



MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION LEARNING IN THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM: A KINDERGARTEN CASE STUDY

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Abstract: This study aims to describe and analyze the management of religious moderation learning activities within the Independent Curriculum in kindergarten settings. The study is significant for enhancing understanding of both the theoretical and practical dimensions of religious moderation learning management in early childhood education. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research involved one school principal, two classroom teachers, and two assistant teachers from Tunas Bangsa Adirejakulon Kindergarten in Adipala, Cilacap, Central Java. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that teachers implement four key management activities in religious moderation learning under the Independent Curriculum: planning, organizing, implementation, and assessment.

Keywords: Independent Curriculum, Management, Moderation, Kindergarten, Tolerance

A. Introduction

Education is a tool for shaping students' character. In today's era of globalization, one of the priority character traits instilled in students in Indonesia is moderation. This is due to the increasing prevalence of religious fanaticism and radicalism, which have led to the emergence of anti-tolerance cases. This has led the government to deem it necessary to provide education that develops students' ability to be moderate and tolerant individuals. One effort that can be made is to incorporate the values of moderation into the curriculum currently being implemented in Indonesia, namely the Independent Curriculum (Hilmin, 2024).

In the 2022/2023 academic year, teachers in Indonesia will place greater emphasis on the independent curriculum. In this academic year, the government began implementing a new curriculum to replace the 2013 curriculum, namely the independent curriculum. The independent curriculum is one of the efforts of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek) to overcome the learning crisis after the COVID-19 pandemic (Kalimatusyaro, 2025). One of the learning crises faced was the problem of character loss as a result of online-based learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (M. Santoso, 2022). The issue of character loss should not be considered trivial. In the independent curriculum, teachers need to conduct character surveys on students in their daily lives. This makes one of the focuses of attention of the independent curriculum the cultivation of character in students' daily lives (Daga, 2021).

There is a relationship between character education and the term of society 5.0. The era of Society 5.0, marked by the rapid development of digital technology, has given rise to moral decadence. This has made character education a tool that can control the behavior of students who currently live as the digital generation in the era of Society 5.0 (Purnomo & Herwin, 2021).

In the current era of society 5.0, a set of characteristics possessed by students has become a soft skill that is essential for living together amid diversity, including religious, ethnic, cultural, and customary diversity. This is a big challenge for every educational institution, as they are required to be able to shape

the character of their students from an early age (B. Santoso et al., 2023). Character formation for students from an early age is seen as a strategic step because, at an early age, students are in the basic phase of character formation (Istati, 2019). This means that moderate character development in children can begin at an early age. However, how this can be achieved is an interesting question worth exploring.

In the independent curriculum, the basic phase in character formation for early childhood is called the foundation phase. The foundation phase is considered the basic framework for early childhood growth and development. Achievement in this foundation phase is located at the age level of 5 – 6 years, when children study in Kindergarten (Fitriani et al., 2023).

Character formation is one of the learning outcomes to be addressed in the foundation phase of kindergarten. Character formation in early childhood, in kindergarten, and in the foundation phase is carried out by internalizing the character values needed by children in living their daily lives (Farida & Mulyani, 2023). One of the character values that young children internalize as they live their daily lives amid the diversity of religions, ethnicities, cultures, and customs is tolerance. The results of the research show that internalizing the value of tolerance in early childhood can give rise to self-resilience in them, so that they can become citizens who can respect and appreciate differences and can act and behave prioritizing common interests rather than personal interests (Rahngang et al., 2022). The results of other research show that internalizing the value of tolerance in early childhood can make young children into individuals who love peace and can understand and accept every difference that exists in other people (Purnamasari & Wuryandani, 2019).

Based on the description above, it can be said that internalizing the value of tolerance in early childhood is an effort to teach children about religious moderation from an early age. This study aims to analyze how the values of religious moderation are taught through an independent curriculum in the kindergarten.

Several studies examine religious moderation in early childhood education institutions. However, these studies have not revealed the formation of a moderate character that occurs

in the independent curriculum.

First, Muh Shaleh and Muthia Nurfadhilah's research entitled "Implementation of Religious Moderation in PAUD Institutions in Southeast Sulawesi". The research aims to understand religious moderation among PAUD managers and educators, and to examine models for implementing religious moderation in PAUD institutions in Southeast Sulawesi (Shaleh & Fadhilah, 2022). Second, research by Yuliana et al entitled "Strengthening Religious Moderation in Early Childhood as an Effort to Prevent Radicalism during the Covid-19 Pandemic". His research aims to examine efforts to strengthen religious moderation in early childhood to prevent radicalism (Yuliana et al., 2022). Third, Gusnarib Wahab and M. Iksan Kahar's research entitled "Implementation of Habituation Methods in Instilling Religious Moderation Values in Early Childhood". His research focuses on the implementation of religious moderation values in early childhood at RA Darul Da'wah wal-Irsyad (DDI) Lonja, Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi Province (Wahab & Kahar, 2023).

Of the three studies above, none discussed religious moderation implemented through learning activities within the independent curriculum. In this study, the author examines religious moderation implemented through learning management activities within the independent curriculum. This is a strategic effort that can be implemented to instill religious moderation in students through structured, systematic learning activities.

In fact, research on religious moderation through learning activities in the independent curriculum is needed to describe the alignment of its implementation with religious moderation. This is what motivated the author to conduct this research. Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyze religious moderation learning management activities in the independent curriculum in kindergarten. Tunas Bangsa Adirejakulon Adipala Cilacap Kindergarten was chosen as the research location because the tolerance learning module has been implemented there as an effort to shape students' moderate character. One reason is that in kindergarten, there are students from different religions, ethnicities, cultures, and customs.

The novelty of this research lies in the identification of a religious moderation learning design within the independent

curriculum in kindergarten. Theoretically, this design can generate a conceptual learning management concept based on religious moderation. In practice, it can serve as a guideline for teachers in kindergartens and Raudhatul Athfal (Islamic boarding schools) when implementing religious moderation learning activities for early childhood.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive, naturalistic approach and adopted a case study design. This approach was selected to enable an in-depth description of phenomena as they occur in a natural research setting, without manipulating participants or the research context (Cutler et al., 2021). The research was conducted at Tunas Bangsa Adireja Kulon Kindergarten, located in Adipala, Cilacap, Indonesia.

The participants in this study included one school principal, two classroom teachers, and two assistant teachers. The principal served as a key informant, providing information on religion-based learning policies at the kindergarten level. The classroom teachers contributed data regarding the implementation of these policies through instructional and managerial practices in the learning process. Meanwhile, the assistant teachers described their roles in supporting classroom teachers during the implementation of religion-based learning activities.

Meanwhile, the objects of this research are four activities in the management of religious moderation learning for early childhood, namely: (1) planning religious moderation learning for early childhood; (2) organizing religious moderation learning for early childhood; (3) implementation of religious moderation learning for early childhood; and (4) assessment of religious moderation learning for early childhood.

The data in this research were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The author uses an unstructured type of interview, where the author carries out interview activities without using an interview instrument (Sugiyono, 2010). The author used interview techniques to explore data on four management activities carried out by teachers in religious moderation learning, as well as on the school principal's support for teachers in this.

The author uses observations to collect data on the implementation and assessment of religious moderation learning. Observations were conducted through participant observation, in which the author was involved in implementing religious moderation learning activities. Meanwhile, the author uses documentation to obtain data, such as religious tolerance teaching modules, photos of activities, and other materials. These documents were excavated simultaneously when the author conducted interviews with research subjects.

The collected data is then tested for validity using data source triangulation techniques. In this technique, the author brings together data sourced from two teachers and a school principal so that valid data can be found (Moleong, 2010). After that, the data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model data analysis technique, which consists of data reduction, data display, and verification (Miles et al., 2018).

C. Result and Discussion

Based on the research results, management of religious moderation learning in the independent curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten, Cilacap, Indonesia, is carried out through the following four activities:

Religious Moderation Learning Planning in the Independent Curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten

Learning about religious moderation in the independent curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten is based on the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum for the 2022/2023. In the curriculum, there is one topic used to practice religious moderation: "My Country, Indonesia," with its subtopic, "Getting to Know Religion and Places of Worship." This policy makes religious moderation learning for early childhood mandatory at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten. Based on interviews with school principals, learning about religious moderation must be taught to children because there is a diversity of religions, cultures, and customs among them. According to him, young children can become moderate when they become tolerant. That is why teachers need to develop a module for teaching religious tolerance. The results of other research show that a person's tolerant attitude can make

him a person who respects diversity and makes him a moderate person (Cuadrado et al., 2021).

Based on the principal's policy, the teacher then created a module for teaching religious tolerance. There are four steps that teachers take when creating teaching modules for religious moderation learning planning activities in the independent curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten.

First, formulate learning information consisting of: (1) The teacher determines the time allocation; (2) the teacher determines the learning model; (3) the teacher formulates learning objectives; (4) the teacher determines the keywords that will be introduced to students; (5) the teacher determines the learning tools and materials; and (6) the teacher determines the learning facilities and infrastructure. Based on the documentation results, it can be seen that the learning objectives in the religious tolerance teaching module include: (1) students can understand the importance of being grateful for the diversity that exists around them; (2) students can practice mutual respect between followers of different religions; (3) students can name religions and official religious places of worship in Indonesia; (4) students can explain attitudes of respect between different religions; (5) students can practice mutual respect between different religions; (6) students can develop a culture of literacy and pre-reading; and (7) students can recognize the concept of number recognition and counting (pre-mathematics). Based on these learning objectives, the keywords that will be introduced and explained in more depth to students are: diversity, religion, and tolerance.

Second, formulate the core learning components, including concept maps and activity brainstorming. The concept map outlines the material to be given to students to achieve the learning objectives. The material provided on learning religious tolerance includes: various religions in Indonesia, places of worship, worship procedures, and how to respect people of different religions. Based on these materials, the teacher then formulates learning alternatives for students, which consist of: (1) alternative initial activities to capture children's ideas or imagination. Based on the documentation results, in the initial activities, the teacher designed for children to read storybooks on religious tolerance and watch films on religious tolerance. The

results of other research show that storybooks and videos can be used as media to shape students' character, including to instill the value of tolerance in students because they can function as media to inspire children's feelings of love for goodness (Rahiem, 2021); (2) alternative play activities to internalize the value of tolerance in students through activities: (a) students mention the names of religions, places of worship, and celebrations of religious holidays in Indonesia; (b) students sing a song about respect between followers of different religions; (c) students mention examples of mutual respect between different religions; (d) students practice examples of mutual respect between different religions; and (e) students create a work about examples of mutual respect between different religions.

Third, prepare a learning implementation plan. The learning implementation plan describes the class identity, learning objectives, learning tools and materials, and learning scenarios with the following details:

Table 1. Religious Tolerance Learning Scenario

Type of activity	Description of activities
Morning Habits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcoming SOP 2. Shake hands and give greetings 3. Put shoes and bags in their place 4. Morning attendance 5. Morning literacy (Books chosen by the child) 6. Play 7. Line up in front of the class 8. Morning clap 9. Sing the good morning song, it's happy here, it's happy there, it's happy to go to school every morning 10. Pray before studying and its meaning 11. Say the kindergarten vows 12. Singing kindergarten songs 13. Saying Pancasila, its symbol, and singing the Garuda Pancasila song 14. Singing the flag song and Mother's Love

Opening activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Greetings2. Taking student attendance3. Watch a video entitled Religious Tolerance4. Questions and answers about the content of the video, namely about the names of the characters, the character of each character, and examples of scenes of religious tolerance
Core activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Craft: make crafts in the form of churches, monasteries, temples, and mosques.2. Coloring media: coloring the shapes of churches, monasteries, temples, and mosques.3. LKS: PAUD LKS about tolerance and places of worship4. Role Playing: about how to practice mutual respect between different religions
Closing activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Children are guided to sit in a circle on the carpet2. Reflection using trigger questions: sit, circle, ask about feelings, ask children to exchange impressions and learning experiences today.3. Invite children to pray together4. Information: Convey the study plan for the next day.5. Sing songs when you come home from school6. Pray before going home, pray for leaving the house, and pray for riding in a vehicle7. Express gratitude for today's learning experience8. Close the activity with a joint greeting or slogan.

Fourth, determine the type of learning assessment. Based on the documentation results, the types of assessment that will be used are observation and documentation. Observation is used to observe children's behavior during the learning process. Meanwhile, documentation is used to assess children's work on crafts for churches, monasteries, temples, and mosques. The results of other research show that observation is an appropriate way to assess students' character, which is manifested in their daily behavior (Tabroni et al., 2021).

Organizing Religious Moderation Learning in the Independent Curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten

In organizing religious moderation learning within the independent curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten, two activities were conducted: coordination and communication. Based on the results of interviews with teachers, coordination activities among teachers were conducted during the preparation of the religious tolerance teaching module. This is because the religious tolerance teaching module was prepared collaboratively and will be implemented in three classes taught by three different teachers. The teacher revealed that the coordination discussed organizing learning time, organizing learning materials, and organizing learning tools and materials.

Organizing learning time addresses how long children study, which is linked to the results of organizing learning materials. Learning materials that will be presented to children include: (1) various religions in Indonesia; (2) various places of worship; (3) procedures for worship, and (4) ways to respect other people of different religions. Based on this material, the duration of study for religious moderation is determined to be 900 minutes, or 150 minutes multiplied by six days.

Then, the organization of learning tools and materials is carried out to determine the resources needed by teachers and students to implement religious moderation learning. After the tools and materials have been identified, the teacher coordinates the strategy for procuring them. Coordination between teachers in organizing will produce the same views in educating children, including the same opinions in implementing religious moderation learning for children. With these shared views, teachers will be able to work together to achieve the learning

goals that have been formulated together (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Based on interviews with teachers, it appears that coordination outcomes were communicated by teacher representatives to the school principal. The religious tolerance teaching module was the primary material discussed between teacher representatives and school principals. This communication is intended to obtain approval for the learning objectives, allocation of learning time, learning materials, learning scenarios, and learning assessment designs contained in the religious tolerance teaching module. Approval from the school principal is indicated by the principal's signature on the religious tolerance teaching module. Legally and formally, this agreement has made the religious tolerance teaching module prepared by teachers a guideline for implementing religious moderation learning for early childhood in the independent curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten. Apart from that, from a managerial perspective, this signature means that the principal, as a leader, is ready to fully support the implementation of religious moderation learning within the independent curriculum and to provide moral-emotional and material support. These two forms of support will have implications for increasing teacher motivation to carry out educational and learning activities as optimally as possible (Kim & Weiner, 2022).

Implementation of Religious Moderation Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten

The implementation stage of religious moderation learning in the independent curriculum is the actualization of the religious tolerance learning teaching module prepared by the teacher, as part of planning activities for religious moderation learning. Based on the research results, there are three stages in implementing religious moderation learning within the independent curriculum.

First, the stage of transforming knowledge about religious moderation. At this stage, the teacher teaches the values of religious moderation contained in the religious tolerance learning module. The values of moderation taught to young children include: (1) being grateful for diversity, and (2) mutual respect between followers of different religions. Based on the results of observations, these two values of religious moderation

are taught to young children through providing material: (1) various religions in Indonesia; and (2) various places of worship for religious communities in Indonesia. The teacher delivers the material using video media taken from YouTube. Then the teacher explains the video's content to the children through question-and-answer activities. Questions asked of children include: (1) What are the religions in Indonesia? (2) state the names of religious places of worship in Indonesia; (3) where do Muslims worship? Where do Christians worship? Where do Hindus worship? Where do Buddhists worship? (4) How are you grateful to have friends of different religions?

Theoretically, in constructivism, children already possess a wide range of knowledge. The questions above serve as prompts that enable children to construct their own knowledge (White, 2025).

Children answer the questions above with short answers. The teacher always confirms the children's answers to explain the material more fully. It can be said that teachers, using the question-and-answer method, carry out the transformation of knowledge about religious moderation. The use of the question-and-answer method can create an interactive learning process, and the teacher can control children's attitudes toward learning. The results of other research show that videos can be an interactive learning medium for young children when teachers can give impressions and messages of video content to children through the question-and-answer method (Hadders-Algra, 2020).

Second, the stage of playing with the theme of religious moderation. There are two play activities carried out by children on the theme of religious moderation: making crafts for religious places of worship in Indonesia and role-playing on religious tolerance. Children make crafts for places of worship by watching the teacher simulate the process, then follow along to make them. The teacher then guides the children in creating crafts by showing the manufacturing process and allowing them to make them according to their ideas.

After the children finished making crafts for religious places of worship in Indonesia, the teacher explained to the children the activities carried out by followers of each religion in their places of worship. After that, the teacher conveys to the children how to

respect people who are worshiping in their place of worship. The following are pictures of crafts for religious places of worship in Indonesia that children have made:



Figure 1. Crafts from various religious houses of worship in Indonesia, made by children

Then, children role-play to demonstrate mutual respect between religious communities in everyday life. In this role-playing activity, the teacher demonstrates mutual respect between religious communities in social interactions and then asks the children to imitate them. In this activity, children's imitation abilities greatly influence their success in role playing. However, the emphasis of this role-playing activity is not on the children's role-playing actions but on their understanding of examples of mutual respect between religious communities in their daily interactions.

A child's world is a world of play. Various play activities can be used as a means to teach children about various life values and cultural values (Lopez, 2022). That is why religious and cultural themes can be introduced to children when they play. Children can enjoy play activities with the theme of religious moderation. They can also play, make crafts, and role-play according to their ideas, so that the creative side of children is seen as one of the learning elements that must be present in the independent curriculum. Whether we admit it or not, children's world is a world of play, and they learn by playing (Kent et al., 2021).

Third, the literacy stage has the theme of religious moderation. At this stage, children are introduced to keywords selected by the teacher in the religious tolerance learning teaching module. These keywords are diversity, religion, and tolerance. Then the teacher

asks the children to write these three words in their worksheet books. This activity of writing words on the theme of religious moderation is a basic literacy activity that must be implemented in the independent curriculum in kindergarten (Fadillah & Yusuf, 2022). Then the teacher introduces the letters in the words “diversity”, “religion”, and “tolerance” to the children. It is hoped that children not only know letters but also retain the words in their minds and hearts as a basic concept of religious moderation, one that is not only remembered but also applied in children’s daily lives now and in the future.

Fourth, the reflection stage. At this stage, the teacher asks the children to discuss their experiences after participating in religious tolerance learning activities. The teacher then provides feedback on the children’s experiences. Feedback is provided to children to relate their experiences to the practice of religious moderation in everyday life. For example, when a child talks about his difficulties in making church crafts, the reason is that, as a Muslim, he has never been to church, so a Christian child helps him make church crafts based on the experience he gets every time he goes to church. After that, the teacher told the children that they must always show an attitude of helping each other when making friends, regardless of their friends’ religious background.

Assessment of Religious Moderation Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten

Basically, the curriculum determines what students must learn, as defined by learning objectives. Then, assessment functions as a means to collect student learning results so that it can be seen whether the learning objectives have been achieved (Pang, 2022).

The assessment of learning about religious moderation in the independent curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten aims to determine the achievement of the learning objectives related to religious tolerance. In the independent curriculum, assessment is called assessment. Teachers use two assessment techniques to measure the achievement of tolerance learning objectives: observation and documentation. The assessment using these two techniques is carried out in accordance with the learning plan design (Pollitt et al., 2020).

Teachers use observation techniques to assess the achievement of religious tolerance learning objectives, using instruments such

as anecdotal notes and assessment checklists. Anecdotal notes are used to assess individual student behavior. These anecdotal notes are considered very appropriate to use to assess individual student behavior (Say et al., 2022).

In the anecdotal notes, the teacher describes each student's behavior and then assesses the relevance of that behavior to the goal of learning religious tolerance. Individual students are said to achieve success in learning when there is a clear connection between their behavior and the learning objectives of religious tolerance. The behavior observed by the teacher through anecdotal notes is the behavior displayed by students while they are participating in learning activities.

Based on the anecdotal records, 92% of students have been able to display behavior such as caring for each other, helping each other, working together, and respecting each other while playing and making friends. This behavior is relevant to the learning objectives of religious moderation, and the anecdotal notes indicate that the students have succeeded in achieving them.

Then the teacher uses the assessment checklist to measure achievement of the religious moderation learning objectives by comparing students' behavior in specific contexts, such as when they play. The results of this comparison are descriptions of whether student behavior has emerged that is consistent with the objectives of learning religious tolerance. Based on the assessment checklist, in class A, 90% of students have exhibited religious tolerance, and 10% have not yet. Meanwhile, in class B, 100% of students have exhibited religious tolerance behavior. Based on the assessment checklist results, learning about religious tolerance in early childhood has been successful.

Then the teacher uses documentation techniques with two instruments: work results and a series of photos. In the work instrument, an assessment was conducted on children's learning products, such as crafts for religious places of worship in Indonesia, including churches, monasteries, temples, and mosques. In the instrument of the work, the teacher describes the process of making the craft carried out by the child, and then tells the child's attitude when making it. The attitude description is then seen for its relevance to the learning objectives of religious moderation. Attitudes that must emerge include being willing to

cooperate, share, care, and not insult other children's work.

In the photo series instrument, the teacher presents photos of children making crafts depicting religious places of worship in Indonesia and then assesses their relevance to the goal of learning about religious moderation. After that, the teacher provides feedback to students based on an assessment of the series of photos' significance to the learning objectives of religious tolerance.

Basically, the results of children's work and a series of photos of children's activities can be used as material to diagnose children's mistakes in learning to make a product or artifact. The results of the diagnosis can be used as material for making improvements (Becker et al., 2023). So, can it be said that assessment using hand-crafted instruments and a series of photos can be used as a medium for recording children's activities while studying?

D. Conclusion

This study aims to examine the practice of religious moderation learning management within an independent curriculum framework. The research findings reveal that the practice of religious moderation in implementing the independent curriculum at Tunas Bangsa Kindergarten is carried out through religious tolerance learning activities on the topic "My Country, Indonesia" and the subtopic "Getting to Know Religion and Places of Worship." Based on these topics and subtopics, the teacher then carries out four religious moderation learning management activities in the independent curriculum, which include planning, organizing, implementing, and assessing religious moderation learning.

In planning religious moderation learning in the independent curriculum, teachers develop religious tolerance teaching modules. This teaching module serves as a guide for implementing religious moderation learning. Then, in organizing religious moderation learning, teachers coordinate to discuss religious moderation materials to be given to children, the procurement of tools and materials for religious moderation, and the types of activities to be conducted with children to internalize the value of religious tolerance. Meanwhile, the implementation of religious moderation learning is carried out through the knowledge transformation stage, the play stage with the religious moderation

theme, the literacy stage with the religious moderation theme, and the reflection stage. Then, proceed with assessing religious moderation learning using observation and documentation techniques. In the observation technique, anecdotal notes and checklists are used. In the documentation technique, work instruments and a series of photographs are used.

One limitation of this research is the lack of observation time at the literacy stage on the theme of religious moderation. This is due to the limited time children have to complete literacy activities. Based on these limitations, the author provides recommendations to other researchers to conduct research focused on studying literacy activities related to religious moderation in early childhood.

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