

Religious Moderation as a Counter-Narrative of Intolerance in Schools and Universities

Dwi Aprilianto¹, Siti Suwaibatul Aslamiyah², Salman Zahidi³, Nihaya Alifiya Crisnasari⁴, Trista Febbrianti⁵

¹Universitas Islam Lamongan, Indonesia; dwiaprilianto4324@gmail.com

²Universitas Islam Lamongan, Indonesia; suwaibatulaslamiyah@gmail.com

³Universitas Islam Lamongan, Indonesia; salmanzahidi04@gmail.com

⁴Universitas Islam Lamongan, Indonesia; nihayaalifiyacrisnasari@gmail.com

⁵Universitas Islam Lamongan, Indonesia; tristafebby36@gmail.com

Abstract

Keywords:
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This research is an academic effort that examines the phenomenon of intolerance and religious radicalization among high school students and college students in the cities of Lamongan and Surabaya; this study offers an actual theoretical discussion of the complex factors that shape young people's views on religious attitudes, This study aims to understand religious intolerance and radicalization among high school students and university students in Lamongan and Surabaya; Methode of this research are quantitative and qualitative methods to understand this problem's complexity. The study begins with a quantitative survey to obtain a general picture of intolerant attitudes in both public and private schools and universities in Lamongan and Surabaya. After the quantitative survey, in-depth interviews will be conducted with high school and university students. Lamongan and Surabaya were chosen based on their well-known Islamic base and substantial variety of associations. This research shows that the experience of interacting with followers of different religions has an extraordinary impact on a culture of openness and inclusive attitudes. Some open-minded young people who befriend non-Muslims do so not because they have been introduced to inclusive teachings or views but because their daily experiences have accustomed them to interacting with friends of different faiths.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:
Moderasi bearagama;
Kontra narasi;
Intoleransime;
Radikalisme;
Pendidikan

Kajian ini menawarkan pembahasan teoritis aktual mengenai faktor-faktor kompleks yang membentuk pandangan generasi muda terhadap sikap beragama, dan juga tentang awal mula mereka bisa terkena sikap intoleran. Tujuan Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami intoleransi dan radikalisasi agama di kalangan pelajar SMA dan mahasiswa di Lamongan dan Surabaya Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif atau kualitatif untuk memahami kompleksitas masalah ini dengan lebih baik. Kajian diawali dengan survei kuantitatif untuk memperoleh gambaran umum mengenai sikap intoleran baik di sekolah maupun universitas negeri maupun swasta di Lamongan dan Surabaya. Setelah Survei Kuantitatif, akan dilakukan wawancara mendalam terhadap siswa SMA/MA dan mahasiswa Universitas. Lamongan dan Surabaya dipilih berdasarkan basis Islam mereka yang terkenal dan banyaknya asosiasi yang dimiliki. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman berinteraksi dengan pemeluk agama yang berbeda memberikan dampak yang luar biasa terhadap budaya keterbukaan dan sikap inklusif. Beberapa siswa dan mahasiswa berpikiran terbuka dan berteman dengan non-Muslim melakukan hal tersebut bukan karena mereka telah diperkenalkan dengan ajaran atau pandangan yang inklusif, melainkan karena pengalaman sehari-hari yang telah membiasakan mereka berinteraksi dengan teman-teman yang berbeda agama.

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Corresponding Author:

Dwi Aprilianto: Universitas Islam Lamongan, Indonesia; dwiaprilianto4324@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, tolerance is encouraged by the government and civil society. A survey from Politica Research and Consulting (P.R.C.), conducted by the Indonesian Political Parameter (PPI) in 2022, showed that there is an increase in the value of the situation of ethnic tolerance in Indonesia based on the assessment of these figures, which is 7.32, or in the excellent category. Likewise, the situation of religious tolerance has a value of 6.85. Then, the security situation gets a score of 6.83, the situation of the civil role scores 6.57, the situation of human rights enforcement scores 6.05, and the economic situation has a value of 6.01 (Alazeez, AL-Momani, & Rababa, 2024; Purwati, P., Darisman, D. & Faiz, 2022; Sutisna & Khori, 2024).

BNPT 2021 released research results on seven state universities where radicalism is growing. The seven campuses are the University of Indonesia, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bogor Agricultural University, Diponegoro University, Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology, Airlangga University, and Brawijaya University. Radical groups have infiltrated them, and several students are sympathetic to the ideology of the radicalism movement.

Is religious tolerance in Indonesia running properly after knowing the various explanations above? As shown by multiple current studies, this is still a problem, especially in the field of education, especially in higher education. One of them is a survey conducted in 2020 by PPIM UIN Jakarta. This survey showed that most school students showed high or very high religious tolerance. Around 69.83% of students showed high religious tolerance, 20% showed very high tolerance towards adherents of other religions, and 30.16% showed low or very low religious tolerance (Jakarta, 2020) (Kader, Rofiq, & Ma`arif, 2024; Ma`arif et al., 2024, 2025).

Meanwhile, the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace surveyed the tolerance conditions of high school students in 2023, and 56.3% of respondents agreed that Islamic law was the basis for the state. Therefore, support for the perception that Pancasila is not a permanent ideology, meaning it can be replaced, is tremendous, namely 83.3% of respondents (SETARA Institute for, 2023). This survey proves that the study conducted by Setara Institute and PPIM has raised significant concerns about religious intolerance in Indonesia and how Indonesian youth deal with issues related to different spiritual beliefs and makes us realize that the rise of religious conservatism and dogmatism has had a significant impact on the younger generation of Indonesia, making them targets and actors that can be used to revive the intolerant face of Islam (Widyastuti, 2021).

Surveys related to radicalization show that individuals at an educational age are the most vulnerable to being exposed to radicalism or extreme ideology. They are at a developmental stage, searching for self-identity, developing self-confidence, and searching for the meaning of life (Aprilianto, 2022). Even if there is general agreement regarding vulnerability among young people, there is no single explanation that can confirm why a particular individual can be exposed to extreme radicalism or why he can join the network of certain extreme radical groups while others cannot (Kurzman,

2019)(Aryati & Suradi, 2022; Suyanta, Saifuddin, & Bahri, 2024; Willy Pedersen, Vestel, & Bakken, 2018).

The revelation of the infiltration of radicalization into campuses and high schools has prompted educators and policymakers to devise early strategies to deal with the growth and spread of radicalization (Ali, Afwadzi, Abdullah, & Mukmin, 2021; Djamaluddin, Bahri, Halim, Nurlailah, & Chabibi, 2024; Ma'arif, Rusydi, Hali, & Rohmah, 2023; Sirry, 2023). However, the survey data fails to capture the dynamics of teenagers' views on crucial issues such as societal pluralism and navigating religious differences. The infiltration of radicalization into campuses and high schools (SMA/SMK) was revealed to encourage educators and policymakers to develop initial strategies for dealing with the growth and spread of radicalization.

Husna & Thohir conducted a study at a public high school in Krembung, East Java. The results showed that the use of three main principles of moderation, such as *tawassuth* (middle), *ta'adul* (fair), and *tawâzun* (balanced), enables schools to create a fair and peaceful environment and to prepare future generations to develop their moderate views (Husna, U., 2020). Siswanto's study showed that the concept of Islamic moderation was not explicitly mentioned but reflected in material containing the values of Islamic moderation. The values include tolerance, Democracy, simplicity, justice, and harmony (Siswanto, 2019).

A study on the dissemination of moderation in Islamic religious education through contextual learning by Winata summarized that implementing Islamic religious education learning by using a contextual learning model can internalize Islamic moderation values in students (Winata, K. A., I. Solihin., R. Uus., 2020), Faisal et al (2021) concluded that Schools need to collaborate with parents to maintain the implementation of religious moderation, as the virtual presence of teachers cannot cover many areas of supervision, including what students are exposed to from the internet. When collaborative plans and actions become organizational habits in schools, the quality of education can be easily achieved, as it also depends on school-home collaboration (Amaroh, Prasetyoningrum, & Husain, 2024; Faisal S. Kamaludin, Tata Septayuda Purnama, 2021; Umar, Ismail, Rahmi, & Arifin, 2024).

This research seeks to understand how religious tolerance is understood and practiced by students and youth in their daily lives both at school, university and in the family environment (Ben K.C., 2018). The main aim of this study is to examine the views and practices of religious diversity among young Indonesians through indicators of religious moderation. Also, through this study, we know more about their daily practices and their unique and different ways of doing things, facing issues that they consider necessary, and accepting the idea of tolerance between religious communities. This study combines quantitative and qualitative data to understand how students understand and practice religious tolerance daily.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research will combine Quantitative and Qualitative methods for data collection; this combined method design provides a better understanding of the research problem than using only one. Quantitative has several advantages in terms of analysis because it can produce a certain level of certainty and detail. In contrast, qualitative research can provide a more holistic picture of the problem. (Bryman, 2006) (Sugiyono, 2012)

The research procedures are 1) problem formulation, 2) literature review, 3) creation of research instruments, 4) determining subjects, population, and research samples, 5) data collection, and 6) data analysis.

This study aims to understand religious intolerance and radicalization among high school and college students in Lamongan and Surabaya; quantitative or qualitative methods alone are insufficient to understand this problem's complexity better. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is a complete method that produces a more comprehensive understanding of the problems investigated.

We began our research by conducting a quantitative survey to obtain an overview of students' understanding of moderation and a general view of intolerant attitudes in both public and private schools and universities in Lamongan and Surabaya involving 145 university students and 225 School students in Lamongan and Surabaya. The total number of respondents was 378, 40.1% of whom were university students and 50.9% were students. The selection criteria were as follows: (1) Respondents were students from state universities (PTN), private universities (PTS), and state/private schools/madrasahs in Lamongan and Surabaya; (2) In the past year, they have been involved in group activities that reflect religious moderation in schools and universities; (3) Respondents have personal smartphones, access social media actively or passively. Female (69.8%) male (31.2%) For educational background, the majority of respondents were state university students, 30.1% Private University Students (69.9%) State high schools (75.1%), and the rest were private high schools (24.9%).

After a quantitative survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten (20) students from each campus. This qualitative data collection took place for one (1) month in two different cities where the campuses and schools were located. This research was conducted comprehensively from start to finish for three (3) months. After completing data collection and analysis at eight universities, a similar research method was also performed at nine (9) high schools to research and understand the views on religious diversity among high school students. The nine high schools located in Surabaya and Lamongan, East Java Province, were chosen based on the consideration of their well-known Islamic base, especially their association with Nahdlatul Ulama or NU, Muhammadiyah, and LDII and also because their population is mainly Christian, both Catholic and Protestant and also Hindu and Budha.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 students from nine (9) schools to assess their tolerance and attitudes inside and outside the school environment.

Quantitative surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face. Selected students answered our questions directly; their answers were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted. One difficult challenge we faced here was creating an atmosphere that allowed these teenagers to discuss religious issues that are often considered sensitive without peer pressure. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in schools/universities, cafeterias, and mosques to minimize discomfort. The ethical treatment of respondents was, of course, considered in all aspects.

A phenomenological approach (Kuswarno, 2009) is used to uncover and understand the phenomenon of intolerance. It focuses on descriptions related to the elements of intolerance. Understanding the values of religious moderation among pupils and students. Interpretative Grounded Theory approach (Egan, 2002) to find the typical characteristics of the emergence of radicalization and intolerance in pupils and students) emphasizes the question of what and how each person relates to each other so that it will produce a tendency towards intolerant behavior. This approach is also for understanding the concept of religious moderation in explaining and providing solutions to intolerance and radicalization in educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

In academic circles, various social science disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, criminology, law, policy studies, religion, and cultural studies can influence theories about radicalization processes. (Jeffrey Monaghan and Adam Molnar, 2016) Several academics have investigated the relationship between ideas and actions. This is in contrast to the definition of radicalization made by governments, which often emphasizes the "endpoint of resolution," namely violence or terrorism.

Alex Schmid conducted a literature review of radicalization from the micro, intermediate, and macro levels. He then said that research on radicalization should "approach the field of extremism and terrorism with greater attention to the processes by which individuals become accustomed to engaging in political violence without considering its limits." (Schmid, 2013) This method does not ignore religious knowledge because religion can be politicized. Therefore, it is essential to put forward some definitions of radicalization that follow scholarly knowledge here.

The Ministry of Religion revealed these indicators to be four factors that harmonize with the nature of Indonesian religion and nationality. The four indicators are national commitment, tolerance, nonviolence, and accommodating local culture. (Abdul Azis, 2021) National commitment helps examine the extent of influence of a person's point of view and attitude loyalty to the necessary national context. Tolerance refers to being open, generous, voluntary, and accepting of differences. Violence in Religious Moderation The context is the ideology and understanding that people want to change social and political systems instantly in the name of religion. Violence can be verbal, physical, and mental. The next indicator is adaptability to local culture. This

attitude shows the willingness to accept religious practices that accommodate local culture and traditions.

Many factors cause acts of violence or intolerant attitudes towards religious people, one of which is an extrinsic understanding of religion or using religion as a tool to achieve goals that are not the goals of religion itself but rather personal interests or using religion to gain social status and power this can also be a factor in the development of intolerance. Western society is apprehensive about young people who are exposed to understanding radicals as their fear increases regarding acts of terrorism that are the perpetrators originating from their young people (homegrown terrorism). (Ben K.C., 2018)(Emilia Aiello, Lidia Puigvert, dan Tinka Schubert, 2018)

However, not all experience this; this can be proven by the results of a survey filling out questions that we have conducted in several high schools and universities, both in the Lamongan and Surabaya areas as follows:

Table.1 Have You Ever Badmouthed Another Religion?

Never	95.4%
Rare	0.025%
Ever	0.021%
Often	0%

When we surveyed the question Have You Ever Badmouthed Other Religions? 95.4% of college and high school students in Lamongan and Surabaya answered never, while 0.025% answered rarely and others answered ever. (see Table 1) we also conducted direct interviews with students and university students to find out the reasons why they answered the questions we gave above such as Arin, one of the students who came from Muhammadiyah 19 Lamongan, responded that she had never denigrated other religions for the following reasons: following:

"The main reason is because every religion teaches goodness and love. Badmouthing other religions will only divide and create hatred. I believe that differences are part of the richness of our lives, and I prefer to focus on similarities that can strengthen relationships between religious communities." (Interview with Arin, August 22, 2024, MA Muhammadiyah 19 Lamongan)

We also interviewed Sherly, a student at SMAN 8 Surabaya, who also had a different answer; she answered that she had badmouthed other religions for the following reasons:

"I was involved in a heated discussion on social media. I admit that I may have spoken without thinking and got caught up in my emotions. My comments were offensive, and I deeply regret them now. I immediately deleted them and wrote a public apology. In addition, I also tried to contact some of the people who were offended to apologise

personally. I want to learn from this mistake." (Interview with Sherly, August 8, 2024, SMAN 8 Surabaya)

The issue of intolerance occurs a lot, especially with the influence of the rapid development of the era and the rapid development of technology has a positive and negative impact on every sector and aspect of life, with the ease of access given everyone currently has the same opportunity to receive information, but on the other hand with the ease of access given provides an opportunity for new polemics, namely the reporting of false information, therefore every citizen must be given an understanding of selecting and filtering every information or news received by checking the truth of every information obtained. That way, it will suppress every false information circulating in society because, based on reality, many intolerant actions are based on receiving false information or misunderstanding information.

We also provide questions regarding religious differences and bullying in the name of religion as follows:

Table.2 Have you ever encountered bullying in the name of religion or religious affiliation in the school environment?

Never 63.9%

Ever 34%

Often 2.1%

In the table above, 63.9% of respondents answered never, 34% responded ever, and 2.1% answered often. From the number we obtained, it is undoubtedly something hazardous because the figure of 34% is close to the majority of respondents who responded to our questions. It also shows that the lack of understanding of tolerance both in religious differences and religious affiliations is also one of the factors in the occurrence of religious intolerance; the data is also strengthened by the results of interviews we conducted with high school students and college students in the Lamongan and Surabaya areas as follows:

"In my school, religious diversity is highly respected. We have students from various religious backgrounds, and it is always appreciated and considered a wealth, not a problem. So far, I have never seen any bullying that occurs because of religious differences. I think this is because the school always emphasizes the importance of tolerance and mutual respect. We are often given an understanding that every religion teaches goodness, and we are taught to focus on similarities, not differences. Programs such as interfaith activities are also usually carried out, so a sense of mutual understanding and respect grows. (Interview with Agnes, August 10, 2024, SMA 3 Lamongan.)"

Not only from among students, we also conducted interviews among university students as follows:

"I have witnessed several acts of bullying on campus that occurred because of religious differences. Usually, these acts are not physical but more verbal or social isolation. So, several students in my class are teased because of their religious beliefs. They are often

called derogatory names or excluded from study groups. For example, when there is a group assignment, some students with certain religious beliefs are left alone or are deliberately not invited to participate by their classmates. Most of them try to ignore the treatment and do not show too much emotional reaction. They tend to keep their feelings to themselves. I also know of one student who tried to report this incident to the campus. However, the follow-up was unclear then, and the problem was not resolved properly." (Interview with Katarina, August 8, 2024 UNESA)

Table 3 Do you accept being friends with people of different religions?

Received 97%
I don't know 3%
Objection 0%

As many as 97% of respondents answered that they accepted, the remaining 3% answered that they did not know, and as many as 0% responded that they objected. It has undoubtedly brought very positive survey results because most people want to be friends with people of different religions.

The survey results above (see Tables 1, 2, and 3) show that the attitude of tolerance among school and university students in Lamongan and Surabaya is generally good, with the majority not badmouthing other religions and accepting friends from different faiths. However, the reported cases of religious-based bullying indicate that there is still a need to improve tolerance education and monitoring of intolerant behavior, especially on social media.

After learning about various definitions and understandings of religious moderation, we also surveyed how far Lamongan and Surabaya students are from religious moderation, as shown in the table below.

Table.4 Have you ever experienced verbal or physical bullying and exclusion of people of other religions?

Never 98.7%
Ever 0.013%
Often 0%

As many as 98.7% of respondents answered never, from our very significant question with the word religious moderation; the results of the interview also reinforced this that we conducted with one of the UNISLA students who had a close friend but a different religion,

"In my experience, I have always tried to be inclusive and respectful of religious differences. Everyone has the right to practice their beliefs; I greatly value diversity. And I always start from a place of respect and a desire to learn. I enjoy listening to other people's views and learning from them, including their religious beliefs. I believe

we can enrich ourselves and build a more harmonious environment by being open to differences – (Interview with Ambar, August 12, 2024, UNISLA.)

However, 0.013% of the respondents answered yes, which means they still do not understand the meaning of religious moderation. We not only give one question; we also provide questions about the application of religious moderation.

Table 5 Have you ever witnessed verbal or physical bullying and exclusion of people of other religions in an educational setting?

Never 74.7%
Ever 24%
Often 1.3%

From the table above (Table.5), we can see that as many as 74.7% of respondents have never witnessed verbal or physical bullying and exclusion of people of other religions in the educational environment. However, 24% of respondents have also seen it, and the remaining 1.3% stated that they often do so. It is undoubtedly a warning and a lesson for us that the understanding of religious moderation has not been fully understood and implemented correctly.

Education is one of the keys to addressing the problem of religious moderation. Education that promotes a better understanding of different religions and beliefs and the values of tolerance can help prevent radicalization and extremism. Effective education and awareness programs can involve religious groups, civil society, and government. (Rochman, 2023) There needs to be a comprehensive understanding so that an action does not conflict with the common good. It can be achieved through careful planning and handling. Educational institutions have an essential and strategic role in fostering religious moderation. It also can be achieved through an academic approach by paying attention to the values of peace, which are then internalized into the school education curriculum.(Purbajati, 2020) therefore, implementing religious moderation character education is essential in providing understanding and insight from early childhood education. According to the Ministry of Religion in the book Religious Moderation, Moderation requires openness, acceptance, and cooperation between different groups, including tribes, ethnicities, cultures, and religions. So that students who are given an understanding of religious moderation will be able to position themselves well in a pluralistic society.(Abdul Azis, 2021) (Umar, Ismail, Syawie, & Khotimah, 2021)

However, in such circumstances, conventional approaches to character education may not be sufficient to equip students with the maturity to handle the various controversial and ambiguous moral issues that arise in both the natural and virtual worlds. Thus, educators must strengthen students' ethical standards and concepts in real and virtual communities. We can match the implementation or application that follows the solution above with the table below.

Table.6 What do you do when you witness physical or verbal bullying and exclusion of people of other religions in an educational environment?

Allowing or ignoring 7.5%
Reporting to teacher or lecturer 54.4%
Defending the bullied and ostracized 37.2%
Support bullying 0.9%

The table above (Table 6) shows that 7.5% of respondents ignore bullying of people of other religions, but 54.4% of respondents have the initiative to report to a Lecturer or Teacher, and 37.2% defend bullying victims. The last is that only 0.9% support bullying. The most results from survey results above, namely having the initiative to report and protect victims, are also in line with the results of the interview that we have conducted with one of the students of SMKN 1 Lamongan as follows,

So far, I have never seen or been involved in a situation where someone was treated differently or singled out because of their religion. However, if I encounter such a situation, I would immediately take a stand to support my friends and ensure they feel accepted and respected. I would try to talk to the person discriminated against to understand their perspective and encourage more open and respectful communication. (Interview with Salwa, August 21, 2024 SMKN 1 Lamongan)

Table. 7 Where do you learn about tolerance, nonviolence, national commitment, and respect for tradition?

Teacher 53.1%
Parents 28.3%
Organization 13.2%
Friends 3.3%
Don't know 2.1%

From the explanations in Table 7, we can see how vital the role of a teacher or lecturer is in the implementation of religious moderation, as conveyed by UINSA students when we interviewed them,

I learned about the importance of tolerance from an early age, both from my parents and teachers at school. My parents always emphasized that everyone has the right to believe and practice their beliefs and that those differences should be respected. At school, my teachers also played a significant role in teaching us about diversity and how important it is to respect friends who may have different backgrounds or religions. My parents taught us tolerance through everyday examples. They always showed respect to everyone, no matter what their background was. For example, when there were family events or social gatherings, they made sure that everyone felt accepted and respected. In addition, they also taught me not to judge others based on their beliefs but on their actions and Character. (Interview with Anisa, UINSA Student, August 14, 2024)

To build religious moderation based on the role of conservators, teachers or lecturers are the parties who maintain the values of religious moderation according to their existing values; this is also agreed by Religious tolerance, the values of justice, balance, simplicity, unity, and brotherhood and other values of religious moderation should be maintained in the school environment. It can be fostered by routine activities, such as gathering together and binding students through student promises. We can see various activities from the survey results regarding the role of educational institutions in religious moderation for high school students and students in the Lamongan and Surabaya areas.

Table. 8 Does your educational institution convey or socialize religious moderation?

Delivering 88.1%
Don't know 9.4%
Did not deliver 2.5%

As many as 88.1% of respondents answered yes, which means that there is still a concern in educational institutions in implementing religious moderation. In comparison, the other 9.4% did not know whether religious moderation had ever been conveyed in their academic institutions; finally, there were 2.5% who did not convey.

We also provide questions regarding the role of educational institutions in carrying out interfaith activities as follows.

Table. 9 Does your educational institution accommodate extracurricular activities involving interfaith activities?

Accommodating 45.3%
Don't know 16.4%
It does not accommodate 38.3%

The table above (Table. 9) shows that only 45.3% accommodate interfaith activities in educational institutions, some of them are 16.4% do not know whether it is implemented in their academic institutions or not, and the last 38.3% do not accommodate interfaith activities in educational institutions. We also asked for an explanation from one of the respondents, who answered that his school accommodates extra activities by folding interfaith activities as follows,

My educational institution places great emphasis on the importance of tolerance and diversity. One very effective way is through extracurricular activities that involve students from various religious backgrounds. My school often holds activities inviting all students' participation, regardless of their religion or beliefs. These activities are not just for fun but are also designed to strengthen relationships between students from

different faiths and to introduce us to other perspectives. One activity I remember is the interfaith discussion program held regularly. In this program, students from various religions sit together to talk about their beliefs, discuss similarities and differences, and learn from each other in a respectful atmosphere. In addition, there are also social activities such as community service or community service that involve students from different religions, where we work together for a common goal regardless of religious differences. (Interview with Andi, a student of SMADA Lamongan, August 14, 2024)

The second role is to be an innovator, and innovations can be made to build religious moderation. One learning model cannot be applied in all situations, conditions, and environments. There needs to be adjustments so that the existing environment can accept it. Innovation can also be aimed at strengthening students' religious Character and nationalism. It is done through activities like celebrating big days involving all parties. In short, these innovations can be done through a series of activities, changes in behavior, or others. (Purbajati, 2020) This also follows the data we obtained through a survey of high school and college students in the Lamongan and Surabaya areas. As many as 91.6% carried out national activities, 5.1% did not know, and as many as 3.3% did not carry out.

Table. 10 Does your educational institution carry out national activities such as flag ceremonies and commemorating the Republic of Indonesia's Independence Day?

Implemented 91.6%
Don't know 5.1%
Not implementing 3.3%

We do not only ask about nationalist activities; we also ask questions about activities with the aim of religious moderation as follows:

Table. 11 Does your educational institution carry out activities aiming for religious harmony or moderation?

Implemented 88.7%
Don't know 9.7%
Not implementing 1.6%

As many as 88.7% of respondents in their educational institutions carry out activities with the aim of religious moderation. In comparison, 9.7% do not know whether the activities are carried out or not, and the remaining 1.6% do not carry them out.

We also provide several other questions that are still related to understanding and applying religious moderation as follows:

Table. 12 Do you agree with celebrating the holidays of people of other religions?

Agree 58.2%
Disagree 24.3%
Don't know 17.5%

In the table above, 58.2% of respondents agreed to give Eid greetings to people of different religions, 24.3% disagreed, and the remaining 17.5% responded that they did not know.

To strengthen each answer, we asked respondents why they answered the questions above, as follows:

"I have many friends from different religions, and whenever they celebrate a holiday, I always wish them a happy holiday, and vice versa. I think this strengthens our relationship and shows that we respect our differences. Although I understand that some people think it is against the teachings of religion because everyone has a different interpretation of religion. But saying happy holidays does not mean we are changing our beliefs. It is more about respecting other people's feelings and happiness. Tolerance is essential, and congratulations are a simple form of tolerance." (Interview with Nadia UNAIR Student, August 8, 2024)

Table. 13 From a religious perspective, is helping other religions permitted?

Agree 88.4%
Don't know 9.4%
Disagree 2.2%

In Table 13, 88.7% of respondents answered that they agreed, the rest responded that they did not know (9.4%), and the rest responded that they disagreed (2.2%).

In the interview we conducted to find out the reasons why respondents answered the questions we asked, we interviewed one of the students in the Lamongan and Surabaya areas as follows:

"Helping fellow human beings, regardless of religion, is good. My religion teaches us to help each other. This value should be applied in all relationships, regardless of religious differences." (Interview with Vera, Student of Muhammadiyah University of Lamongan, August 7, 2024)

Table. 14: Do you accept living next door to people of other religions?

Implemented 88.7%

Don't know 9.7%

Not implementing 1.6%

In table.14 Implement (88.7%): Most respondents said they accept being neighbours with adherents of other religions, indicating a high societal tolerance level. It shows that 88.7% of respondents feel comfortable living with individuals of different religions. Of those who answered Don't know (9.7%), Almost 10% of respondents did not give a definite answer, perhaps because of uncertainty, lack of direct interaction with neighbours of other religions, or inability to decide. This group is uncertain, possibly influenced by environmental conditions or government policies. The rest answered Not implementing (1.6%): Only a small number of respondents do not accept being neighbours with adherents of other religions, indicating that intolerance related to religious diversity at the neighbour level is very low. This figure reflects a relatively high level of social tolerance in society, where the majority are ready to live with people from different religious backgrounds. The small number of disagreements indicates that this issue is not a source of major societal conflict. This is also in line with the results of our interviews with UNESA students as follows:

I believe that living side by side with followers of other religions reflects tolerance and respect for differences. In this increasingly diverse world, we must be able to accept each other. The reason is simple: we all have the right to live in peace and harmony. Religions may differ, but we can find common ground in human values such as respecting each other, helping others, and creating a safe environment for everyone. (Interview with Vera, Student of Muhammadiyah University of Lamongan, August 7, 2024)

Table 15 Do you agree with non-Muslims as public leaders?

Agree 46.9%

Disagree 30.7%

Undecided 22.4%

In table.15 Agree (46.9%): Almost half of the respondents agreed that non-Muslims could become public leaders. This shows a more open view and accepts leaders from various religious backgrounds. Some answered Disagree (30.7%): Some respondents disagreed, indicating a more conservative group that might want a public leader among Muslims. The rest answered Undecided (22.4%): This group is quite large, suggesting that many people are unsure or may be influenced by particular political, social, or cultural conditions. These figures show that society is divided in its views on non-Muslim leadership. Although most agree, disagreement and doubt are also quite significant. This may be influenced by the dynamics of identity politics or religious

discourse in Indonesia's public leadership context.

In recent years, several studies have examined what can be done to encourage radicalized individuals to reintegrate into society and lead everyday lives. What are effective intervention strategies to facilitate deradicalization? There is widespread agreement among scholars and practitioners that there is no single, universally applicable model of deradicalization. Any attempt to understand the factors that drive deradicalization for an individual must be based on or derived from a specific context. Renowned deradicalization expert Daniel Koehler has cited variations in deradicalization models developed in different parts of the world, and such interventions cannot simply be lifted from one country to another or even from one region within a country. According to Koehler, Western deradicalization programs focus heavily on economic assistance and counseling but pay little attention to the ideology associated with deradicalization. In comparison, deradicalization programs in Middle Eastern countries "rely heavily on theological elements." (Koehler, 2015)

To find out how far this has affected students in the Lamongan and Surabaya areas, we conducted a survey and interviews as follows.

Table. 16 Do you agree to maintain togetherness and the equality of having a nation, a unifying language, a homeland, the Pancasila ideology, the 1945 constitution, and the red and white flag?

Agree 96.2%

Disagree 2.6%

Undecided 1.2%

Table 16 shows the percentage of citizens' or respondents' attitudes regarding their willingness to maintain the main elements that form the identity of the Indonesian nation, such as the nation, the unifying language, the homeland, the Pancasila ideology, the 1945 Constitution, and the red and white flag. Here is the explanation:

Agree (96.2%): Most respondents agreed to maintain these elements. This shows that most of the community has a strong sense of pride and commitment to the values of Indonesian nationality. This figure indicates a high level of nationalism; respondents feel it is essential to maintain national unity and identity. Disagree (2.6%): This small percentage suggests that a segment of society does not agree with preserving togetherness within the framework of these elements of nationality. Although the number is small, this could be caused by various factors, such as dissatisfaction with the government or different interpretations of ideology.

Undecided (1.2%): This group indicates uncertainty in their stance. They may be unsure about the importance of these elements in national life, or they feel that issues need to be reviewed before making a total commitment. Overall, these figures show that nationalism and a sense of national identity remain strong among Indonesians,

with a majority strongly supporting maintaining the symbols and foundations of the state.

Table 17 Do you agree that Pancasila is the basis of the Republic of Indonesia?

Agree 97.6%

Disagree 1.1%

Undecided 1.3%

Table .17 shows the respondents' attitudes towards Pancasila as the basis of the Republic of Indonesia. As follows:

Agree (97.6%): This percentage shows that most respondents support Pancasila as the foundation of the state. This indicates that the values contained in Pancasila, such as unity, humanity, social justice, and the one and only God, are still relevant and accepted by most Indonesians. This high percentage also reflects the strong sense of nationalism and the public's belief that Pancasila is the proper foundation to maintain the integrity of the state. **Disagree (1.1%):** Although the number is small, some respondents do not support Pancasila as the foundation of the state. Various reasons, such as different political views, dissatisfaction with the country's current situation, or tendencies towards other ideologies, can cause this group. Although a minority, this view is still significant in Indonesia's socio-political dynamics. **Undecided (1.3%):** Undecided Respondents may not yet have a firm or in-depth view of the role of Pancasila as the foundation of the state. They may need more information or consider other factors before taking a clear stance. This percentage also shows that a small portion of the public may view Pancasila in a more critical or reflective framework. Overall, this table confirms that support for Pancasila as the foundation of the state is firm, with only a little rejection or doubt from the public.

We also conducted interviews to find out the reasons why respondents answered the questions we gave as follows:

"In my opinion, Pancasila is an ideology that unites us all, even though we have different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Pancasila upholds tolerance, humanity, and social justice, making it suitable for the pluralistic Indonesian society. I also strongly agree that togetherness, in this case, is important because it keeps us united as a nation. The language of unity, for example, is significant for communication and interaction between ethnic groups in Indonesia. The homeland, the Pancasila ideology, the 1945 Constitution, and the Red and White flag are symbols that we must continue to maintain so that they are not lost in globalization. They are our identity as the Indonesian nation." (Interview with Aida, Student of Surabaya State University, August 5, 2024)

DISCUSSION

The discussion surrounding understanding of religious moderation among students in Lamongan and Surabaya reveals complex dynamics influenced by cultural, educational, and societal factors. This analysis draws upon insights from various social

science disciplines to explore how these factors interact with the processes of radicalization and religious intolerance. Religious moderation among students in Lamongan and Surabaya is promising yet complex. While the majority exhibit positive attitudes toward tolerance and acceptance, intolerance underscores the need for ongoing education and engagement. By fostering an environment that prioritizes mutual respect and understanding, educational institutions can play a crucial role in promoting religious moderation and reducing the risk of radicalization and extremism. (Jalil, 2021; Kader et al., 2024; Saim & El-Muhammady, 2025).

Social intolerance is increasingly prominent in the rapidly developing digital era, especially among the younger generation. This generation grew up amidst technological advances and comprehensive access to information, facing new challenges in practicing ethical values in social interactions (Latifa, Fahri, Subchi, & Mahida, 2022; Salim, Zaini, Wahib, Fauzi, & Asnawan, 2024; Zuhdi, 2018). In the increasingly advanced digital era, the young generation and students' attention to moral and ethical values is experiencing a crisis, so the risk impacts the surrounding environment (Choirin, M., Dwijayanto, A., Yumna & Muaz, 2024). This phenomenon is very worrying, and the scale is almost entering the red zone if it is not immediately addressed by providing education and good digital literacy. They tend not to be able to respect other people and have minimal empathy for others, whether they are of the same religion, tribe, or group. High exposure to social media, online platforms, and digital content has created an environment where civility, empathy, and respect for differences are often overlooked (Abidin, Fatawi, & Kausar, 2025; Muid, Shohib, & Askarullah, 2024).

To overcome the problems and dynamics above, changing the media around creeds and beliefs in education is essential to become the primary foundation for training students in this increasingly modern era. It is argued that education is necessary to improve societal commitment processes and to prevent violent extremism, whether it is provided through school systems, clubs, and community associations or at home (Sas, M., Ponnet, K., Reniers, G., 2020) to increase digital literacy to filter inaccurate information, and encourage responsible and empathetic use of social media. Positive injections always hold fast in digitalization, and this is a spotlight for students to be accountable for spreading and viewing on social media (Arifin & Kartiko, 2022; Fathullah, Ulfiah, Mulyanto, Gaffar, & Khorri, 2023; Khotimah, Krisnawati, Abusiri, Mubin, & Wardi, 2024).

From the data of students in Lamongan and Surabaya, the government, schools, parents, society, and Islamic organizations have tried to prevent intolerance and radicalism together. All had work to address this quite serious problem. For this reason, it is necessary immediately for students who are future leaders to be ideally equipped with an education that guides them away from discrimination. Religious moderation teaching and practicing in programs of schools and universities in Lamongan and Surabaya strengthens freedom, equality, justice, tolerance, and unity based on Pancasila. Students included in Generation Z are a generation born in the

technological era and have been in contact with technology since early on. They adapt very quickly to various technological developments (Jayatissa, 2023). Therefore, they have an essential role as agents of religious moderation. They can socialize the content of religious moderation among the community to create a harmonious, peaceful and harmonious life.

Religious moderation in the educational context of Lamongan and Surabaya is a vital counter-narrative to intolerance. While there is a clear institutional awareness and commitment to promoting tolerance, implementing interfaith activities remains challenging. Continuous efforts to innovate educational practices, coupled with a strong emphasis on national identity (S. Z. et Al, 2023; Ma`arif, Rofiq, & Sirojuddin, 2022; Yasin, Chakim, Susilawati, & Muhammad, 2023), can help cultivate an environment where religious diversity is accepted and celebrated. This approach enhances social cohesion and contributes to a more peaceful and harmonious society.

Religious moderation is not only an issue, but it has been practiced in schools and universities. Also, the content is already integrated into all subjects. The learning is mainly focused on the eye cluster Islamic Religious Education lessons inserted in the school environment. Payload substantive moderation comes in Sub-subjects and exists in all subjects (Apologia, Mas'od, Masykuri, Hidayati, & Putra, 2024). Even specifically, the load is moderated. Religion will be emphasized in the sub-themes or special topics in the subject of Islamic Studies. Moderation charges are included in the curriculum and implemented based on implementation guidelines. KMA number 184 also contains guidelines, such as "Implementation of Religious Moderation, Strengthening Character Education, and Anti-Education Corruption (Kemenag, 2019).

We can conclude the survey results conducted in Lamongan and Surabaya to understand how university and high school students access radical content and their attitudes toward national identity and symbols. It showed that students also access radical content out of curiosity and read the content they find. In terms of maintaining the unity and identity of the Indonesian nation, most respondents agreed to support these elements, indicating a high level of nationalism. Tolerance can occur in various forms and can be influenced by multiple factors, including local cultural patterns and independent technology. Community-based initiatives, education, and self-deradicalization all play an essential role.

School or university culture is used as a forum to instill the values of religious moderation. The effectiveness of creating a school or university culture contains the value of religious moderation, which is very much determined by the expertise of the school or university administrator, expansion from school or university principals, Lectures, teaching staff, and staff education (Akmalia, Nst, & Siahaan, 2023; Burga & Damopolii, 2022; Idrus, Abidin, Saputra, Rahman, & Shobri, 2022). Religious moderation interventions in school or university will be faster if they are done on all fronts: school community life, nationalist extracurricular activities, intracurricular activities, and habituation at school without any fanaticism, diversity, and intolerance.

Based on the description and Survey above, the big role of teachers (53,1%) and parents (28,3%) in educating children about religious moderation can be characterized by giving children the freedom to socialize, such as interacting with anyone older or not, playing with friends in the local area by applying existing rules without any distinction based on tribe or religion, or deliberation if you encounter differences of opinion with the person you are talking to. Students may have moderate attitudes toward daily habits (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Nadlifah, Siregar, Ismaiyah, & Maulidah, 2023).

The results of this survey are encouraging, showing that most pupils and students have a very high attitude toward religious tolerance. Around (88.4%) of students are classified as having a high attitude of religious tolerance with a willingness to help each other even though they have different religions, (88.7) are classified as having a very high tolerance towards adherents of other religions with an attitude of acceptance of neighbors even though they have different beliefs And Also students' in Lamongan and Surabaya commitment to Pancasila is very high (97,6 %), assessing that Pancasila the best formula to unify the nation, is final and cannot be changed for any reason for a peaceful Indonesia.

In this building of tolerance and effect of religious moderation that remains strong in Lamongan and Surabaya, this does not mean that the potential threat of eroding national cohesion is nil. It cannot be denied that several incidents reflect how tolerance between religious communities must continue to be maintained and strengthened.

To continue to maintain tolerance between students. Policyholders must pay attention to several things. First, promote the beauty of differences and social interaction across religious groups between students and university students. Second, activities that support religious moderation should be increased by increasing the culture of religious tolerance among the academic community and respect for diversity and minority groups. Third, programs or policies to increase student religious tolerance by considering student demographics

CONCLUSION

During this period of identity formation, these teenagers (students) experience discomfort regarding their individuality and beliefs. As a result, they might adopt an intolerant mentality as a form of self-defense against confusion and the search for identity. This research at Schools and universities in Lamongan and Surabaya shows that the experience of interacting with followers of different religions has an extraordinary impact on a culture of openness and inclusive attitudes. Some open-minded young people who befriend non-Muslims do so not because they have been introduced to inclusive teachings or views but because their daily experiences have accustomed them to interacting with friends of different faiths. For example, when a non-Muslim friend wishes you a Happy Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha, invites them to hang out together, helps with school assignments, when a neighbor attends

celebrations and events or religious holidays, and shares food. It is doubtful that an exclusive perspective will form within theology or their religious beliefs. This means that views on differences in religious beliefs are more complex than epistemic issues. Through interactions between groups, these teenagers can renew their perspectives and intuitions.

Theoretically, the research builds a very empirical relationship between local wisdom and absolute religion. The discourse of religious moderation, which relies on national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture, will be strengthened by the results of this research. Meanwhile, practically, this research becomes a model for regions with similar characteristics to their locus to take advantage of the value of local wisdom and moderate religious understanding to build strong tolerance among students in Indonesia.

The limitation of the segmentation of educational institutions that are thought to teach radical ideology and exclusivity is that the researcher has attempted to find a sample of educational institutions, both public and private, with several religious affiliations. The following research plan is that the researcher will focus more on specific madrasa/Islamic boarding school educational institutions that are often perceived as an educational institution that contain exclusive teachings that teach intolerance. It is essential to research the curriculum taught to students, the educational track record of the teachers, and the daily activities that support the curriculum. However, the researcher believes it will not be easy to do this due to the possibility of rejection by some educational institutions suspected of being affiliated with radical Islam to be appointed in research.

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