

The Functional Role of Islamic Education Learning Based on the Merdeka Curriculum on Students' Tolerance and Harmony Values at SMP PGRI Kasihan

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, Islamic Education (PAI) plays an important role in helping people to realize the value of tolerance and harmony, especially for school-age children. Therefore, this research is intended to reveal the extent to which the role of PAI based on the merdeka curriculum that is currently rolling on the value of tolerance and harmony of students. This research uses a qualitative methodology combined with a case study approach strategy, thus making PGRI Kasihan Junior High School as the research subject. The results revealed that PAI learning based on the merdeka curriculum at SMP PGRI Kasihan raises the value of tolerance and harmony in the form of collaboration, care, and openness to the opinions of others. In this case too, the merdeka curriculum used is very helpful, through teachers and learning media that do not bore students, and make it easier to implement the values of tolerance and harmony learned.

Abstrak

Tidak diragukan lagi, Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) memainkan peran penting dalam membantu masyarakat untuk menyadari nilai toleransi dan kerukunan, terutama bagi anak-anak usia sekolah. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini ditujukan agar dapat mengungkapkan sejauh mana peran PAI berbasis kurikulum merdeka yang saat ini sedang bergulir terhadap nilai toleransi dan kerukunan siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif yang dikombinasikan dengan strategi pendekatan studi kasus, sehingga menjadikan SMP PGRI Kasihan sebagai subjek penelitian. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa Pembelajaran PAI berbasis kurikulum merdeka di SMP PGRI Kasihan menimbulkan nilai toleransi dan kerukunan

berupa kolaborasi, kepedulian, serta keterbukaan terhadap pendapat sesama. Dalam hal ini juga, kurikulum merdeka yang digunakan sangat membantu, melalui guru dan media pembelajaran yang tidak membuat siswa jenuh, serta lebih mudah mengimplementasikan nilai toleransi dan kerukunan yang dipelajari.

Keywords

Islamic education, Merdeka curriculum, tolerance, harmony

Introduction

Developing the potential of students and educating the life of the Indonesian people about faith and piety are two noble educational goals in this country. This is in line with the objectives of Islamic Education (PAI) which emphasizes moral education and tawhid. Aqidah, Akhlak, Fikih, History of Islamic Civilization, and Al-Qur'an and Hadith are some aspects of the material that become the main focus of PAI subjects. This is different from madrasahs where the five aspects become five different fields of study. In public education, the five aforementioned characteristics are combined into a single curriculum called PAI for students in elementary, junior, and senior high school. Similarly, at the tertiary level between general universities and Islamic universities. The five components of the core curriculum are still integrated into the field of study of PAI, although there is a distinction between general education institutions and Islamic education institutions. However, between general education institutions and Islamic education institutions, the percentage or portion may be different (Nurlaila, Rojab, and Agustin 2023).

In connection with the moral aspect, of course, the PAI teaching that is applied aims to form a good, moral, and noble student personality in interacting with fellow environments. However, sometimes during the teenage years lived by students, what is still missing is the values of social intelligence in this case tolerance and harmony. Especially in public schools, with various backgrounds, students are considered difficult to adapt without discriminating between one friend and another. Forms of bullying such as violence, denouncing, mocking, and even fatal jokes related to other religious beliefs (Afifah and Yulaiyah 2022). It is a big question mark, what are the indicators that this can happen and appear to take place normatively in the school environment. The curriculum that contains strategies to evaluation should be able to be the answer and lead to deeper solutions to bring tolerance and harmony in schools.

Commissioner Aris Adi Leksono of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reported that as of March 2024, 383 complaints of child

protection violations had been received by KPAI, with 34% of the case data taking place in educational institutions. This evidence also demonstrates that the effects of violence on educational settings can be fatal or lead to youngsters taking their own lives, in addition to physical and psychological effects. Thus, this calls for significant, organized, and quantifiable efforts in addition to taking effective action to stop and deal with violence in educational settings (Humas KPAI 2024). As time goes on, this issue just becomes worse, which is understandable. The education system does not exhibit the cohesion that is commonly associated with a diversified community. It appears that today's schoolchildren are less informed, whether it is due to spiritual learning that is not rigorous or parental neglect as the child's first school at home (Elsyam and Rossidy 2024).

The current merdeka curriculum is one that gives teachers the opportunity to teach essential and functional materials and gives schools the freedom to explore their capabilities according to their facilities, inputs and resources. To achieve the best educational outcomes, it is imperative to give students sufficient and unrestricted space to reach their full potential. In Indonesia, there are currently around 2,500 schools that have actualized the merdeka curriculum into their school environment. Because of this, the curriculum is cited in all courses taught there, including PAI subjects (Rifa'i, Kurnia Asih, and Fatmawati 2022). One of them is PGRI Kasihan Junior High School which has used an merdeka curriculum in PAI learning, but it needs to be analyzed to what extent the role of PAI learning based on the merdeka curriculum taught so far has made students uphold the values of tolerance and harmony or not.

There are several previous studies that are considered to support the theory and have relevance to this research. First, research by Bernadeta, Yustinus, and Andarweni in 2023 with the title "The Effectiveness of the Module-assisted Group Investigation (GI) Method on Students' Global Diversity Attitudes in the Merdeka Curriculum" (Yulisa, Yuniarto, and Astuti 2023). Second, research by Hendri Dunan in 2023 with the title "The Role of Islamic Education in Increasing Religious Tolerance in Schools" (Dunan 2023). Third, research by Sarah Pratama Putri, Edi Ansyah, and Masrifa Hidayani in 2021 entitled "Islamic Education Teacher's Strategy in Instilling Student Tolerance at SMP Negeri 19 Bengkulu City" (Putri, Ansyah, and Hidayani 2021). To prevent duplication of findings and plagiarism between previous research and current research, this compilation of previous research was conducted. So that researchers can categorize what needs to be done in the research and what does not need to be done by using the differences in previous findings as a new, updated point of view (Ridwan et al. 2021).

In the first study, using quantitative methods, it was found that the GI method successfully improved global diversity attitudes and was able to improve learning outcomes related to global diversity. This was made possible by effective modules derived from the merdeka curriculum. In the second research, using the literature study method leads to the conclusion that Islamic Education (PAI) plays an important role in fostering religious tolerance in schools. Islamic education can be a useful tool for fostering attitudes of tolerance, understanding, and respect for religious diversity in a society where various religious groups and beliefs coexist in an increasingly multicultural environment. And the third study using descriptive qualitative methods revealed findings that the method used by Islamic Education teachers at SMP Negeri 19 Bengkulu City, tolerance is promoted by instilling the values of compassion, accountability, cooperation, and unity in the students. It is hoped that by instilling these values, students will develop an attitude of tolerance towards others.

Therefore, this research focuses on the contextual values of tolerance and harmony in students. Then, this research has more urgency related to how the principal and PAI teachers at SMP PGRI Kasihan help realize this through the merdeka curriculum used at school. The extent to which PAI learning can have an impact on tolerance and harmony in PGRI Kasihan Junior High School. Because, in essence, public schools are multicultural schools, a lot of diversity and differences that must be strived to be a unity in accordance with the vision and mission of the school.

Method

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a case study approach (Sugiyono 2021). To create a comprehensive picture of a case, researchers need to collect a lot of data using this case study approach. Therefore, a thorough analysis is also needed to be able to collect related information about the case that appears (Assyakurrohim et al. 2022). The object of this research is the functional role of merdeka curriculum-based PAI learning on the values of tolerance and harmony, while the subjects are PAI teachers and some students at SMP PGRI Kasihan. The technique of collecting informants in this study uses Purposive Sampling technique, where this technique will sort out informants with certain criteria, so that it is more selective. For example, having mastered the topic in depth, being at the research location, and having wider experience or knowledge about the context of the research problem. The selection of informants will be much more in line with the objectives and targets of the research when using the Purposive Sampling technique (Lenaini 2021).

Table 1. Research Subject

No.	Subjek Penelitian	Name
1.	Guru PAI	Pemi Ediansyah, S.Pd
2	Student	Naura
3	Student	Nabila
4	Student	Siti

The researcher's role as the primary instrument and data collector is one of the traits of qualitative research. As the main instrument or tool, the researcher must be skilled in research methodology, understand the theory under study, and know the elements that are important to the overall research framework. In addition, researchers will use other research instruments in the form of interview guidelines that have been prepared for the research process. Several comparison methods are used to conduct the method triangulation process. It is well known that procedures such as observation, interview, and documentation are used in qualitative research. To test the validity of the data, researchers can use structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Susanto, Risnita, and Jailani 2023).

Results and Discussion

Merdeka Curriculum Based PAI at SMP PGRI Kasihan

The idea of the Merdeka curriculum is to develop independent thought in order to meet national education goals and adjust to the changing circumstances. Ki Hajar Dewantara was the one who first introduced this idea through the idea of physical and mental freedom in education. According to the educational independence principle, each person is endowed by God with the ability to govern their own life as long as they abide by social norms. The idea of "merdeka" in thought can be applied in the digital age, when advancements in technology have a significant impact on education. It is impossible to separate the usage of digital gadgets from the activities of educators and pupils. The idea of Merdeka learning incorporates technological proficiency together with literacy skills, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Pupils are allowed to think freely in order to make the most of cutting-edge technologies and increase their knowledge (Hazyimara 2023).

There are moments when teachers are so preoccupied with lengthy and intricate bureaucratic procedures that they fail to provide students the chance to select a subject that interests them. The goal of the merdeka curriculum's design is to foster learning that is pleasurable for both teachers and students. This is especially true when teachers incorporate a variety of innovative teaching strategies, group task collaboration, which can improve

the learning environment and motivate students to learn more. In this case, the orientation of PAI based on the merdeka curriculum must be in accordance with the interests of students so that, it is expected to have implications for skills in critical thinking, creativity, communication, teamwork, and self-confidence can be grown or improved by students (Noor, Izzati, and Azani 2023).

This is also in line with the PAI teacher of SMP PGRI Kasihan when interviewed, that the merdeka curriculum provides a new color for Indonesian education, especially at SMP PGRI Kasihan. Teachers are required to open their eyes and minds to be able to explore their students more deeply. Likewise with the students themselves, those who have been familiar with digital since childhood are required to be more sensitive to explore information and knowledge through this modern technology. Collaborative work between teachers and students is emphasized, while keeping up with the times.



Figure 1. Interview with PAI Teacher of SMP PGRI Kasihan

Interviews conducted with students regarding their views on the learning process using the independent curriculum, Naura said that: “It’s fun, especially when the teacher shows inspirational videos, if the teacher talks too much you can often get sleepy”. In line with Naura, Nabila stated that: “We students usually get bored quickly when studying for hours, but if we make assignments in groups, it doesn’t feel like the class hours are over”. The third student, Siti, stated that: “At first I had difficulty when given assignments, but the teacher always gave me an understanding of my assignments, so it was easier for me to do”.

The interview findings are consistent with the merdeka curriculum, which seeks to increase students’ and teachers’ enjoyment of learning. Indonesian education has been prioritizing knowledge acquisition. This is in

contrast to the merdeka curriculum, which places a strong emphasis on character and skill development consistent with Indonesia's noble values (Darlis et al. 2022). It is undeniable that the Indonesian curriculum is always evolving, with the goal of striking a balance between attempts to advance the country's educational system. This adjustment was motivated by the perception that education had not met expectations and that no adjustments had been made in this area. Thus, in order to produce a future generation of greatness and moral rectitude, the educational curriculum needs to be regularly revised, changed, and improved (Sari, Sunedar, and Anshori 2022).

Speaking of the implementation of PAI learning based on the merdeka curriculum, so far there have been no significant obstacles at SMP PGRI Kasihan. It's just that, because PGRI Kasihan Junior High School has been using the merdeka curriculum from the beginning, some learning media can no longer be used and must be updated. Facilities and infrastructure at SMP PGRI Kasihan are also quite adequate. "Of course, we use media in PAI learning, whether it is visual or not, to make it easier to understand and lecture the way we as teachers explain in detail related to this," he replied. In the classroom or outside the classroom, there are rules that are closely related to PAI learning itself. For example, maintaining cleanliness, maintaining harmony, and maintaining the manners and behavior of students. Teachers also obey the rules, because teachers will always be a role model for how students should act and behave.

When it comes to harmony and tolerance, PAI learning typically emphasizes behavior improvement for both the individual and the group. Islamic teachings do not distinguish between faith and good deeds, therefore the learning process is both theoretical and practical. Because Islamic teachings encompass guidance on how individuals should conduct themselves in a way that promotes both the well-being of the individual and the community. Then, the optimum way to stop the exclusivist mindset is to uphold the values of harmony and tolerance in connection to PAI. Religious teachings that are dogmatic, exclusionary, or that don't address moral issues are undoubtedly out of place in Indonesia's diverse society (Djollong and Akbar 2019).

In response, the PAI teacher at SMP PGRI Kasihan also recognized that PAI is an important instrument in promoting the value of tolerance and harmony. Through the intensity of the combined material themes related to tawhid, creed, and morals. Students must understand that the fundamental thing to create healthy friendships between them is to have a sense of tolerance. Likewise, harmony is the central point in the classroom. Teachers should not differentiate the rights and obligations of students, regardless of their backgrounds. When they do good, the appreciation given must be the same. Likewise, when they make mistakes, the handling must also be the same.

When asked about student disputes, the PAI teacher of SMP PGRI Kasihan answered that of course there were. Disputes that occur between students usually occur due to misunderstandings or excessive jokes. “My role is to reprimand by providing education, for the students’ response, of course if the teacher reprimands them, they follow and practice what we say. My experience also at SMP PGRI Kasihan so far, just one reprimand they will not repeat the mistake again”, he said.

Students’ views regarding PAI learning based on an merdeka curriculum also vary. Naura and Nabila agree that the merdeka curriculum-based PAI learning implemented by SMP PGRI Kasihan is easy to understand. They are not bored because the teacher does not just give lectures or deliver material for them to write, but also learn through gadgets. And the affirmation from the teacher that we can only use the gadget when there is learning that is allowed to open the gadget. “I am more productive in using gadgets at school, as well as at home when there is an assignment, I read more often”, said Naura. “PAI learning is very fun if the teacher doesn’t just talk in front of us”, said Nabila.

Value of Tolerance and Harmony of PGRI Kasihan Junior High School Students

The value of tolerance and harmony is something that is coveted by all institutions, especially schools. Since each party should be able to control themselves and make space so that they can respect and appreciate each other’s differences without having to worry about their own rights and beliefs, this value is at the core of tolerance. In Islam, tolerance is based on the idea that religious adherents must respect each other so that they can practice their respective religions in a way that is consistent with their beliefs, without coercion or pressure from other religious adherents. It should be emphasized that adopting the beliefs of others is not tolerance. Sharing beliefs with other religious groups is also not tolerance. Here, tolerance refers to a respectful (social) engagement where there are boundaries between parties that should not be crossed (Azmi 2022).

The lack of efficient synergy between parents and teachers will make it difficult to realize harmony and tolerance. This is especially important because, in today’s highly digitized world, children in Indonesia have to face a very complex digital world. In order for children to adapt to the current times and be able to avoid these challenges, it is crucial that they learn to use technology. For example, to achieve the best learning objectives, a teacher in a school should take precautions, one of which is to instill the principles of divinity (*ilahiyah*) to the students by using techniques that attract their attention (Mansir 2022). When a child enters school, the teacher is immediately entrusted with their education. The presence of a teacher in an educational setting is crucial to the growth of a student’s knowledge and character. Teachers fulfill the role of professional educators,

and as such, they have high standards for the work they do. However, to provide spiritual support in implementing the ideals of harmony and tolerance in schools, teachers must also teach the importance of divine values (Azis and Mustakim 2023).

The PAI teacher stated that the value of tolerance practiced by students at SMP PGRI Kasihan is already very good. It is believed that it has been taught by both parents or guardians of students since home, so that it can be carried to school. For example, Muslim students who are performing Dzuhur prayer in congregation, then other students remain in the classroom while doing useful activities. They will not disturb and keep the peace in the classroom. Because they already know that worshiping God requires a calm and focused atmosphere. This is certainly welcomed by Muslim friends and vice versa. According to him, too, the fact that all Muslim students can collaborate without showing preference for one religion over another, that students have a strong sense of faith, that students and teachers can tolerate each other, and that students and teachers exhibit democratic qualities all contribute to the success of incorporating the values of tolerance and harmony into PAI learning. In addition, other activities such as morning tadarus and dhuha prayers in congregation strengthen children in terms of tolerance and harmony.



Figure 2. Dzuhur prayer in congregation which is done every day

This is in line with the theory of tolerance according to Tillman, that specifically a mindset that respects one another and seeks to realize peace through understanding. It is stated that tolerance is indispensable for realizing peace. Peace is articulated as harmony in a perspective that is not only related to religion, but one's personal and social relationships. Understanding and accepting diversity is certainly not enough. Schools, as

institutions, must continue to strengthen curriculum and extracurricular learning opportunities that promote the internalization of tolerance values (Khomah, Fadilla, and Farhan 2023). Meanwhile, Sayyid Qutb asserts that the definition of tolerance includes the following: First, there is no impediment for a person to get an explanation of religious doctrines. Second, everyone who practices any religion has the right to be free from intimidation and defamation. Third, the right to security and safety for those who practice a particular religion. Fourth, a religious person has the freedom to reject any form of religious conversion (Wijaya and Zainuddin 2020).

Furthermore, the results of an interview with Naura, a student at SMP PGRI Kasihan stated that: “The value of tolerance and harmony in PAI learning, we are taught to care, love each other and appreciate differences, especially from ourselves first, be more open and responsive to the opinions of fellow friends in class or outside the classroom, and provide comfort to one another”. Nabila stated that: “We enjoy the differences that exist together from everything, be it conversations or actions. PAI teachers also provide comfort and harmony between us without any restrictions”. Likewise, a statement from Siti, who stated that: “Smile, greeting, greeting, politeness, and courtesy are things that we must always familiarize among students and also with teachers. That is what the PAI teacher often tells us”.

Conclusion

It should be understood that diversity or difference is not a barrier for someone to go on an educational journey. This is illustrated through the students of SMP PGRI Kasihan. In learning PAI based on an merdeka curriculum, they learn many things. The quality of the teachers and their adjustments in implementing the merdeka curriculum were able to be practiced by the students. The freedom and flexibility of the merdeka curriculum make it easier for students to learn PAI, especially in the values of tolerance and harmony.

Tolerance and harmony that are practiced are students' concern for fellow friends regardless of background or differences, collaboration demanded by the independent curriculum makes students more communicative in group assignments, and mutual openness in accepting other people's opinions. This is also reinforced through habituation to students in the form of morning tadarus, dhuha prayers in congregation, and dzuhur prayers in congregation. The religious diversity of students in PGRI Kasihan Junior High School also makes them more harmonious, they understand each other when Muslim students worship. In addition to PAI lessons taught at school, the value of tolerance and harmony is acquired by students at home, through parents or guardians. However, learning PAI at

school by teachers, if without support from the home environment, tolerance and harmony do not run optimally.

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Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflicts of interest. I certify that the submission is original and hasn't been accepted by another publisher.

Ethical Considerations

There are no copyright infringements found in any of the research's sources, which include books, research papers, articles, and scientific forum sessions.

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