Muvid, "The Education of Love and its Relevance to Islam as a Religion of Compassion: A Study on the Concept of Mahabbah of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah," *Religio Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 11(1), (2021): 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.15642/religio.v11i1.1659>.

<sup>16</sup> Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Kalimat Fi Al-Wasathiyah Al-Islamiyyah Wa Ma'alimuba* (Mesir Kairo: Cairo: Dar As-Syuruq, 2008); Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Fiqh Al-Wasathiyah Al-Islamiyyah Wa At-Tajdid Ma'alimu Wa Manaratu* (Mesir Kairo: Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2009), <https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/5066>; Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah Al-Islamiyyah Bayn Al-Ikhtilaf Al-Mashru' Wa Al-Tafarruq Al-Madbmum* (Mesir Kairo: Cairo: Dar As-Syuruq, 2001).

various interrelationship of the participants and through decoding the “participant meanings” of situations and events. The meaning of the participants includes their feelings, beliefs, ideas, thoughts, and activities. Therefore, it is appropriate that this study uses a qualitative approach.

This research employs a descriptive case study method because its orientation and characteristics are casuistic and unique. In this case, it investigates the concept of religious education and conflict resolution built by UPI Lab School in creating a culture of tolerance and interfaith dialogue among Muslim and non-Muslim students. The descriptive method used in this study examines the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present that align with the objectives of this study. It aims to make a systematic, factual, and accurate description, picture, or painting of the facts, characteristics, and relationships between the investigated phenomena to be interpreted appropriately. In other words, following Whiteney’s definition, the descriptive method is finding facts with the correct interpretation. This research studies the problems in society and the procedures that apply in certain situations, including relationships, activities, attitudes, views, ongoing processes, and the effects of a phenomenon.

The research location for this study is UPI Lab School, located on Sanjaya Guru Street No 3, Bumi Siliwangi Setiabudhi, Bandung, West Java. We studied UPI Lab School because it is an open educational institution that accepts students from Indonesia with different religious backgrounds in one learning community. We found that this school is unique and attractive to implement the research. The research participants were PAI teachers, school principals, students, and parents of students in the school environment. The selection of the participants was based on the premise that they were a source of data capable of providing information regarding the focus and formulation of the problems in this study.

Two main things affect the quality of research results: the quality of research instruments and data collection. In qualitative research, the quality is based on validity and reliability, and the quality of data collection is related to the accuracy of the methods used in collecting data. In this research type, the instrument or research tool is the researcher. To ensure the quality of researchers as instruments, the research team conducted in-depth studies of theory and scientific



developments and research findings related to religious moderation. Team discussions are held regularly to build a common perspective on the research objectives. Furthermore, from the point of view of methods or data collection techniques, the data is collected from interviews, questionnaires, observation, and a combination of the three. Data collection techniques are attempts to limit research by gathering information through observation and structured and unstructured interviews.

This study conducted observations following the steps proposed by Creswell. The observation steps are: (1) selecting the activities to be studied, (2) slowly observing the activity/object under study, (3) identifying the object, time, and duration of observation, (4) determining the role of researchers in observation, (5) following the observation to completion; (6) recording important things during observation, (7) recording important information during observation with tools, (8) recording field notes descriptively and reflectively, (9) introducing oneself to the object of research without disturbing the naturalness of the activity under study, and (10) applying ethics according to the prevailing culture during observation.

Meanwhile, this study also conducted interviews following the steps of Creswell. The interview steps are: (1) identifying the respondents, (2) determining the type of interview to be used, (3) recording the interview process using a tape recorder, (4) recording, (5) choosing a conducive place, (6) the consent of both parties to the object of the interview during the interview, (7) planned but flexible interviews, and (8) conducting an in-depth interview to obtain additional information.

We conducted data analysis comprehensively and continuously before the field study, during the field study, and after the completion of the field study. Data analysis before entering the field was to obtain initial information regarding the problem to be studied and to determine the focus of the research. In this study, the authors adopted data analysis techniques according to Miles and Huberman, which divided them into three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

At the data reduction stage, the researcher summarized, chose the main things, focused on the crucial things, and looked for themes and patterns from all the data collected and recorded in field notes to obtain a clearer picture. Data condensation was carried out on all raw

data continuously during data gathering. The data condensation was conducted by carefully reading all the information in the raw data found during the research process and then marking the relevant information according to the problem formulation and research questions. The tagged information was then separated and entered into a specially-made finding table based on a specific code.

After the data was condensed, the next researcher displayed the data. The researcher worked on the data through in-depth analysis of the reduced data and described it as narrative text to obtain a storyline that can be understood following the formulation of the problems. The data description was written sequentially and systematically according to the order of the research questions in the research findings. The findings of this study were then discussed and analyzed by comparing the research findings with the theory relevant to the research data.

The next stage is to draw conclusions and verify. Conclusions are researchers' findings in the form of descriptions or descriptions of the meaning of an object that did not exist before or are still unclear. In this study, conclusions were made in response to the formulation of the problems asked.

## **Research Results and Discussion**

Following the formulation of the problem, there are three essential research findings related to the concept of religious education and conflict resolution initiated by UPI Lab School in building a culture of tolerance and interfaith dialogue among Muslim students and non-Muslims. Firstly, the effort of UPI Lab School in building interreligious dialogue and navigating religious tensions and conflicts between students was carried out through the internalization of religious moderation values applied in the curriculum and materials of PAI in schools. Secondly, to create a culture of tolerance among students, the school developed learning models that foster a tolerant attitude. Thirdly, to strengthen student religious identity, the school set a model for handling conflict resolution and diversity between minorities and the majority. These three findings are explained in more detail as follows.

### a. **Internalization of Religious Moderation Values in the Curriculum and Materials of Islamic Religious Education at UPI Lab School**

Before conducting learning, the teachers carried out a lesson plan beforehand to achieve learning success. The plan formulated the goals of the learning activity, methods used to assess the achievement of the goals, the material, and the media and method to deliver the materials. The material was included in the plan to support learning success. According to a Lab School teacher, Islamic religious education material with the theme “noble morals” was given to grade XI to support the realization of a moderate and tolerant attitude among students. In the book, the noble morals are divided into two components: the morals related to tolerance, including the teaching to respect fellow friends and the morals of doing good to teachers and parents.

Muslims believe the prophet’s and the apostles’ mission is to perfect human morality from low morality. Islamic scholar Sheikh Abdurrahman Al-Arefe, in his book *Istamti’ bi Hayātik* explained that the prophet Muhammad is a perfect role model. Even in a *hadīth*, he is described as if his ethics and morals are interpretations of the “running” Quran. In *hadīth* literature, there are many virtues of having good morals, including pursuing happiness in this world and the hereafter.<sup>17</sup> According to an education expert, Muhammad Rawwas, a good teacher has at least eight main characteristics: compassion, patience, intelligence, humility, gentleness, a forgiving attitude, strong character, and implementing the *tarbiyah al-Islāmiyah* strategy.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the government is also responsible for fighting moral degradation. In this case, much research has studied the need to improve and strengthen the nation’s character by growing positive values.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Muhammad bin Abdurrahman Al-Arefe, *Istamti’ Bi Hayātika Funūn At-Ta’āmul Ma’a An-Nās Fī Dzīlli As-Sirah An-Nabawīyah* (Saudi Arabia: Sarikah Muslim: Saudi Arabia: Sarikah Muslim, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Muhamad Rawwas, “Dirasah Tahliliyyah Li Syahshiyati Ar-Rasul Muhammad” (Lebanon Beirut: Dar An-Nafais, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> Ahmad Yasar Ramdan and Puji Yanti Fauziah, “Peran Orang Tua Dan Guru Dalam Mengembangkan Nilai-Nilai Karakter Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar,” *Premiere Educandum: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar dan Pembelajaran* 9, no. 2 (2019): 100; Badrudin Badrudin, “The Management of Strengthening the Mosque-Based Religious Character Education,” *Nadwa* 13, no. 2 (2020): 179; Ibadullah Malawi, “Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Pembelajaran Dalam Mata Pelajaran Di

According to one of the school teachers, students were trained to have a sense of reverence or respect for others to foster a tolerant attitude. According to him, getting used to *ta'zim* attitude (respect for others) is necessary, especially when students are already involved in society and socially interact with other people. Everyone wants to be respected and valued. Therefore, teachers trained Muslim and non-Muslim students to be respectful toward other people, especially older ones. This habituation process is believed to accelerate the occurrence of harmony among students with diverse beliefs. Respect for others is the first step in realizing religious tolerance. At UPI High School, teachers must guide students who have different beliefs. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning activities, teachers gave freedom to their non-Muslim students to choose whether they want to participate in the learning process. The school upholds the freedom principle and ensures no one is forced to take the PAI class.<sup>20</sup> However, according to several PAI teachers, there had never been a non-Muslim student who opted out during the class. Sometimes non-Muslim students in the discussion session were actively involved in asking questions, which shows an indicator of mutual respect. According to the teachers, good and proper coaching will support successful learning. Preparing good material content and an intense coaching process help create and foster a tolerant attitude among students.

According to Al-Qardhawi, knowledge and understanding must be built on two main characteristics: *al-shumul* (universal) and *al-takamul* (complementary). According to him, this concept must be included in the areas of *'uqidah* and *shari'ah*, science and worship,

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Sekolah Dasar,” *Premiere Educandum : Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar dan Pembelajaran* 3, no. 01 (2016): 1–12; Umi Zulfa, “Model of Islamic Religion Education 435 Based on Islam Nusantara on College,” *Nadwa Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 1 (2018): 1–12; Abdul Jalil, “Karakter Pendidikan Untuk Membentuk Pendidikan Karakter,” *Nadwa* 6, no. 2 (2016): 175; Lian G. Otaya, “Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Nilai,” *Nadwa* 8, no. 1 (2014): 75.

<sup>20</sup> In the practical realm, the experience of FKUB could be an example of lesson learned for students to be noticed. Ahmad Faqih, “The Role of Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) for Religious Harmony and the Rights of Freedom of Religion or Belief (Forb),” *Religio Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 11(1), (2021): 65–82. <https://doi.org/10.15642/religio.v11i1.1662>.

insight and morals, the world, and religion.<sup>21</sup> He described that believing in the Quran and the Sunna in implementing *shari'ah* solves the complexity of social problems. Al-Qardhawi emphasized that a comprehensive understanding that aligns with *maqāsid shari'ah* (goals of religion) will bring about a solution that enlightens, not drowns.<sup>22</sup> Islamic *shari'ah* is a way of life that harmonizes time and place conditions.<sup>23</sup> Islam is a religion that motivates its adherents to do good deeds based on the following principles which are *al-shumūl* (universal), *al-tanawwu'* (diversity), *al-istimrār* (continuity), *al-kebulūs li al-kehayr* (sincere intentions to do good).<sup>24</sup> The notions of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism ideology are formed due to a wrong understanding of the Quran and Hadith. Therefore, proper education is necessary on how Islam encourages everyone to understand the religion in a *ka>ffab* (comprehensive) way so that it will reduce the outbreak of radicalism.<sup>25</sup>

### **b. UPI Lab School Learning Model in Growing Tolerance**

Almost every class has non-Muslim students from Catholics, Protestants, and Hindus. In the PAI learning process, the teacher gave freedom to these students. It was permissible to take a break outside or participate in learning activities. The school ensured that the students felt comfortable, and the teacher did not force students to attend the PAI learning process in class. They respected each other, teachers, Muslim students, and non-Muslim students. We observed that interreligious conflict among students had never occurred in the school. Instead, the UPI school becomes a piece of evidence for a successful tolerance education in schools.

According to a PAI teacher, some factors can affect students' tolerance in the learning process, including internal and external factors. Internal factors include the condition within the student himself, where each student can regulate his emotions and empathize

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<sup>21</sup> Al-Qardhawi, *Fiqh Al-Wasathiyah Al-Islamiyyah Wa At-Tajdid Ma'alimu Wa Manāritu*.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Syari'atu Al-Islamiyyah Shalibatun Lil Tatbiq Fi Kulli Zaman Wa Makān* (Mesir Kairo: Cairo: Dar As-Shahwah Lil Nasyr Wa Tauji', 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Ushūl Al-'Amal Al-Khairi Fi Al-Islām Fi Dhawī An-Nushūsh Wa Al-Maqāsid As-Shari'ah* (Mesir Kairo: Cairo: Dar As-Syuruq, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Ijtihād Fi As-Shari'ah Al-Islamiyyah* (Cairo: Dar Al-Qalam, 1996).

with his friends. In contrast, external factors are the factors of teachers at school, parents of students, and their friends. The school's teachers explained the role of the environment in which the students cultivate the attitude of tolerance could affect how they behave in both external and internal conditions. UPI Lab School, led by the principal, stakeholders, and teachers, makes efforts to create a safe and peaceful environment that can realize religious moderation values in the school. In Arabic literature, a slogan says *al-Insān ibn biatib* meaning that humans are the product of their environment. If the environment is good, the person tends to have a positive character, but if the environment is terrible, the character also tends to be negative.<sup>26</sup>

According to Dila, an 11th-grade student at UPI High School, when students communicated with other Muslim and non-Muslim friends, they respected each other and did not talk about things that could offend them. They also exchanged opinions about good attitudes taught in their respective religions. Likewise, teachers provided opportunities for non-Muslim students to express opinions and ask questions about the material presented during PAI learning in class. Thus, the PAI learning process at UPI High School had been directed towards cultivating an attitude of tolerance practiced by teachers and students in the learning process inside and outside the classroom.

The UPI High School is one of the regular schools with no restriction requiring their students to be Muslim. Hence, the students come from various religions, and the school is implementing a strategy to foster tolerance among the students. Based on the interview with one of the PAI teachers, there are three learning models used by UPI High School to grow tolerance:

- 1) One of the learning processes uses a group model. The teachers play their role in conducting the learning model that aims to make a competition between groups while growing cooperation and respect for various opinions and arguments.
- 2) The school provides different religious classes for Muslim and non-Muslim students. For Muslims, the school has Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes. In this case, the school gives freedom for non-Muslim students to take Islamic Religious Education (PAI) or have a class on their religious traditions. The

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<sup>26</sup> Rawwas, "Dirasah Tahliliyyah Li Syahshiyati Ar-Rasul Muhammad."

school ensures the students are not forced to participate in the PAI classes. However, non-Muslim students prefer to be in the classroom and listen to the teacher delivering the material during the PAI learning process. Thus, the teacher sees a challenge regarding the learning method to deliver the material without offending non-Muslim students.

- 3) Besides being a mentor, the teacher provides examples and role models for students in every word and deed inspired by the prophet Muhammad who exemplifies his teachings. The prophet is theologically believed to be the ideal teacher in Islam based on the Quranic verse found in the surah al-Aḥzāb verse 21: “Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah often.” (QS. al-Aḥzāb: 21).

According to al-Ghazali, one of the education practitioners in Indonesia, to foster tolerance among students, Muslim teachers should carry out an effective strategy by adapting Islamic Religious Education into the curriculum. There are two models to instill religious tolerance values in the PAI subject. The first model is the communicative teaching model. It enables classroom dialogue, allowing students from various religious backgrounds to communicate and express their arguments. Through this process, the students can get to know each other’s religious traditions and minimize truth claims. The second model is the active teaching model. It allows students to actively seek, find, and evaluate their religious views by knowing other faiths. In this case, the emphasis should be on how to teach religion. Both models are the teacher’s efforts to instill values of tolerance through the creation of study groups of students with different religious backgrounds.

### **c. Responses of Muslim and Non-Muslim Students to the Role of Islamic Religious Education in Fostering Tolerance**

Based on interview results with Muslim and non-Muslim students, we found that Islamic Religious Education subject is very influential on students’ tolerance. According to them, the PAI material that significantly contributes to them is the teaching about “noble morals” taught to 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students. In addition, Muslim students have shown tolerance toward the presence of non-Muslim students as they decided to stay in the classroom and listen to the

teaching of the subject. A student gives an opinion on the PAI subject “In class, we just respect each other, don’t talk about things that can offend one’s feelings, and we can exchange opinions about good attitudes taught in our respective religions.”

Based on the observation, we found that the attitude of tolerance between students is excellent. The students and the teachers are the factors that enable a learning situation that grows tolerance. However, in terms of duties and functions of the PAI teacher, they do not fully act directly on students when there is a conflict. UPI High School’s policy states that a teacher only delivers subject materials and becomes a role model for students. Meanwhile, the Counselling teacher (BK) provides exclusive handling and guidance.

To minimize conflicts between religious adherents in the school environment, one of the informants explained that the school applied the principles of equality and freedom to the school programs. For instance, there was no different treatment for Muslim or non-Muslim students and no privilege for specific communities. The school’s treatment is based on the principle that all students are partners who must be treated equally as long as they are in the right corridor. Religious activities, including the PAI class, exemplify the equality application. Based on the interview, the school did not discriminate against non-Muslim minorities and did not force them to be involved and take part in these activities.

Similarly, according to the religious education teacher, non-Muslim students were not forced to participate in the learning process of Islamic Religious Education. Nevertheless, they participated in Islamic Religious Education classes based on their will. The teachers further said non-Muslim students are enthusiastic about studying common religious concepts.

Moreover, we can see the equality and freedom principle in the case of the PECIMAS program (Muslim student religious activity program) held at UPI’s Mosque (Masjid al-Furqon), where non-Muslim students preferred to wait outside the mosque instead of participating in the activity. Some were having light discussions while waiting, some listened to music, and some were back at school. This case shows the freedom to believe in any religion. Islam, with the spirit of *rahmat li al-‘alamin* gives freedom of expression, opinion, and belief as long as it does not conflict with religious norms. In his work, a Muslim scholar, Dr. Nashir Muhammad Jad argued that the



freedom principle is theologically reflected in the prophet Muhammad's teaching of *hurriyyah al-i'tiqād*—freedom of belief. This principle is also emphasized in the Quran surah Al-Baqarah verse 256, stating that there is no compulsion in (practicing) religion.<sup>27</sup> Coercion is prohibited in Islam as it tends to be destructive.

Regarding the conflict resolution we found at the UPI Lab School, we observed a strategy to build effective communication with parents of non-Muslim students. According to an informant, in the student registration process during admission, the school gave detailed explanations to parents regarding the curriculum. The school would say that the curriculum is based on Islamic teachings. However, parents did not show their objection because they realized that UPI Lab School is a Muslim-majority school. Furthermore, parents did not have any objection because their main goal was to ensure that the school could improve their children's competence and knowledge, which they hoped would make them accepted in higher education. The non-Muslim parents with this opinion mostly come from broken homes and do not consider religious elements an issue in education. The school also communicated with non-Muslim students who wanted to convert to Islam. The school required these students to notify and confirm their parents. Besides, before confirming their desire to convert, they would first be required to study Islam. The school must ensure that his willingness to convert is not because of jokes, friends, or other reasons.

Another finding is the way to build inter-religious dialogue in the learning process. In several cases, according to the PAI teacher, Muslim students were joking with their non-Muslim friends by using the words "Come on in! ... come on in!". When this happened, the teacher immediately warned Muslim students not to do this. He explained that in the teachings of Islam, there should be no coercion in preaching. Conflicts among students often arise from jokes, bullying, or ridicule. According to the principles of the Quran and Sunnah, good speech indicates one's piety. The more pious a Muslim, the more often he would say good things and avoid bad words that can hurt other people's feelings. The last finding regarding tolerance and building religious dialogue is that non-Muslim students must take religious exams at a church according to their preferences. They were

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<sup>27</sup> Nasir Muhammadi Muhammad Jad, "Al-Ta'amul Ma'a Ghayr Al-Muslimin Fi 'Ahd Al-Nabawi," 2009.

required to bring the scores given by the church to the school. The UPI Lab School initiated this effort as a bridge to build religious tolerance internally with students and with external parties like the church. In this case, the school communicated with the church about the implementation of exams. Based on this fact, the school has successfully internalized religious moderation values regarding curriculum, learning process, and building relationships with outsiders.

## Conclusion

The results of this study showed several essential findings, which are: 1) The internalization of religious moderation values is manifested in the school's curriculum and learning process, 2) The learning model is based on freedom and non-coercion, and it builds moderate and dynamic discussion space, 3) the school carries out conflict resolution and inter-religious dialogue by communicating with non-Muslim parents and external parties to avoid misunderstanding, and 4) strengthening religious identity is built through open discussion based on freedom of opinion for every student, without any form of coercion and discrimination. Moreover, this research implies the importance of developing a learning model and school culture that grow students' tolerant attitudes. The UPI Lab School's model is applicable and thus can be adopted by other schools with the same concern on tolerance and conflict resolution.

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