



Teachers as Agents of Religious Moderation: Insights from Indonesia as a Multicultural Country

Ade Husna¹, Andar Nubowo², Yamudin Salaeh³

¹Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, ²Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia,

³Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

Email: ¹ade.husna@uiii.ac.id, ²andar.nubowo@uiii.ac.id, ³yamudin.s@psu.ac.th

Abstract

This study explores the role of teachers from diverse religious backgrounds in promoting religious moderation and tolerance in Indonesia, a nation characterized by its multicultural and multi-religious composition. Drawing on qualitative research methods, the study examines how teachers' personal beliefs, professional practices, and educational frameworks contribute to fostering interreligious harmony and peaceful coexistence. The research highlights the importance of religious moderation, particularly in the context of Indonesia's educational system, which emphasizes tolerance as part of national policy. By analyzing the perspectives and strategies employed by Islamic, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian educators, the paper identifies key practices and challenges in cultivating inclusivity within classrooms and communities. The findings underscore the critical role of teachers as moral role models and agents of societal change, offering valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to advance harmony in Indonesia's pluralistic society. This research has significant implications for educational policy and curriculum development, suggesting that integrating structured interfaith dialogue, values-based education, and teacher training programs can further strengthen religious moderation efforts. Additionally, it provides a framework for other multicultural societies seeking to implement effective strategies for fostering tolerance and reducing sectarian divides through education.

Keywords: religious moderation, tolerance, education, multicultural society

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi peran pendidik dari berbagai latar belakang agama dalam mempromosikan moderasi dan toleransi beragama di Indonesia, sebuah negara yang dicirikan oleh komposisi multikultural dan multiagama. Dengan menggunakan

metode penelitian kualitatif, studi ini meneliti bagaimana keyakinan pribadi guru, praktik profesional, dan kerangka pendidikan berkontribusi dalam membina kerukunan antaragama dan hidup berdampingan secara damai. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya moderasi beragama, khususnya dalam konteks sistem pendidikan Indonesia, yang menekankan toleransi sebagai bagian dari kebijakan nasional. Dengan menganalisis perspektif dan strategi yang digunakan oleh pendidik Islam, Kristen, Katolik, Hindu, Buddha, dan Konghucu, makalah ini mengidentifikasi praktik dan tantangan utama dalam menumbuhkan inklusivitas di dalam kelas dan masyarakat. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi peran penting pendidik sebagai panutan moral dan agen perubahan masyarakat, yang menawarkan wawasan berharga bagi para pembuat kebijakan dan praktisi yang bertujuan untuk memajukan kerukunan dalam masyarakat pluralistik Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Tolernasi, Pendidikan, Masyarakat Multikultural.

Introduction

Respect, acceptance, and awareness of the rich diversity present in the educational environment are all parts of the comprehensive idea of tolerance in education ¹. Tolerance is necessary for the harmonious coexistence of diverse populations and is not just a moral obligation but also a political and legal need, according to UNESCO (1995). It is crucial that teachers establish these ideals in students from an early age because they are the main educators and socializing facilitators ². In order to foster tolerance and respect for various religious practices and beliefs, they are in an important position to have an impact on developing minds.

The importance of education in promoting peaceful coexistence in the modern Malay world, with its various cultural and religious environment, cannot be emphasized. Teachers are extremely important in influencing the attitudes and behaviours of young people since they are not only educators but also moral role models ³. Their views on coexistence and tolerance are

¹ Ben Bindewald, "Theories of Tolerance in Education," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, by Ben Bindewald (Oxford University Press, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.415>.

² Ali Madanipour, "2. Culture and Tolerance in Public Space," in *Space and Pluralism*, ed. Stefano Moroni and David Weberman (Central European University Press, 2016), 35–54, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789633861264-004>.

³ Imron Arifin and Agustinus Hermino, "The Importance of Multicultural Education in Schools in the Era of ASEAN Economic Community," *Asian Social Science* 13, no. 4 (March 24, 2017): 78, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v13n4p78>.

essential for advancing a tranquil society in which people of all religious backgrounds can coexist peacefully.

A diverse range of races and religions make up the Malay globe, which includes nations like Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines⁴. This region is home to a plurality of indigenous beliefs alongside Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism⁵. Educational systems that aim to inculcate ideals of tolerance and mutual respect have both possibilities and challenges as a result of this religious diversity.

Teachers with diverse religious origins contribute distinctive viewpoints to the school environment⁶. Their approach to educating about religious tolerance and harmony is shaped by their individual experiences and views. Comprehending different viewpoints is vital in formulating efficacious pedagogical approaches that foster concord in heterogeneous communities. The purpose of this essay is to investigate the perspectives of educators from different religious backgrounds about the promotion of harmony and tolerance in the Malay community, specifically in the Indonesian society.

In Indonesia, tolerance education is highly emphasized in the concept and policy of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and supported by other educational institutions⁷. As a country with the diverse religious adherents, teaching and instilling the values of religious moderation in students is very important for religious education teachers.

In order to create a society that is inclusive, polite, and peaceful, it is imperative that religious tolerance and moderation be encouraged in schools.

⁴ Calvin Goldscheider, ed., *Population, Ethnicity, and Nation-Building* (London: Routledge, 2019).

⁵ Lukmanul Hakim, "The Malay World in History: Study on Malay Identity," *Journal of Malay Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (December 30, 2017): 101–12, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jmis.v1i2.3838>.

⁶ Ben K. C. Laksana and Bronwyn E Wood, "Navigating Religious Diversity: Exploring Young People's Lived Religious Citizenship in Indonesia," *Journal of Youth Studies* 22, no. 6 (July 3, 2019): 807–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2018.1545998>.

⁷ Bassam Abul A'la, Ripin Ikhwindi, and Sugito Muzaqi, "Religious Moderation Concept in Israel, United Kingdom, and Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review," *Proceeding International Conference on Islam, Law, and Society* 2, no. 1 (January 18, 2023), <https://incoils.or.id/index.php/INCOILS/article/view/59>.

Schools can be essential in helping young people develop these values through well planned curricula, teacher preparation, inclusive policies, and community involvement ⁸.

In recent years, discussions on religious moderation have become increasingly significant amid growing concerns over religious intolerance, radicalization, and sectarianism in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. As a nation built upon the principles of unity in diversity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika), Indonesia faces ongoing challenges in maintaining interfaith harmony, particularly in the education sector, where teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' worldviews. Despite government initiatives to promote tolerance and pluralism, incidents of religious discrimination and exclusivism continue to surface, reflecting the need for more robust and practical approaches to religious moderation.

Moreover, in the digital era, the spread of misinformation and extremist narratives through social media has further complicated efforts to foster interreligious understanding. Teachers, as frontline educators, are increasingly required to not only provide knowledge but also serve as role models in promoting inclusive values. However, the extent to which educators across different religious backgrounds effectively embody and transmit the principles of religious moderation remains underexplored. By examining teachers' perspectives, practices, and challenges, this study aims to fill this gap and offer insights into how education can be a powerful tool in countering religious polarization and fostering a culture of peace.

Numerous scholarly investigations have emphasised the significance of teacher attitudes in moulding students' perspectives on religious plurality. For example, Banks (2019) highlights the contribution of multicultural education to the advancement of social cohesion ⁹. Similarly, Merryfield (2000) talks on how teachers' global viewpoints can affect the content and

⁸ Achmad Anwar Abidin and Muhammad Ali Murtadlo, "Curriculum Development of Multicultural-Based Islamic Education as an Effort to Weaver Religious Moderation Values in Indonesia," *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)* 2, no. 1 (September 20, 2020): 29–46, <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v2i1.30>.

⁹ James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (John Wiley & Sons, 2019).

methods they use in the classroom, which in turn affects students' appreciation and understanding of various cultures and religions ¹⁰.

Teachers are at the front of promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence because of the significant influence education has on the values and attitudes of society ¹¹. This essay investigates how educators from various religious backgrounds see their role in fostering religious harmony within the context of inside and outside of the classroom.

Several studies have explored the role of religious education in promoting interfaith tolerance and religious moderation. For instance, Azra (2015) and Hefner (2013) examined how Indonesia's educational system integrates religious values into national identity while fostering pluralism. Their research highlights the role of Islamic schools (*pesantren* and *madrasah*) in balancing religious teachings with civic values ¹². Similarly, Mujiburrahman (2019) investigated religious moderation policies in Indonesia, emphasizing their institutional and political dimensions. His study identified government-driven efforts to prevent radicalization but noted the challenges in practical implementation at the grassroots level.

Other studies, such as those by Subchi (2022) and Ali-Fauzi et al. (2022), have focused on interreligious dialogue in schools and universities, demonstrating how educational institutions can act as spaces for nurturing tolerance. These studies underscore the importance of curriculum design, teacher training, and school culture in shaping students' attitudes toward religious diversity ¹³. However, they primarily focus on institutional policies

¹⁰ Merry M Merryfield, "Why Aren't Teachers Being Prepared to Teach for Diversity, Equity, and Global Interconnectedness? A Study of Lived Experiences in the Making of Multicultural and Global Educators," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 16, no. 4 (May 2000): 429–43, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(00\)00004-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00004-4).

¹¹ Elizabeth Burns Coleman and Kevin White, *Religious Tolerance, Education and the Curriculum* (Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2011).

¹² Azyumardi Azra, "Genealogy of Indonesian Islamic Education: Roles in the Modernization of Muslim Society," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 4, no. 1 (July 8, 2015): 85–114, <https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v4i1.63>; Robert W. Hefner, "The Study of Religious Freedom in Indonesia," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 11, no. 2 (June 2013): 18–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2013.808038>.

¹³ Imam Subchi et al., "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Muslims," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (May 17, 2022): 451, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050451>.

rather than the personal experiences and pedagogical approaches of educators themselves.

Despite these valuable contributions, limited research has specifically examined the perspectives and lived experiences of teachers from different religious backgrounds in implementing religious moderation in the classroom. While previous studies have largely focused on Islamic education, this study broadens the scope by including teachers from six officially recognized religions in Indonesia—Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Thus, the novelty of this study lies in its teacher-centered perspective, its comprehensive inclusion of diverse religious educators, and its phenomenological approach to understanding religious moderation in practice. The findings will contribute not only to educational and policy discussions in Indonesia but also offer insights for other multicultural societies seeking to strengthen interfaith harmony through education. This research is significant because it has the potential to improve the knowledge of how education may foster harmony and tolerance in a religiously diverse community. This study aims to support the ongoing efforts to create a more tolerant and cohesive society in the Malay world by examining the perspectives of teachers from various religious backgrounds.

To maximize the objectives of this research, there are who main research questions used in this study, it narrows down the scope of the study, making it more manageable and directed ¹⁴. How do teachers from different religious backgrounds perceive their roles in fostering a harmonious coexistence among students?, and how do the history and concept of religious moderation policies influence the education system in Indonesia?

Method

The qualitative research methodology is used to write this study. According to Leavy in "Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research

¹⁴ Jane Forman et al., "Qualitative Research Methods: Key Features and Insights Gained from Use in Infection Prevention Research," *American Journal of Infection Control* 36, no. 10 (December 2008): 764–71, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2008.03.010>.

Approaches", the primary objective of qualitative research is to explore and appreciate the complexities of human experience, behavior, and social phenomena. Qualitative research relies on non-numerical data, which includes words, images, and narratives; quantitative methods, on the other hand, highlight statistical analysis and numerical data. In qualitative research, the researcher often uses a variety of methods to collect data, such as document analysis, focus groups, interviews, and observations, in addition to doing in-depth investigations. The aim is to generate comprehensive and situation-specific data, recognize trends, and gain understanding of the interpretation's individuals place on their experiences ¹⁵.

This study employs a literature review and document analysis as its primary research methods. Given the complexity of religious moderation within Indonesia's diverse educational landscape, this approach allows for a comprehensive examination of existing knowledge, policies, and frameworks without relying on fieldwork-based data collection. The literature review involves an in-depth analysis of scholarly works, government policies, educational curricula, and previous studies related to religious moderation, interfaith education, and tolerance in Indonesia. This review helps to contextualize the role of teachers in promoting religious moderation within a broader academic and policy discourse.

The document analysis focuses on primary sources such as national education policies, religious education curricula, ministerial regulations, and reports from relevant institutions. By systematically analyzing these documents, this study identifies key themes, patterns, and gaps in the implementation of religious moderation within the education system. It is important to note that this research does not involve interviews or observations. Instead, it relies solely on textual analysis to derive insights, ensuring that the findings are grounded in existing academic and policy discussions rather than personal narratives or case-specific observations. This

¹⁵ Patricia Leavy, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*, Second edition (New York London: Guilford Press, 2023).

methodological approach enables a macro-level understanding of religious moderation in education while maintaining objectivity and analytical depth.

Result And Discussion

Teaching religious themes while fostering critical and intelligent thinking about the impact of contemporary events to foster tolerance is a challenging undertaking for educators. The establishment of an inclusive learning environment is necessary to enable students to openly express their thoughts, pose enquiries, and engage in fruitful conversations without worrying about bias or criticism¹⁶. However, since the turn of the twenty-first century, one of the most notable socio-religious developments has been anarchism and terrorism committed in the name of religion¹⁷. Some schools offer religious and cross-cultural counselling in order to prevent terrorism and anarchy that come from students' activities when they are trying to figure out who they are¹⁸.

Furthermore, the idea of religious moderation is interpreted differently in different religious traditions. Some may interpret it as a commitment to compromise, tolerance, and open-mindedness, while others may view it as a betrayal of religion or a dilution of religious principles. In educational settings, educators must balance these divergent opinions while maintaining the principles of religious neutrality and academic freedom. They have a crucial role in teaching children empathy and compassion, promoting tolerance across religious divides, and providing an example of courteous communication.

There are challenges associated with these steps. It may be quite challenging to combat religious intolerance, sectarianism, and extremism in

¹⁶ Munawar Rahmat and M. Wildan Bin H. M. Yahya, "The Impact of Inclusive Islamic Education Teaching Materials Model on Religious Tolerance of Indonesian Students," *International Journal of Instruction* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 347–64, <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2022.15120a>.

¹⁷ Azyumardi Azra and Idris Thaha, *Moderasi Islam Di Indonesia: Dari Ajaran, Ibadah, Hingga Perilaku*, Cetakan ke-1 (Rawamangun, Jakarta: Kencana, 2020).

¹⁸ Rena Rostini et al., "Konseling Lintas Budaya Dan Agama Dalam Penanggulangan Radikalisme Di Lingkungan Sekolah," *JURNAL PENELITIAN KEISLAMAN* 17, no. 2 (January 3, 2022): 155–69, <https://doi.org/10.20414/jpk.v17i2.4577>.

order to encourage religious moderation in educational settings ¹⁹ . Sociological and cultural components such as identity politics and political polarisation further complicate efforts to promote interfaith collaboration and communication. Teachers have a crucial role in fostering tolerance by teaching the ideals of variety in schools in this multicultural nation, which formally acknowledges the existence of six religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism ²⁰.

Teacher of Islamic Education

Islam is the most common religion in Indonesia, according to data from the civil registry in 2022, with 87% of the population identifying as Muslims. Given that Muslims make up the majority of the population, Islamic religion education is one of the necessary subjects to produce a generation of morally upright people. An Islamic education teacher is a qualified educator whose job it is to supply Islamic resources to pupils in the classroom. At the very least, an Islamic education teacher has two duties: first, they must fulfil their responsibilities as educators and instructors in schools; second, they must assist students in understanding Islamic material so that they and the community can view and comprehend Islam in a way that is appropriate, marked by politeness, joy, and nonviolence ²¹. Islamic education teachers usually emphasise the concept of "wasatiyyah," which is Arabic for "moderation" or "balance," and is based on verses from the Quran that advocate for choosing the middle path ²².

In implementing religious moderation instruction, Islamic religious education teachers play five roles: organiser, transmitter, transformer,

¹⁹ Muhammad Zuhdi, "Challenging Moderate Muslims: Indonesia's Muslim Schools in the Midst of Religious Conservatism," *Religions* 9, no. 10 (October 11, 2018): 310, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9100310>.

²⁰ Laksana, "Living Together in a Religious Plural Society."

²¹ M. Saekan Muchith, "Guru PAI yang Profesional," *QUALITY* 4, no. 2 (April 6, 2017): 200–217, <https://doi.org/10.21043/quality.v4i2.2121>.

²² John L. Esposito and Emad Eldin Shahin, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics* (Oxford, UK ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

innovator, and conservator²³. Islamic religious education teachers have a big responsibility to themselves as conservators and to teach their students to appreciate and apply the principles of religious moderation. They also have a role as innovators, which is to be able to help instill these principles in schools in a creative way. A religious teacher's creativity is inextricably linked to his crucial function in fostering character development and imparting the virtues of religious moderation²⁴.

Teachers serve as a conduit for students' values. Islamic religious education instructors continue the understanding of religious moderation by inspiring or engaging with pupils in the classroom. To keep students from going too far in their religious observance and to allow them to adjust by locating themselves wherever and however they choose without endangering the existence of the religion they practice in moderation²⁵. Teachers serve as mediators between religious and social issues, fostering an awareness of the importance of religious moderation through a variety of creative activities. For instance, during large-scale events or religious holiday celebrations, educators must be able to mediate and encourage students from diverse religious backgrounds to show respect for one another²⁶.

Teachers are in charge of organizing all activities in the school setting. Activities that are planned must consider the principles of religious moderation. These activities include both classroom-based and extracurricular activities. In the school, it is essential to teach youngsters to be moderate in their religious beliefs. It aims to firmly establish the principles of religious moderation in the community so that students can understand

²³ Syarnubi Syarnubi et al., "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Menanamkan Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama," *International Education Conference (IEC) FITK 1*, no. 1 (August 12, 2023): 112–17.

²⁴ Elly Manizar, "Peran Guru Sebagai Motivator Dalam Belajar," *Tadrib: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam 1*, no. 2 (2015): 204–22.

²⁵ Syarnubi et al., "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Menanamkan Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama."

²⁶ Gesti Puspitasari et al., "Pembinaan Keagamaan Peserta Didik Muslim Oleh Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) Di Yayasan Khatolik," *Jurnal PAI Raden Fatah 1*, no. 4 (October 31, 2019): 497–508, <https://doi.org/10.19109/pairf.v1i4.3595>.

and apply them. The teachers are essential to making this happen. The one that has direct contact with the kids is the instructor ²⁷.

Teacher of Christianity Education

In Indonesia, Christianity has the second-largest population after Islam ²⁸. In addition to having the largest Protestant population in the region, Indonesia has the second-largest Christian population in Southeast Asia, after the Philippines. After India and China, it also boasts the third-largest Christian population in Asia. The two Muslim nations having the largest Christian populations, after Indonesia, are Nigeria and Egypt ²⁹. The majority of Indonesia's traditional Christian communities are found in Tanah Batak, Taneh Karo, Nias, Mentawai, inland Kalimantan, Minahasa, Sangir, Poso, Toraja, Mamasa, East Nusa Tenggara, Maluku Islands, and Papua.

In their daily actions, Christian religious education instructors follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the Great Teacher, as they serve as mentors, evangelists, and teachers ³⁰. They also had expertise teaching lessons that are based on material that is gathered from a variety of sources and is intended to teach pupils about Christianity. ... order for students to trust and believe in the love of God ³¹.

Conflicts occur in Indonesia because of the nation's heterogeneous society, which is varied in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, and religion ³². When individuals fail to recognize the importance of diversity and instead

²⁷ Edi Kuswanto, "Peranan Guru PAI Dalam Pendidikan Akhlak Di Sekolah," *MUDARRISA: Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 2 (December 31, 2015): 194, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mdr.v6i2.194-220>.

²⁸ "Pusat Data Kementerian Agama RI," September 3, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200903221250/https://data.kemenag.go.id/agamadashboard/statistik/umat>.

²⁹ Duane A. Miller, "Believers in Christ from a Muslim Background: A Global Census," 2019, https://www.academia.edu/16338087/Believers_in_Christ_from_a_Muslim_Background_A_Global_Census.

³⁰ Rotua Samosir, "Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen yang Profesional" 5 (2019).

³¹ Meniria Laoli et al., "Moderasi Beragama: Upaya Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Mencegah Sikap Intoleran Pada Remaja," *Vox Dei: Jurnal Teologi dan Pastoral* 4, no. 1 (June 29, 2023): 99–111, <https://doi.org/10.46408/vxd.v4i1.232>.

³² Paskalis Lina and Robertus Wijanarko, "Faith In God as The Source of Goodness And Religious Moderation In Indonesia: A Christian Moral Perspective," *International Journal*

believe that their group is the most correct, there is a risk of discontent and other phenomena that lead to disagreement. Christian educators must teach the qualities of religious moderation by using stories that resemble those that Jesus told. Religious education instructors need to be outstanding people who can set an example with their words and actions. Additionally, Christian education teachers include the principles of moderation into their progressive curricula.

However, one of the oldest educational systems in the world is that of Christianity³³. Alongside schools, universities, and other institutions dispersed throughout more than 140 countries, it is likely the largest in the contemporary world. For the past two millennia, it has coexisted alongside the church. Kurian & Lamport (2015) noted this. The Christian educational system serves a different goal than secular education. Stripping information and using it as a tool of atonement in and of itself is the key. It imparts not only ideologies and talents but also values and character. It transforms, transforms, and empowers in addition to educating. In addition to solving issues and arousing curiosity, Christian knowledge aims to bring the human intellect into harmony with God's ideas.

Christian religious education plays a crucial role in forming the character of individuals and impacting social and cultural processes within society. The goal of this education, which is founded on Christian religious teachings, is to develop qualified, morally upright individuals who can make valuable contributions to society in addition to teaching religious beliefs and doctrines³⁴.

The idea of religious moderation should be ingrained in Christian religious education because it is crucial for fostering interfaith cooperation, peace, and tolerance in an increasingly diverse society, as well as for creating

of *Indonesian Philosophy & Theology* 3, no. 1 (June 28, 2022): 40–52, <https://doi.org/10.47043/ijipth.v3i1.24>.

³³ George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport, *Encyclopedia of Christian Education* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

³⁴ Meissandani Ardilla et al., "Penanaman Nilai-nilai Moderasi Beragama dalam Bingkai Pendidikan Agama Kristen," n.d.; Lina and Wijanarko, "Faith In God as The Source of Goodness And Religious Moderation In Indonesia."

a more balanced view of religion. The future generation must be empowered to bring about constructive change and build a more inclusive and peaceful society, which makes it evident that integrating religious moderation concepts within Christian religious education is crucial.

Teacher of Catholic Education

According to official Ministry of Religious Affairs figures from 2022, around 8.3 million persons, or 3.12% of Indonesia's total population, are Catholic³⁵. Beginning in the 16th century, when the Portuguese arrived in Indonesia in pursuit of spices, Catholicism spread throughout the country³⁶. The provinces of East Nusa Tenggara and South Papua have the highest percentages of Catholics, at almost 55% and 50% of the total population, respectively. In addition, there are sizable Catholic populations in Central Java, DKI Jakarta, DI Yogyakarta, North Sulawesi, North Sumatra, and West Kalimantan.

Catholicism has been spread throughout Indonesia by numerous missionaries since the Portuguese arrived. After Francis Xavier, a Portuguese missionary, arrived in the Maluku region—then the world's greatest spice-producing region—it became the focal point of Indonesia's Catholic conversion drive. In addition to their trade, the Portuguese had previously introduced religious concerns to Indonesia. He effectively baptized hundreds of people and constructed schools for the indigenous population of Maluku by the time he arrived there in 1546–1547³⁷. Catholic religious education is instruction that is planned and ongoing to help students strengthen their faith and devotion to the Almighty God in line with Catholic doctrine, while also focusing on respect for other religions and peaceful relationships between religious communities in society to achieve national unity.

³⁵ Kementerian Sekretariat Negara, "Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 58 Tahun 2023 Tentang Penguatan Moderasi Beragama," September 25, 2023.

³⁶ Samingan Samingan and Yosef Tomi Roe, "Kedatangan Bangsa Portugis: Berdagang Dan Menyebarkan Agama Katolik Di Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Historis: Jurnal Kajian, Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Pendidikan Sejarah* 6, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 18–24, <https://doi.org/10.31764/historis.v6i1.4441>.

³⁷ Samudra Eka Cipta, "100% Katolik 100% Indonesia: Suatu Tinjauan Historis Perkembangan Nasionalisme Umat Katolik Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 14, no. 1 (June 1, 2020): 175, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2020.141-07>.

To put it more strongly, Catholic religious education in schools is an endeavour to help pupils engage (communicate) in order to comprehend, struggle with, and practice the faith ³⁸.

Batu and Sihotang (2022) assert that Catholic religious instruction for Catholic students in schools is crucial to dispelling the belief held by Indonesian society that religious extremism is happening now and will happen in the future. In this instance, religious teachers' instruction of students in schools is also the main source of religious radicalism in Indonesia. Students thus grow into intolerance, exclusivism, and religious fanaticism ³⁹.

Teaching religious education in schools by serving as role models, effective learning managers, and motivators; working with students' parents to teach religious education in the home; and working with church deacons are the three ways that Catholic religious education teachers can help students develop positive character traits as a means of combating religious radicalism. Students will develop emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually under the guidance of Catholic religious teachers. They will also be able to emulate Christ as Savior and recognize the plurality of religions, preventing religious radicalism.

Teacher of Hindu religious education

The Ministry of Home Affairs' 2022 civil registration statistics shows that Hinduism is Indonesia's third most common religion. About 1.69% of the nation's population as a whole and about 87% of Bali residents practice it ⁴⁰. Hinduism, one of the six officially recognized religions of Indonesia, was the most common religion in the country until Islam arrived. Hinduism was

³⁸ Daniel Supriyadi and Kharisda Mueleni Waruwu, "Pentingnya Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Menanamkan Nilai Moderasi Beragama bagi Peserta Didik," *DIDAKTIKOS: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 5, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 47–55, <https://doi.org/10.32490/didaktik.v5i1.146>.

³⁹ Johannes Sohirimon Lumban Batu and Din Oloan Sihotang, "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Katolik Dalam Memerangi Radikalisme Di SMP Swasta Santo Xaverius 2 Kabanjahe," *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik* 22, no. 1 (April 21, 2022): 116–35, <https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v22i1.378>.

⁴⁰ "Satu Data - Kementerian Agama RI," Agustus 2022, <https://satudata.kemenag.go.id/dataset/detail/jumlah-penduduk-menurut-agama>.

introduced to Indonesia by Indian scholars, traders, sailors, priests, and scholars throughout the first century ⁴¹.

Hinduism and its core teachings humanizing people, nature, and the environment—are practiced by the majority of Balinese people through ceremonial activities. It is believed that these activities will help them remember the environment and that they must even be one with it in order to create happiness in life ⁴². One of the subjects that must be studied in order to graduate from all educational levels is Hindu religious education, which is intended to help Hindu students improve their religious variety ⁴³. Hindu religious education has goals beyond merely imparting knowledge. Hindu religious education actually aims to increase devotion to God Almighty, intelligence, and skills, as well as to strengthen nationality, character, and personality. These goals are outlined in the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003, which also states that the national education strategy aims to develop Indonesians who are devoted to God Almighty by focusing on intelligence, skills, and expertise ⁴⁴. This aligns with the goals of national education.

Hindu religious education instructors have a crucial and important function to play in enforcing religious moderation in Hinduism ⁴⁵. The roles of a teacher include: The first is *Guru Rupaka*, which states that parents have a responsibility to properly raise and educate their children. In order to develop good Hindu cadres, the second is *Guru Pangajian*, which refers to educators or teachers who instruct pupils in schools. In order to produce knowledgeable and competent cadres, the third is *Guru Wisesa*, which includes community leaders, elders, figures, and government representatives

⁴¹ Mark Juergensmeyer and Wade Clark Roof, eds., *Encyclopedia of Global Religion*. 2 (Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Reference, 2012).

⁴² Ida Bagus Suradarma, "Pendidikan Agama Hindu Sebagai Landasan Pendidikan Moral Dan Etika," *Jurnal Ilmiah Dinamika Sosial* 3, no. 1 (February 1, 2019): 16, <https://doi.org/10.38043/jids.v3i1.1731>.

⁴³ Untung Suhardi, "Dinamika Pendidikan Agama Hindu," 2014.

⁴⁴ Suhardi.

⁴⁵ I. Ketut Subagiasta, "Filosofi Moderasi Beragama : Beragama Hindu Sangat Mudah Dan Maknai Pendidikan," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional IAHN-TP Palangka Raya*, no. 2 (April 16, 2021): 72–87, <https://doi.org/10.33363/sn.v0i2.69>.

who are innate role models in the field of education. The fourth is *Guru Swadhyaya*, or studying with God Almighty, who is the highest instructor, the eternal teacher, the genuine teacher, abstract in nature, and bestows the highest wisdom and skills on all people. In order to moderate Hindu education in a good, correct, noble, successful, and competent manner in their sector, these four teachers are supposed to convert all Hindus into Bahu Sastra or to have a great deal of insight or vast knowledge ⁴⁶.

Hindu religious education, according to Darta (2020), is a process that helps students acquire knowledge, comprehension, and skills while also developing a personality (attitude, character, and mentality) that is informed by the teachings of the Hindu religion (Veda). They must be able to help pupils develop positive characters and lessen the moral crises they are currently facing ⁴⁷.

Theacher of Buddhist religious education

As of 2022, there were roughly 2 million Buddhists in Indonesia, which is 0.7% of the total population⁴⁸. Most of the Buddhists in West Kalimantan, North Sumatra, reside in Bangka Belitung, Jakarta, and Riau ⁴⁹. Despite the fact that Taoism and Chinese folk religion are not officially recognized in Indonesia, these figures are probably inflated because its followers most likely identified as Buddhists in the most recent census. East Asians, especially Chinese, currently comprise the majority of Indonesia's Buddhist population, while there are still small numbers of native Buddhists (such as Javanese and Sasak) ⁵⁰.

Buddhism is the second-oldest religion in Indonesia, after Hinduism, which came from India in the second century. Buddhism and Hinduism have

⁴⁶ Subagiasta.

⁴⁷ I. Nyoman Darta, "Pendidikan Agama Hindu dalam Pembentukan Kepribadian Siswa," *GUNA WIDYA: JURNAL PENDIDIKAN HINDU* 7, no. 2 (September 30, 2020): 97–103, <https://doi.org/10.25078/gw.v7i2.1272>.

⁴⁸ "Satu Data - Kementerian Agama RI."

⁴⁹ Irma Garnesia, "Manakah Wilayah dengan Umat Buddha Terbanyak?," *tirto.id*, May 29, 2018, <https://tirto.id/manakah-wilayah-dengan-umat-buddha-terbanyak-cLjw>.

⁵⁰ Andrea Acri, "Maritime Buddhism," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, by Andrea Acri (Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.638>.

an entwined history in Indonesia since multiple kingdoms influenced by Indian culture were established at the same time. Buddhism was introduced to the Indonesian archipelago by trade via the maritime Silk Road between India and India starting at the turn of the century. It could be argued that the oldest Buddhist archeological site in Indonesia is the Batujaya stupa complex in Karawang, West Java. It is thought that the oldest island dates to the second century, while the newest ruins at Batujaya date to the 12th century. Furthermore, the Sumatra provinces of Jambi, Palembang, and Riau, as well as Central and East Java, were home to a sizable number of Buddhist sites. The Srivijaya, Mataram, and Sailendra dynasties are among the powerful Buddhist kingdoms that have arisen and fallen throughout the Indonesian archipelago over the years ⁵¹.

The four competency requirements of pedagogical competence, social competence, personality competence, and professional competence are mastered by a Buddhist education teacher, who holds a Bachelor of Education degree from a Buddhist religious college ⁵². In order for the teacher to perform their duties professionally, receive effective and efficient coaching, and serve interested parties in line with their field of duties, teacher competency standards were developed to ensure that the teacher possesses the bare minimum of competency ⁵³.

Buddhist and moral education teachers have a variety of roles in assisting students in cultivating a mindset of religious moderation, who studied the role of Buddhist education teachers in implementing the value of religious moderation at Atisa Dipamkara Lippo Karawaci Middle School Tangerang. The aforementioned responsibilities include: (1) leading group discussions to teach students about responsibility; (2) introducing religious differences in schools; (3) managing the class to encourage collaboration

⁵¹ Aciri; Titi Surti Nastiti, "Jejak-jejak Peradaban Hindu-Buddha di Nusantara" 23, no. 1 (2014).

⁵² Sugianto Sugianto, "Tantangan Profesi Guru Pendidikan Agama Buddha di Tangerang," February 22, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/wfq3e>.

⁵³ Cholid Nur, *Menjadi Guru Profesional* (CV Presisi Cipta Media, 2021), <http://eprints.unwahas.ac.id/3030/>.

without discrimination; (4) modeling respect for others; and (5) motivating students to refrain from violence and respect school culture ⁵⁴.

Teacher of Confucian Religious Education

Generally speaking, Confucianism is not practiced elsewhere in the world, not even in a number of Asian countries including China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Nonetheless, Indonesian culture recognizes Confucianism as one of the six religions that are practiced there ⁵⁵.

The Soeharto administration outlawed all activities pertaining to Chinese culture and customs in Indonesia during the New Order era. As a result, many followers of traditional Chinese beliefs are not considered to be followers of one of the five officially recognized faiths. Adherents of these ideas are therefore obliged to choose one of the recognized religions, the majority of which are Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, or Protestantism, in order to avoid political issues (being accused of being atheists and communists). This was carried out because, according to Presidential Instruction Number 14 of 1967, the New Order authorities outlawed anything associated with China, including script and language ⁵⁶.

The Tionghoa ethnic minority is frequently the target of severe social stigma as Indonesian citizens because of their lack of feeling of national identity with the Republic of Indonesia, according to Rosidi (2015), who made observations about the Confucian religion and Chinese ethnicity in Surakarta. Tionghoa is believed to share some of these characteristics, even though the natives do not practice Confucianism. despite spending a considerable amount of time in Indonesia. In fact, Confucianism has cherished nationalism since early youth. It all started with obedience to parents and forefathers, solid morals, and respect for the elderly. The objective of the Confucian actualization process of nationalism is to fortify Indonesia's morally pure

⁵⁴ Septika Setiana and I Ketut Damana, "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Buddha Dan Budi Pekerti Dalam Pembentukan Sikap Moderasi Beragama Antarsiswa Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama Atisa Dipamkara Lippo Karawaci Tangerang" 10, no. 1 (2023).

⁵⁵ Yong Chen, "'The Last Confucian' in the Rice Paddy of Java," December 4, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22143955-00702002>.

⁵⁶ Gunawan Saidi, "Perkembangan agama Khonghucu di Indonesia: Studi Kasus Masyarakat Cina Penganut Khonghucu di Tangerang," 2009.

youth ⁵⁷. Under President KH. Abdurrahman Wahid's administration, followers of traditional Chinese values started to reclaim their identity following the New Order ⁵⁸.

The humanism heritage in Confucian and Islamic educational thought systems upholds human evolution and transformation in the context of education. Raising God/Way-aware, moral individuals who achieve perfection in order to fulfil their calling is a typical educational objective. In contrast to textual transmission, didacticism, and rote memorization, the humanist traditions of both Islam and Confucianism promote active learning pedagogies and a diverse curriculum ⁵⁹.

Teachers of Confucian religious education are aware that Confucian religious traditions also serve as a foundation for religious moderation. Since yin yang represents the philosophy, ideas, and spirituality of a Confucian who aspires to live in moderation, junzi (loyal and noble) Confucians see the world through its prism. Instead of being the extreme stance, yin yang is the middle one. According to Sutrisno (2019), something less is equally as harmful as something excessive.

Conclusion

This study underscores the pivotal role of teachers in fostering religious moderation and tolerance within Indonesia's diverse and multicultural society. Teachers, as moral role models and agents of change, are uniquely positioned to influence students' attitudes towards interreligious harmony and peaceful coexistence. Drawing on the perspectives of educators from various religious backgrounds—Islamic, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian—the research highlights how their unique approaches and experiences contribute to advancing the values of inclusivity, respect, and understanding.

⁵⁷ Achmad Rosidi, "Aktualisasi Ajaran Konfusianisme dalam Membangun Nasionalisme Etnis Tionghoa (Perspektif Etnis Tionghoa Surakarta)," *SMART* 1, no. 2 (December 16, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v1i2.249>.

⁵⁸ Saidi, "Perkembangan agama Khonghucu di Indonesia: Studi Kasus Masyarakat Cina Penganut Khonghucu di Tangerang."

⁵⁹ Charlene Tan and Azhar Ibrahim, "Humanism, Islamic Education, and Confucian Education," *Religious Education* 112, no. 4 (August 8, 2017): 394–406, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2016.1225247>.

The findings reveal that while educational policies and curricula emphasizing religious moderation provide a solid foundation, the successful implementation of these principles largely depends on the creativity, commitment, and neutrality of teachers in navigating sensitive religious and cultural contexts. Challenges such as sectarianism, identity politics, and societal polarization require educators to employ innovative strategies to uphold the values of moderation while maintaining respect for diverse beliefs. The implications of this study extend to policymakers and educational stakeholders, who must provide adequate training and support for teachers to act as facilitators of harmony. By investing in inclusive policies and fostering interreligious dialogue, Indonesia can further strengthen its commitment to building a more cohesive and peaceful society. Ultimately, this research affirms that education remains a powerful tool for promoting tolerance and bridging religious divides in a pluralistic world.

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