



Evaluating Inclusive Religious Education Policy Through Religious Moderation and Civic Values Synergy

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sinergi antara moderasi beragama dan civic values melalui evaluasi strategis terhadap kebijakan pengarusutamaan pendidikan keagamaan inklusif di sekolah publik. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain evaluasi kebijakan yang berlandaskan paradigma interpretif-naturalistik. Data diperoleh melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan pengarusutamaan pendidikan keagamaan inklusif telah terimplementasi secara formal melalui integrasi moderasi beragama dan civic values dalam kurikulum, modul pembelajaran, serta perangkat pembelajaran. Namun, implementasinya masih menghadapi berbagai hambatan pedagogis, struktural, dan kultural yang menyebabkan terjadinya kesenjangan antara desain kebijakan dan praktik pembelajaran di kelas. Kajian ini juga menemukan bahwa keberhasilan internalisasi nilai moderasi beragama dan civic values sangat dipengaruhi oleh kemampuan guru dalam mengembangkan pembelajaran yang kontekstual, dialogis, dan reflektif. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, penelitian menghasilkan model strategi integrasi yang terdiri atas contextual integration, critical dialogue, value recontextualization, dan transformational reflection sebagai kerangka pedagogis untuk memperkuat implementasi pendidikan keagamaan inklusif di sekolah publik. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan kapasitas guru, budaya sekolah yang inklusif, serta praktik pembelajaran yang partisipatif untuk mendukung terbentuknya peserta didik yang religius, moderat, toleran, dan memiliki komitmen kewarganegaraan yang kuat.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the synergy between religious moderation and civic values through a strategic evaluation of inclusive religious education mainstreaming policies in public schools. The study employed a qualitative approach using a policy evaluation design grounded in a naturalistic-interpretive paradigm. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that the mainstreaming policy of inclusive religious education has been formally implemented through the integration of religious moderation and civic values into curricula, instructional modules, and teaching practices. However, its implementation continues to face pedagogical, structural, and cultural barriers that create gaps between policy design and classroom practice. The study further finds that the successful internalization of religious moderation and civic values is highly dependent on teachers' ability to develop contextual, dialogical, and reflective learning experiences. Based on these findings, the study proposes an integration strategy model consisting of contextual integration, critical dialogue, value recontextualization, and transformational reflection as a pedagogical framework for strengthening inclusive religious education in public schools. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening teacher capacity, fostering inclusive school cultures, and promoting participatory learning practices to develop students who are religiously committed, moderate, tolerant, and equipped with strong civic values.

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INTRODUCTION

In the complexity of 21st-century geopolitical and sociocultural order, nation-states characterized by pluralism face significant challenges in maintaining social cohesion and national stability (Castells, 2010; Putnam, 2007). In this context, the integration of religious values and civic values becomes a fundamental element in building peaceful and civilized societies. Religious moderation is understood as a perspective, attitude, and practice of religiosity that follows a middle path (*wasathiyah*) and aligns with the principles of justice, humanity, and respect for diversity (Wahid Foundation, 2020; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). At this point, religious moderation does not stand alone but is intertwined with civic values such as equality, rule of law, and social responsibility as the foundation of democratic citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Banks, 2017).

The synergy between religious moderation and civic values becomes increasingly important in the educational context, particularly in efforts to build inclusive and tolerant citizen character. Education is viewed as a key instrument in the process of social value reproduction and the formation of civic identity (Dewey, 1916; Biesta, 2011). From this perspective, schools function not only as institutions for knowledge transmission but also as arenas for shaping students' ethical and social consciousness. Therefore, the integration of moderate religious values with civic values is a crucial prerequisite for fostering healthy civic engagement within multicultural societies (Banks, 2017; Gutmann, 1999).

Public schools, as formal educational institutions, hold a strategic position in this value internalization process due to their inclusive nature and representation of societal diversity (Apple, 2004; Sleeter, 2018). Within these institutions, religious education plays a significant role in shaping students' moral and spiritual orientations. However, in practice, religious education in public schools often still faces challenges related to exclusive, normative, and less dialogical pedagogical approaches (Noddings, 2013; Supriatna, 2021). This condition potentially creates tensions between students' religious identity and civic identity, especially when pluralistic values are not substantively integrated into the learning process.

On the other hand, various studies indicate that schools can serve as sites of ideological reproduction that are not neutral, but influenced by hidden curricula, pedagogical practices, and institutional culture (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2011). In this context, inclusive religious education is considered a strategic approach to reduce exclusivism and strengthen students' pluralistic awareness. Inclusive religious education emphasizes dialogue, recognition of differences, and reinforcement of universal human values as ethical foundations in religious learning (Banks, 2017; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

To respond to these challenges, the Indonesian government has initiated the mainstreaming of inclusive religious education as part of the national religious moderation agenda (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019; Wahid Foundation, 2020). This policy aims to reform religious learning approaches to become more open, dialogical, and compatible with national civic values. However, its implementation at the school level still faces various structural and cultural challenges, including teacher resistance, limited pedagogical capacity, and misalignment between central policies and classroom practices (Tilaar, 2012; Supriatna, 2021).

Evaluation of this policy is still dominated by administrative and quantitative approaches that are unable to capture the complexity of implementation at the micro level (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Ideally, educational policy evaluation should not only measure outputs but also analyze processes, social contexts, and the cultural impact of policy implementation. In this regard, a more comprehensive strategic evaluation approach is needed to understand how policies on religious moderation and civic values are internalized in everyday educational practice.

Furthermore, literature suggests that studies on religious moderation and civic values tend to develop separately within two different academic domains, namely sociology of religion and citizenship education (Banks, 2017; Noddings, 2013). There is still limited research that integrates both within a single evaluative framework of religious education policy in public schools. This gap indicates the need for a more integrative and multidimensional study to understand the effectiveness of inclusive religious education mainstreaming policies.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the synergy between religious moderation and civic values through a strategic evaluation of inclusive religious education mainstreaming policies in public schools. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of educational policy studies and sociology of education by offering an evaluation approach that simultaneously integrates religious and civic dimensions. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for policymakers, education

administrators, and educators in formulating more inclusive, adaptive, and evidence-based strategies for implementing religious education policies

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a strategic policy evaluation design to analyze the implementation of inclusive religious education mainstreaming policies in public schools in fostering synergy between religious moderation and civic values. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of social processes, meanings, and the dynamics of policy implementation within a complex and multidimensional educational context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Policy evaluation in this study does not only focus on administrative outputs but also emphasizes implementation processes, value negotiations, as well as social and cultural impacts at the school level (Patton, 2015; Weiss, 1998).

Epistemologically, this study is grounded in a naturalistic interpretivist paradigm, which views policy reality as a social construction shaped by interactions among educational actors rather than as an objective and fixed phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Therefore, the evaluation is conducted in a contextual, flexible, and in-depth manner to understand the implementation practices of religious moderation and civic values policies in public school environments.

The research was conducted in public secondary schools that have implemented inclusive religious education mainstreaming policies as part of the national religious moderation program. The site selection was carried out using purposive sampling, considering that these schools represent active policy implementation contexts within heterogeneous social environments in terms of students' religious, social, and cultural backgrounds. This approach aligns with the principles of naturalistic inquiry, which emphasize the importance of context in understanding social phenomena (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Research participants included religious education teachers, school principals, students, and stakeholders involved in educational policy implementation at the school level. Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques to obtain a wide range of perspectives regarding policy implementation in practice (Patton, 2015; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Data collection techniques included participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted in religious education classrooms to directly examine teacher–student interactions, pedagogical communication patterns, and the internalization of religious moderation and civic values in daily learning practices. This approach allowed the researcher to capture micro-level dynamics of policy implementation that are not accessible through formal documents, including resistance, adaptation, and value negotiation within classroom settings (Spradley, 1980; Patton, 2015).

In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to explore the experiences, perceptions, and adaptive strategies of teachers and students in implementing inclusive religious education policies (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Meanwhile, document analysis included curriculum documents, teaching modules, school policies, and other supporting documents related to the implementation of inclusive religious education (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis through the stages of data reduction, coding, categorization, and theme development. The analysis was performed iteratively to identify patterns of policy implementation, structural and cultural barriers, and adaptive strategies employed by educational actors in integrating religious moderation and civic values in public schools (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles et al., 2014).

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study employed source and method triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation was used to enhance the credibility of findings by comparing data from multiple sources, while member checking ensured that the researcher's interpretations aligned with participants' experiences (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing was conducted to improve dependability and confirmability through academic discussion with fellow researchers.

Thus, this study is situated within a qualitative policy evaluation framework that emphasizes a deep understanding of the social context of policy implementation and is oriented toward a critical analysis of the synergy between religious moderation and civic values in public school educational practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Formal Implementation of Inclusive Religious Education Mainstreaming Policy

The findings indicate that the implementation of the inclusive religious education mainstreaming policy in public schools has been structurally established through the integration of curriculum documents, religious moderation modules, and the reinforcement of civic values within instructional devices. However, field observations reveal that this implementation is still dominated by a formal-administrative approach and has not been fully transformed into reflective and dialogical pedagogical practices in classroom settings.

In practice, teachers tend to present religious moderation as a normative concept in isolation, rather than as a learning experience integrated with students' social realities. This indicates an implementation gap between policy design and field practice, as emphasized by Patton (2015), who argues that policy evaluation success is not only determined by formal outputs but also by how policies are utilized in real practice (utilization-focused evaluation).

This finding is also consistent with Denzin and Lincoln (2018), who emphasize that educational reality is socially constructed; therefore, policy implementation is strongly influenced by actors' interpretations at the school level.

One teacher stated:

"We already understand the concept of moderation, but integrating it into daily teaching is still difficult due to time constraints and curriculum workload."

This statement reinforces the finding that the policy has not yet been fully internalized pedagogically.

Dynamics of Integrating Religious Moderation and Civic Values in Classroom Practice

The findings show that the integration of religious moderation and civic values is inconsistent and highly dependent on teachers' pedagogical competence. In classrooms applying dialogical approaches, students demonstrate higher engagement in understanding values such as tolerance, diversity, and social responsibility. In contrast, in classrooms still dominated by lecture-based approaches, students tend to be passive and receive values unidirectionally.

This phenomenon indicates that policy effectiveness is not solely determined by the existence of regulations, but by the quality of pedagogical interaction in the classroom. Selwyn (2016) emphasizes that educational policies and technologies do not automatically generate change, as implementation is always negotiated within educational social practices.

One student stated:

"In discussions, it is easier for us to understand why we must respect differences, not just because it is a rule."

This finding indicates that civic values internalization is more effectively achieved through dialogical-reflective learning that allows students to construct meaning. This aligns with Freire (1970), who emphasizes that education is a process of problem-posing rather than mere knowledge transfer.

Furthermore, Castells (2010) explains that in a network society, knowledge authority is no longer centralized in formal institutions but distributed through digital networks, requiring teachers to adapt to this epistemological shift.

Structural and Cultural Barriers to Policy Implementation

The study identifies significant structural and cultural barriers in implementing the inclusive religious education mainstreaming policy. Structural barriers include limited teacher training, high administrative workload, and weak cross-subject integration. Cultural barriers relate to the persistence of a textual, dogmatic, and often exclusive paradigm of religious education.

In many cases, civic values are still perceived as the domain of Civic Education (Pancasila and Citizenship Education), rather than an integral part of religious education. This reflects epistemological fragmentation within the school curriculum.

Denzin (2017) emphasizes that in qualitative research, policy implementation barriers are not merely technical issues but social constructions shaped by values, ideologies, and institutional practices.

This finding is also consistent with Banks (2017), who argues that multicultural education often fails when it is not structurally embedded in the core curriculum but remains peripheral.

Transformation of Teachers' Roles as Value Mediators

One of the key findings of this study is the transformation of religious education teachers' roles from knowledge transmitters to value mediators and critical pedagogical agents. Teachers are no longer the sole authority of knowledge but must engage with alternative knowledge sources accessed by students through social media.

Selwyn (2016) states that in the digital era, education is no longer linear but hybrid and fragmented. This requires teachers to develop critical digital literacy competencies to mediate differences between formal and informal knowledge.

Teachers who successfully integrate digital issues into classroom discussions are more effective in fostering critical dialogue. This indicates that the teacher's role is shifting toward facilitating value reflection rather than merely delivering content.

Model of Integration Strategies for Religious Moderation and Civic Values

Based on observations, interviews, and document analysis, this study developed an integrative strategy model explaining how religious moderation and civic values can be internalized in religious education within public schools. The model emphasizes that value integration cannot be achieved through a single instructional approach, but requires a gradual pedagogical process that combines contextualization, dialogue, critical reflection, and value reconstruction within classroom practices. The detailed model is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Integration Strategy Model of Religious Moderation and Civic Values

Strategy Component	Pedagogical Focus	Classroom Practice	Observed Impact
Contextual Integration	Relationship between religion and social issues	Case studies on diversity	Students become more reflective (Banks, 2017)
Critical Dialogue	Two-way interaction	Reflective group discussions	Increased empathy and tolerance (Freire, 1970)
Value Recontextualization	Religion & civic values connection	Linking to civic life experiences	Integrated understanding (Selwyn, 2016)
Transformational Reflection	Internalization process	Student reflection journals	Moderate attitude shift (Mezirow, 1997)

This model shows that value integration cannot be achieved instantly but through a gradual process involving dialogue, reflection, and contextualization. This process reinforces Patton's (2015) argument that policy evaluation must be oriented toward real-world use (use-focused evaluation) in social contexts.

Evaluative Synthesis of Policy Implementation

Overall, the findings indicate that the inclusive religious education mainstreaming policy has been successful at the policy design level but still faces significant challenges at the micro-implementation level in public schools.

Teacher transformation emerges as a key factor in bridging the gap between policy and practice. Teachers who function as value mediators and facilitators of dialogue are more effective in integrating religious moderation and civic values compared to those who rely on traditional instructional approaches.

This finding reinforces Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) argument that educational reality should be understood as a dynamic, contextual, and socially interactive process rather than merely formal policy implementation.

Thus, the synergy between religious moderation and civic values is still in a transitional phase toward deeper pedagogical internalization and requires strengthening teacher capacity, reforming classroom practices, and reducing administrative burdens to ensure more effective and sustainable policy implementation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the policy of mainstreaming inclusive religious education in public schools has provided an important foundation for strengthening the synergy between religious moderation and civic values. However, its implementation continues to face various pedagogical, structural, and cultural challenges, resulting in the incomplete integration of these values into everyday educational practices.

The findings highlight that the success of policy implementation is largely determined by teachers' ability to develop contextual, dialogical, and reflective learning experiences. Teachers are no longer limited to the role of knowledge transmitters but also serve as value mediators who bridge religious understanding with civic consciousness in a pluralistic society.

Furthermore, this study proposes an integration strategy model consisting of contextual integration, critical dialogue, value recontextualization, and transformational reflection. The model suggests that religious moderation and civic values can be more effectively internalized when they are presented as meaningful learning experiences connected to students' social realities rather than merely as normative concepts within the curriculum.

Overall, strengthening teacher capacity, fostering an inclusive school culture, and implementing more participatory and reflective learning practices are essential prerequisites for developing religious education that nurtures students who are religiously committed, moderate, tolerant, and dedicated to the values of citizenship and national cohesion.

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