



RELIGIOUS MODERATION BASED SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS A PREVENTIVE MEASURE AGAINST BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

One of the social problems that disrupts the learning environment and character development of students is bullying in schools. As a subject that emphasizes social, cultural, and moral values, social studies (IPS) education has great potential to shape students' character to be tolerant, inclusive, and to uphold human values. This article employs a descriptive qualitative approach based on a literature review to examine how the integration of religious moderation values into IPS learning can function as a preventive strategy against bullying in schools. The discussion highlights that embedding principles of religious moderation such as tolerance, mutual respect, and balance within IPS learning can foster anti-bullying attitudes and strengthen a culture of peace in educational settings. The main contribution of this article lies in offering a conceptual framework for religious moderation-based IPS education as an alternative pedagogical approach to support the development of child-friendly, safe, and character-based schools.

Keywords: Religious moderation; bullying; social values; child-friendly schools; social studies education

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the increasingly complex social problems is harassment or abuse in schools. Bullying is not limited to physical violence; it can also involve verbal, emotional, or even cyber violence. As Wulandari and Nugroho (2023) state, bullying negatively impacts students' mental health, lowering their self-confidence and hindering their academic and social development.

According to a report by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI, 2022), there is an increase in bullying cases in schools every year, especially at the junior high and senior high school levels. This indicates that prevention efforts are still suboptimal, and educational interventions must be implemented in a structured manner through a values and character-based approach from an early age.

One source of bullying is students' lack of awareness of the importance of respecting differences, fairness, and empathy. Value-based preventive strategies are needed, rather than curative approaches. In situations like this, education plays a strategic role in bringing about social

change. As stated by Hidayat & Fitria (2021), social studies (IPS) play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward others because this discipline emphasizes social, cultural, and civic aspects. IPS can also be used as a tool for internalizing humanistic and tolerant social values in a multicultural society.

The religious moderation approach emphasizes a just, balanced, and non-extremist religious attitude. In a pluralistic society like Indonesia, this concept is crucial. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2021) states that religious moderation is not merely a theological teaching; it is also a way of living peacefully among various social identities, beliefs, and cultures.

Themes such as diversity, human rights, and social conflict can be used to integrate the values of religious moderation into social studies learning. When students are accustomed to speaking, discussing, and understanding the opinions of others, they will develop moral and social resilience that will enable them to avoid bullying or discrimination, according to Nasution (2022).

Social studies education based on religious moderation combines social sciences with religious values. This aligns with the opinion of Munir and Wahyuni (2023), who stated that religious moderation in social studies can create an inclusive learning space free from symbolic violence. It is crucial for teachers to create a non-protective educational environment. Teachers not only function as educators but also as role models and facilitators of peaceful conversations. According to Spitasari (2024), social studies teachers who instill the principles of religious moderation can increase students' social awareness of the importance of empathy and justice.

Social studies education designed contextually and reflectively can serve as a space for social transformation in schools. Protective measures will further marginalize students when they perceive differences as strengths rather than threats. This strategy is effective for fostering a culture of peace in schools.

Based on this description, the purpose of this article is to comprehensively examine the benefits of social studies education based on religious moderation as a method for preventing bullying in schools. This method is expected to produce students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also socially and morally strong for living in society.

Different from previous studies that predominantly position religious moderation within the domain of religious education or moral instruction, this article emphasizes the integration of religious moderation values into Social Studies (IPS) learning as a preventive strategy against bullying in schools. By situating religious moderation within IPS an interdisciplinary subject that addresses social interaction, diversity, conflict, and citizenship this article offers a novel conceptual perspective on character education. This approach highlights IPS not merely as a transmitter of social knowledge, but as a strategic medium for cultivating tolerance, empathy, and social justice in a pluralistic school environment, thereby contributing to the development of anti-bullying attitudes and a culture of peace.

2. METHODS

This study employs a literature-based qualitative analysis with a descriptive approach. The data sources consist of various written materials related to social studies education, religious moderation, and bullying in schools, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy documents, and research reports published within the last ten years (2014–2024) to ensure the relevance and contextual accuracy of the discussion. A total of approximately 30–40 primary sources were selected based on their relevance to the research focus, credibility, and contribution to discussions on value-based education, character formation, and bullying prevention.

The data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis and narrative review technique. Key concepts and recurring themes such as tolerance, empathy, inclusivity, social justice, and peaceful conflict resolution were identified, categorized, and synthesized across the selected literature. These themes were then systematically connected to the objectives and learning characteristics of social studies (IPS) education to construct a coherent conceptual framework. This analytical process enabled the authors to interpret how the integration of religious moderation values into IPS learning can function as a preventive strategy against bullying and contribute to the development of child-friendly, safe, and character-based school environments.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a thematic discussion based on the synthesis of relevant literature related to social studies education, religious moderation, and bullying prevention. The discussion does not report empirical findings but instead organizes key ideas and patterns identified in previous studies into analytical themes that explain how religious moderation-based social studies education can function as a preventive strategy against bullying in schools.

3.1 The Role of Social Studies Education in Character Formation

Social studies education plays a strategic role in shaping students' social character and behavior. Various studies on character education indicate that social studies serves as a medium for introducing social norms, cultural values, and societal diversity. Effective social studies learning contributes to the development of empathy, social responsibility, and respect for others, which can suppress deviant behaviors such as bullying. Schools that consistently integrate social values into social studies learning tend to cultivate more tolerant and inclusive educational environments (Nucci et al., 2014; OECD, 2018).

3.2 Integration of Religious Moderation Values in Social Studies Learning

The values of religious moderation can be integrated into social studies learning through both instructional content and pedagogical approaches. Themes such as social justice, tolerance, balance, and peaceful coexistence can complement materials in history, sociology, and geography. For example, discussions on Indonesia's pluralistic society or historical social conflicts can be used to highlight the importance of mutual respect and non-violent interaction, which aligns with global perspectives on values education and inclusive pedagogy (UNESCO, 2017; Zembylas, 2017). Contextual learning methods such as case studies, role-playing, and group discussions enable students to internalize these values meaningfully.

3.3 Religious Moderation as a Preventive Framework against Bullying

Bullying often stems from prejudice, ignorance, and the inability to accept differences. Social studies education based on religious moderation encourages students to think critically, avoid judgmental attitudes, and respond rationally to diversity. Through continuous exposure to values of inclusivity and empathy, students develop emotional regulation and social awareness, which form a strong foundation for bullying prevention and child protection (Espelage & Hong, 2017; UNESCO, 2019).

3.4 Teacher Roles and School Climate Development

Teachers play a central role in implementing moderation-based social studies learning. Beyond delivering content, teachers model moderate attitudes through respectful communication, fair conflict management, and inclusive classroom practices. A supportive school climate is also essential, where open dialogue and non-discriminatory interactions are encouraged. Such school climates have been shown to significantly reduce bullying behavior and peer victimization (Smith & Sharp, 2015; Espelage & Hong, 2017). These values can be reinforced not only in classrooms but also through extracurricular activities, discussion forums, and inclusive school policies.

3.5 Social Studies Learning as a Medium for Conflict Resolution

Social studies learning provides opportunities for students to develop conflict resolution skills in peaceful and constructive ways. Through problem-based learning, students can analyze bullying cases and collaboratively propose solutions. In this process, moderation values such as fairness, active listening, and awareness of the harmful impacts of violence are internalized naturally, reinforcing anti-bullying attitudes (Gaffney et al., 2019).

3.6 Local Wisdom and Cultural Values in Supporting Moderation

Local cultural values such as mutual cooperation, community harmony, and customary practices can strengthen the implementation of religious moderation in social studies learning. This approach is particularly relevant in multicultural and border areas, where local wisdom plays a significant role in shaping students' social attitudes and reinforcing non-violent, harmonious interactions.

3.7 Challenges in Implementing Moderation-Based Social Studies

Despite its potential, the implementation of religious moderation-based social studies faces several challenges. These include limited teacher training on value integration, insufficient understanding of the moderation concept, and curricula that prioritize cognitive outcomes over character development. Additionally, not all schools recognize the importance of linking social studies learning with character and attitude formation, a challenge also highlighted in international discussions on school-based character education (OECD, 2018).

3.8 Curriculum Integration and Teacher Competence Strengthening

To maximize its preventive function against bullying, social studies curricula must be designed holistically. Clear instructional guidelines and learning modules that integrate moderation values are necessary. Strengthening teacher competence through professional development is crucial to ensure that moderation values are practiced consistently in classroom management and instructional strategies, in line with international recommendations on values-based education (UNESCO, 2017).

3.9 Implications for School Climate and Policy Development

Schools that implement moderation-based social studies learning tend to demonstrate reduced bullying incidents, increased student tolerance, and stronger intergroup collaboration. These outcomes indicate that integrating moderation values into social studies learning positively influences overall school culture and reflect findings from international evaluations of school-based bullying prevention programs (Gaffney et al., 2019; OECD, 2018). At the policy level, character education strategies should explicitly include moderation-based social studies

approaches, supported by teacher training programs, contextual learning resources, and collaboration between educational institutions, government agencies, and families.

4. CONCLUSION

Social studies education plays a strategic role in developing students who are socially aware, tolerant, and respectful of diversity. Integrating the values of religious moderation into social studies learning represents a relevant and solution-oriented approach in response to the increasing incidence of bullying in schools. Through moderation-based learning, students are encouraged to act fairly, avoid extremism, and reject violence when encountering differences in religion, culture, social status, and other social identities.

Active and reflective learning strategies such as values-based discussions, case studies, and social action projects enable students to develop empathy and internalize the importance of peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society. In this process, social studies teachers function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as moderators and facilitators of value-based learning, playing a critical role in creating inclusive, safe, and bullying-free classrooms.

To ensure effective implementation, this study recommends several operational steps. First, the integration of religious moderation values should be explicitly embedded in social studies lesson plans (RPP) through learning objectives, materials, methods, and assessment indicators that emphasize tolerance, empathy, and non-violent conflict resolution. Second, teacher professional development programs should include structured training on religious moderation, focusing on pedagogical strategies for value integration, classroom dialogue management, and inclusive learning practices. Finally, moderation-based social studies education should be aligned with national education policies on character education and child-friendly schools to strengthen its sustainability and broader impact on school culture.

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