



The Influence of Religious Moderation on Youth's Mindset in Understanding Religion and Social Life

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of religious moderation on the mindset of young people in understanding their religion and social life. With the increasing challenges to tolerance between religious communities, religious moderation is considered important to shape the character of young people who are more inclusive and open-minded. This study was conducted through a qualitative approach with methods, interviews and surveys on young people in several communities and universities. The results of the study show that young people who practice religious moderation tend to have more critical mindsets, are open to differences, and have a more moderate understanding of religion and are in accordance with the social values that exist in society

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation is a concept that emphasizes a balanced approach to understanding and practicing religious teachings, avoiding extremism in the form of both religious fundamentalism and overly liberal interpretations. This concept seeks to integrate religious values with the context of a diverse social life, thereby creating harmony in a society filled with diversity. In Indonesia, religious moderation is not only a religious teaching but also a necessity to strengthen national unity, especially among young people. Young people are a crucial group in building the nation's future. They are agents of change with great potential to bring new values, including those of diversity and tolerance. However, in this era of globalization, young people are often exposed to extreme ideologies, both from radical groups and from external influences that conflict with moderate values. Therefore, a proper understanding of religious moderation is crucial for fostering critical, open, and inclusive thinking among young people. The phenomenon of radicalization involving young people is increasing in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. The spread of extreme ideologies often begins with young people who feel alienated or lack a moderate religious education. In this regard, religious moderation plays a crucial role in instilling the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and appreciation for differences within society. Religious moderation education provided from an early age in schools and within the family environment can strengthen youth's understanding of how to practice religion in a balanced manner and avoid falling into extreme views that can damage social relationships and societal harmony.

Therefore, the influence of religious moderation on youth mindsets is crucial to determine the extent to which moderate attitudes can shape a more inclusive and social understanding of religion among the younger generation. By identifying this influence, we can design more effective educational programs and policies to shape the character of tolerant and broad-minded youth. In this context, more in-depth research is needed to explore how religious moderation can be implemented in the lives of youth and how it impacts their mindset in facing a challenging and dynamic social life.

The Importance of Religious Moderation Education for Youth: Moderate religious education is not only crucial for instilling religious values but also as a tool for shaping positive social attitudes. Previous studies have shown that youth who receive a moderate religious education tend to be more open-minded toward religious and cultural differences. They are better able to establish harmonious social relationships and collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds (Hedayati, 2021). One effective model for religious moderation education is through the integration of religious education with a curriculum that encourages interfaith dialogue, teaches values of tolerance, and provides space for youth to think critically about religious teachings within a broader social context (Azra, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious education that teaches religious moderation can help prevent radicalization among youth. Hasan stated that by prioritizing an inclusive, open, and tolerant attitude in religious understanding, youth can avoid the influence

of extreme teachings. In the Indonesian context, where religious radicalization remains a major challenge, religious moderation education has the potential to reduce the potential for youth to become involved in groups with extreme and exclusive religious views. This helps create a younger generation that is more capable of accepting differences and resolving conflicts without violence. Hasan, S. (2021).

Religious moderation plays a crucial role in reducing social polarization by creating youth who can coexist peacefully despite their religious and cultural differences. Youth equipped with a moderate understanding tend to be more adaptable and cooperative in diverse environments, as they are taught to value diversity as a wealth, not a threat. In an increasingly technologically connected world where information can spread rapidly, religious moderation empowers youth to filter information from various sources, including those containing extreme teachings (Hidayat, A. (2020).

According to Wicaksono, education that teaches the values of tolerance, interfaith respect, and a moderate understanding of religious teachings can shape young people who not only understand their own religion well but are also open to other religions. This education provides an important foundation for young people to avoid exclusive attitudes that can lead to social segregation or even violence between religious groups. Wicaksono, A. (2019) discusses the challenges faced by young people in dealing with information circulating in the digital age. Ramadhan stated that technology and social media can be fertile ground for the spread of radical ideologies that can influence young people's mindsets. Therefore, it is important to introduce religious moderation from an early age so that young people can respond to information wisely. Ramadhan also emphasized that with religious moderation, young people are taught to think critically and consider various perspectives when viewing differences, whether in religion, culture, or outlook on life. Ramadhan, A. (2022).

According to Nugroho, education based on the values of peace, unity, and mutual respect is highly effective in shaping a mindset that is not only tolerant but also ready to contribute to a diverse social life. In the Indonesian context, this type of education helps young people better appreciate plurality and live in peace despite religious and cultural differences. Nugroho, D. (2019).

Radicalization and Its Impact on Youth: Youth radicalization often begins with ideologies that promote narrow views of religion and social life. Many studies show that the main factors causing radicalization are a lack of inclusive and moderate religious education, as well as the influence of groups that promote extremism (Bakker, 2018). Therefore, religious moderation, which teaches balance and tolerance, is considered one solution to reduce the potential for radicalization, especially among young people.

METHODOLOGY

The research method used to examine the influence of religious moderation on youth mindsets in understanding religion and social life utilizes a qualitative approach with a case study design. This qualitative approach was chosen because the purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding

of youth perspectives on religious moderation and how this influences their understanding of religion and interactions in their social lives. This approach is particularly appropriate for understanding the social and cultural contexts that influence youth mindsets, which are often complex and diverse. Through this approach, researchers can explore youth experiences and perspectives in depth and gain an understanding of how they approach religion in a pluralistic social context (Creswell, 2014).

Case studies are used in this research to focus on the phenomenon of religious moderation in the lives of youth in several regions with distinct social and religious characteristics. Case studies allow researchers to more deeply observe how religious moderation is implemented in diverse social conditions and its impact on youth mindsets. This research is not limited to one location, but covers several areas representing religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia, to provide a more comprehensive picture of how religious moderation is implemented and accepted by young people from various social backgrounds (Yin, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Youth's Mindset About Religion

Young people's mindsets about religion are strongly influenced by various factors, including education, social environment, and exposure to diverse religious views. In the context of religious moderation, young people's mindsets can become more inclusive and open to differences, both in terms of religious teachings and in how they interact with others. In Indonesia, which has a very high level of religious diversity, it is important for young people to develop a moderate mindset, namely an attitude that is non-extremist, open, and respectful of differences in understanding religion and social life. Young people are often at a very dynamic stage in life, where they are searching for identity and values that can shape their worldview, including in the context of religion. In this regard, religious moderation plays a crucial role in guiding them in understanding religion in a balanced way, not too rigid or limited to one extreme view (Azra, 2018).

Young people's mindsets about religion are also influenced by the religious education they receive. If the religious education they receive tends to teach a more exclusive and literal interpretation of religious teachings, young people may develop a narrow mindset, even leading to radicalization. Conversely, education that emphasizes the importance of religious moderation can help young people see religion as a path to building harmonious relationships with others, respecting differences, and living in a pluralistic society. Moderate religious education teaches that even though each individual holds different religious beliefs, they still have the same right to be respected and treated fairly in social life (Hedayati, 2021). Young people's mindsets about religion are also influenced by their social interactions with others, both within religious communities and in society at large. Young people who frequently engage in interfaith dialogue tend to have a broader view of religion and social life. They learn to see religion not merely as a restrictive teaching, but as a tool for creating harmony and cooperation among individuals, especially amidst

diversity. This aligns with research conducted by Bakker (2018), which showed that young people involved in social activities involving interfaith interactions tend to have a more tolerant and moderate mindset towards religious and cultural differences.

The influence of the social environment is also significant in shaping young people's mindsets about religion. A pluralistic environment, where various religions and cultures coexist, provides young people with opportunities to learn from diverse perspectives. If young people are raised in an environment that encourages inclusiveness and acceptance of differences, they are more likely to develop a moderate mindset regarding their religion and social relationships. Conversely, if they grow up in a more exclusive or intolerant environment, they may develop a narrow and more segregated mindset toward other groups or religions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In a world increasingly connected through technology and social media, young people are also exposed to diverse religious views from around the world. Social media, for example, can be a powerful resource in shaping how young people view religion, as they can easily access information and discuss various religious issues.

However, social media can also be a space that allows the spread of extreme and intolerant views, which can influence young people's thinking if they lack the ability to critically evaluate information. Therefore, it is important for young people to be trained in critical thinking and a moderate understanding of the teachings of their own religion and the religions of others (Creswell, 2014). Overall, young people's mindsets about religion are constructs heavily influenced by various educational, social, and personal factors. Religious moderation plays a crucial role in helping young people develop a more open, inclusive, and tolerant mindset toward differences, and can help them better adapt to a pluralistic and multicultural society. Moderate religious education, inclusive social interactions, and the ability to think critically about diverse religious views all contribute to shaping young people's mindsets, which can foster a more harmonious and tolerant society.

Social Understanding and Tolerance:

Social understanding and tolerance are two interrelated concepts in pluralistic societies, particularly in countries with diverse religions, cultures, and ethnicities. Social understanding refers to an individual's ability to understand and respond to differences within society, including differences in religion, culture, and social background. It also relates to the ability to see social reality from another person's perspective, as well as how individuals interact and adapt within diverse social contexts. Tolerance, on the other hand, relates to an attitude of accepting and respecting differences, even if one disagrees with the opposing views or beliefs. Both concepts are crucial for building a harmonious and peaceful social life, especially in countries with high levels of plurality, such as Indonesia.

Tolerance can be seen as one of the main pillars in maintaining social harmony. A tolerant attitude allows individuals to live side by side with others who hold different views and beliefs without significant conflict. This becomes

even more important in increasingly diverse societies, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, and culture. Good social understanding allows individuals to more easily appreciate differences and avoid discriminatory or exclusive attitudes that can lead to social division. Therefore, education about tolerance is crucial, particularly in shaping the mindsets of the younger generation, who will play a significant role in shaping a more inclusive and peaceful future for society.

In Indonesia, which boasts a highly diverse range of religions and cultures, social understanding and tolerance are fundamental to maintaining unity. Youth, as the nation's next generation, play a crucial role in implementing the values of tolerance in their daily lives. A sound understanding of religious and cultural diversity, followed by an attitude of tolerance, will create conditions conducive to a peaceful and respectful social life. Education that emphasizes the importance of religious moderation and acceptance of differences is key to achieving this goal. A study by Azra (2018) showed that youth equipped with an education that teaches tolerance and social understanding are more likely to avoid conflicts related to religion and culture and are more open to differing ideologies.

However, it is important to note that tolerance does not mean ignoring or minimizing differences, but rather accepting and appreciating them with mutual respect. According to Hedayati (2021), tolerance is the ability to coexist despite significant differences, and this does not require everyone to share the same views. Good social understanding allows one to understand the background, experiences, and perspectives of others without feeling threatened by those differences. Furthermore, this understanding is also important in preventing radicalization, where individuals who feel alienated or misunderstood may be more easily influenced by extreme ideologies. By having good social understanding, young people can develop empathy for others, thereby building an inclusive and respectful social environment.

Education that emphasizes social understanding and tolerance can be applied in various aspects of life, including schools, families, and the wider community. In schools, for example, teaching that emphasizes religious moderation and diversity can help students better understand the importance of coexisting with differences, whether in religious, ethnic, or cultural contexts. This is important because education has a significant influence on shaping young people's mindsets and attitudes toward differences. Research by Bakker (2018) shows that education that emphasizes tolerance and social understanding can reduce the potential for interreligious conflict, especially among young people.

Overall, social understanding and tolerance are key elements in creating a harmonious society, especially in a pluralistic society like Indonesia. Tolerance, fostered through a good understanding of religious and cultural differences, can help reduce social tensions and enhance cooperation between individuals from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, it is crucial for young people to receive an education that not only teaches tolerance but also fosters a deep social understanding of the diversity around them. In an increasingly connected world filled with social challenges, tolerance will always be a crucial foundation for maintaining peace and unity.

The Role of Education in Religious Moderation:

Education plays a crucial role in developing religious moderation, especially among young people. Religious moderation refers to a balanced understanding and practice of religious teachings, avoiding extreme and intolerant attitudes, and emphasizing the values of inclusivity and tolerance towards religious differences. In Indonesia, with its high religious diversity, education that teaches religious moderation is crucial for creating a peaceful and harmonious society. Appropriate education can shape the mindset of young people who are able to deeply internalize religious teachings while still respecting the social and religious diversity around them.

One of the primary goals of religious moderation education is to foster an understanding that extends beyond textually accepted religious teachings to encompass those teachings within a broader social context. Moderate religious education teaches that although individuals embrace different religions, each religion possesses universal values that complement each other and respect differences. In this regard, religious education focuses not only on ritual learning but also on developing attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect among religious communities. This is crucial to avoid extreme views that can trigger social conflict and violence between religious communities (Azra, 2018). For example, a curriculum that teaches the importance of respecting individual rights to choose a religion and explains the meaning of religious pluralism can foster a more inclusive understanding among young people.

Religious moderation education is not only carried out in formal schools, but also in families and communities. In schools, religious education delivered by teachers should not only focus on teaching religious teachings dogmatically but should also foster a moderate attitude that respects diversity and interfaith dialogue. Education that encourages critical and contextual religious instruction can help young people understand their religion in a way that does not restrict their interaction with the wider community. Hedayati (2021) stated that education that prioritizes religious moderation in schools can prevent young people from being exposed to extreme ideologies and reduce the potential for radicalization. Moderate education also enables students to interact with others of different religions and cultures in a manner that fosters mutual respect and avoids being trapped in exclusive views.

Furthermore, religious moderation education is crucial within the family, as it is the first institution that instills fundamental values in children. Families that teach the values of tolerance and openness to differences will provide a strong foundation for children to grow into individuals with moderate attitudes. This family education involves instilling mutual respect for differences in religion, culture, and outlook on life. Families that support the teaching of religious moderation can shape children's character to be more inclusive and open to differing views. This is important because children raised in a family environment that supports tolerance tend to develop positive social attitudes in society (Creswell, 2014).

More broadly, religious moderation education must also involve the community as part of efforts to foster a tolerant attitude. A society that is open to diversity and provides space for interfaith dialogue will provide opportunities for young people to learn directly from the experiences of living alongside people of different beliefs and backgrounds. Community-facilitated interfaith dialogue can be an important tool for reducing tensions between groups and providing a deeper understanding of the religious teachings held by other groups. Research by Bakker (2018) shows that youth involved in interfaith social activities tend to be more accepting of differences and develop moderate attitudes toward their religion and social life.

Religious moderation education can also be strengthened by utilizing technology and social media. In this digital era, youth have extensive access to information from various parts of the world. However, on the other hand, social media can also be a vulnerable space for the spread of radicalization and intolerance. Therefore, it is important to educate youth to be more critical in selecting the information they receive through social media. Education that teaches youth to think critically and selectively about the content they consume on social media can help them develop a more moderate mindset and avoid the influence of extreme ideologies that can undermine tolerance and social harmony.

Overall, religious moderation education plays a significant role in shaping the mindset of youth to be more open, inclusive, and tolerant of differences. With the right education, youth can better understand their religious teachings while still respecting the differences that exist in their social lives. Therefore, it is important for the government, educational institutions, families, and society to work together to create an environment that supports religious moderation education, in order to create a peaceful and harmonious society.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The influence of religious moderation on youth's mindsets regarding religion and social life is significant in shaping their attitudes to be more open, inclusive, and tolerant of differences. Religious moderation, which teaches a balanced understanding of religion without falling into extremism, empowers youth to view religion as a source of peace, not division. Youth equipped with a moderate understanding of religion tend to be better able to adapt to diverse societies, uphold the values of tolerance, and avoid exclusivist attitudes that can trigger social conflict.

Education that prioritizes religious moderation plays a crucial role in shaping youth's mindsets, teaching them to respect differences and understand that every individual, despite their differing beliefs, still has the right to live side by side in peace. With an understanding of religious moderation, youth can act as agents of change, promoting social harmony, peace, and solidarity between religious communities. This not only positively impacts their social lives but also the diversity within society as a whole.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic of The Influence of Religious Moderation on Youth's Mindset in Understanding Religion and Social Life in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

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