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Islamic Religious Education and the Interreligious (Interfaith) Approach: A Comparative Study and Interfaith Dialogue in the Development of Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract

This study examines the application of an interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as an effort to strengthen religious moderation in a pluralistic society. The persistence of religious conflict and intolerance highlights the urgency of developing dialogical and inclusive forms of religious education. The objectives of this study are to analyze the concept of the interreligious approach in PAI, explore interreligious dialogue as a learning method, conduct a comparative study of its implementation in various countries, and evaluate its relevance to strengthening religious moderation, the method employed is a literature review using conceptual and comparative analysis of scholarly works on interreligious education, interreligious dialogue, and religious moderation. The findings indicate that the interreligious approach in PAI is grounded in the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy for all creation) and Qur'anic teachings on plurality. Interfaith dialogue has proven effective as a pedagogical strategy for fostering empathy, tolerance, and critical thinking. Comparative analysis shows that Indonesia implements this approach through its Religious Moderation policy, while Western countries apply it through Religious Education curricula, and several Muslim-majority countries remain at a limited stage of reform, the interreligious approach contributes significantly to strengthening key indicators of religious moderation, including national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of local traditions. In conclusion, the interreligious approach

represents an important paradigm for transforming Islamic Religious Education (PAI) into a more humanistic, moderate, and contextualized form of education that responds to the reality of pluralism in Indonesia

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Interreligious Approach, Interfaith Dialogue

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan pendekatan interreligius dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) sebagai upaya memperkuat moderasi beragama di tengah masyarakat plural. Konflik bernuansa agama dan sikap intoleransi menunjukkan urgensi pengembangan pendidikan agama yang dialogis dan inklusif. Tujuan penelitian adalah menganalisis konsep pendekatan interreligius dalam PAI, mengeksplorasi dialog antaragama sebagai metode pembelajaran, melakukan studi komparatif implementasi pendekatan ini di berbagai negara, dan mengevaluasi relevansinya terhadap penguatan moderasi beragama. Metode yang digunakan adalah kajian pustaka dengan pendekatan analisis konseptual dan komparatif terhadap literatur tentang pendidikan interreligius, dialog antaragama, dan moderasi beragama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan interreligius dalam PAI berlandaskan prinsip rahmatan lil 'ālamīn dan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tentang pluralitas. Dialog antaragama terbukti efektif sebagai strategi pedagogis untuk menumbuhkan empati, toleransi, dan pemikiran kritis. Studi komparatif memperlihatkan bahwa Indonesia menerapkan pendekatan ini melalui kebijakan Moderasi Beragama, sementara negara Barat menggunakan kurikulum Religious Education, dan negara Muslim lain masih dalam tahap reformasi terbatas. Pendekatan interreligius berkontribusi signifikan terhadap penguatan indikator moderasi beragama: komitmen kebangsaan, toleransi, anti-kekerasan, dan penerimaan tradisi lokal. Kesimpulannya, pendekatan interreligius merupakan paradigma penting dalam transformasi PAI menuju pendidikan yang humanis, moderat, dan kontekstual terhadap realitas pluralisme di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam, Pendekatan Interreligius, Dialog Antaragama

Introduction

The issue of religious diversity and interreligious dialogue in the global context has increasingly received serious attention. Religious conflicts in various parts of the world underscore the importance of fostering interfaith understanding from an early age through education. Exclusive and closed forms of religious education tend to cultivate fanaticism and intolerance, which may potentially trigger social conflict.¹ Therefore, an interreligious approach, or interfaith education, has become an urgent necessity in contemporary religious education systems.

Contemporary Islamic education, in the context of implementing interfaith dialogue and a multicultural approach, has demonstrated complex yet promising dynamics in various Indonesian educational institutions. Recent case studies demonstrate that the interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not merely theoretical discourse but has become a practical practice that has

¹ Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini, "Islamic Education for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue," *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* 17 (2016): h. 174.

significantly impacted the development of tolerant character in Indonesia's young Muslim generation.

In the context of a multicultural and multireligious society like Indonesia, religious education plays a strategic role in building social harmony and strengthening national values. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) aims not only to instill religious knowledge but also to shape students' character so they can live peacefully alongside followers of other faiths. This aligns with the spirit of Religious Moderation, developed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as a strategy to strengthen tolerance, anti-violence, and respect for diversity in national and state life.²

The interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) refers to efforts to integrate the values of dialogue, tolerance, and respect for religious diversity into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum and learning practices. This approach does not intend to mix religious teachings or engage in syncretism, but rather to build awareness that differences are a natural law that must be accepted and respected.³ Islam itself teaches universal principles of humanity, justice, and peace which are in line with the spirit of interfaith dialogue.

The interreligious approach in Islamic Education (PAI) is relevant as an effort to renew the paradigm of Islamic education to become more open to religious and cultural diversity. This educational model emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue and comparative religious studies as means of understanding theological differences without compromising religious identity. In the context of globalization and digitalization, interfaith dialogue takes place not only in formal forums but also in digital spaces that increasingly bring people of different faiths into close and sustained interaction.⁴

Openness in Islamic religious education requires the reinterpretation of religious texts in ways that are inclusive and humanistic. Through comparative studies and interfaith dialogue, students are trained to think critically about religious doctrines while continuing to cultivate respect for followers of other religions. Therefore, an interreligious approach serves as an important pillar in fostering attitudes of tolerance, *ta'āruf* (mutual understanding), and *ta'āwun* (cooperation) among religious communities.⁵

Islamic religious education with an interreligious approach can also be a means of actualizing the values of the Qur'an which emphasize peace and justice.⁶ In the Quran, Allah says: "O mankind, indeed We created you from a male and a female and

²Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Research and Development and Training Agency, Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019), h. 12

³Munawaroh and Hidayatullah, "The Role of Islamic Religious Education," h. 1306.

⁴Leonard Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), h. 23.

⁵Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Doctrine and Civilization* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), h. 214.

⁶Quraish Shihab, *Insights into the Qur'an: Maudhu'i Interpretation of Various Questions of the Ummah* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), h. 142.

made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another."(QS. al-Hujurāt [49]:13). This verse is an important theological foundation for the development of Islamic education that values plurality.⁷

On the other hand, various studies show that an interreligious approach in education can strengthen religious moderation among students.⁸Comparative studies between Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and other countries show that the success of interfaith dialogue-based learning is greatly influenced by the social, cultural, and policy contexts of the country.⁹Therefore, it is important to critically examine how the interreligious approach is applied in the development of Islamic Religious Education as a means of building a moderate and harmonious society.¹⁰ This study aims to comparatively analyze the application of an interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education and examine its contribution to strengthening religious moderation. Through a literature review and conceptual analysis, this paper is expected to provide a new perspective for developing a more dialogical, tolerant, and contextual Islamic Religious Education curriculum addressing the reality of religious pluralism in Indonesia.¹¹

Literature Review

Many academics have conducted studies on Islamic Religious Education. Most studies emphasize normative aspects and moral formation. Islamic Religious Education is seen as a means of internalizing Islamic values. However, this focus often ignores the pluralistic social context. As a result, education is less responsive to the realities of diversity. This gap requires further study.

Research on multicultural education demonstrates the importance of integrating tolerance values into the curriculum. Banks emphasized that education must reflect cultural and religious diversity. In the Islamic context, tolerance values have a strong theological basis. However, their implementation in Islamic Religious Education remains limited. This research is relevant as a conceptual foundation for an interreligious approach.

Studies on interfaith dialogue have been extensively conducted in the fields of theology and sociology of religion. Swidler describes dialogue as a means of personal and social transformation. Dialogue is not intended for debate or apologetics. In education, dialogue serves as a participatory learning method. This research provides a methodological perspective for the development of Islamic Religious Education.

⁷ Ibid., 145.

⁸Dindin Solahudin, "Inclusive Islamic Education and Interfaith Dialogue," *Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (2018): h. 112

⁹Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), h. 97

¹⁰Syamsul Arifin, "Interreligious Education and Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Islamic Studies* 28, no. 1 (2021): h. 28.

¹¹Alwi Shihab, *Inclusive Islam: Towards an Open Attitude in Religion* (Bandung: Mizan, 1997), h. 55.

Abdullah's previous research emphasized the importance of an inclusive approach in Islamic education. He stated that exclusivism has the potential to breed intolerance. Islamic education needs to be open to global discourse. However, that research did not specifically address interfaith models in the curriculum. Therefore, this study complements previous research.

Comparative studies of religious education across countries reveal significant variations in approaches. In some countries, religious education is conventional and exclusive. In others, it is dialogical and inclusive. This comparison demonstrates that an interfaith approach can be implemented without diminishing religious identity. These findings are relevant to the context of Islamic Religious Education.

Research on the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in Indonesia shows a dominant textual approach. The curriculum emphasizes memorization and normative understanding. Dialogue and critical reflection are lacking. Some researchers have proposed contextual-based curriculum reform. An interfaith approach aligns with this proposal.

A study of teachers' perceptions of interfaith education yielded mixed results. Some teachers supported the approach, believing it relevant. Others were skeptical, citing concerns about religious beliefs. These differing perceptions highlight the need for outreach and training. This research serves as an important reference for understanding implementation challenges.

Other research highlights the role of education in preventing radicalism. Dialogic religious education is considered capable of suppressing extremist attitudes. An interfaith approach encourages a broader understanding of other religions, thereby reducing prejudice and stereotypes. These findings strengthen the argument for the importance of an interreligious approach.

Philosophical studies of religious pluralism are also relevant to this research. Hick proposed the concept of pluralism as a recognition of diversity. Although this concept is controversial, its ethical aspects can be adopted. Islamic religious education can incorporate ethical values without adopting theological relativism. This selective approach is essential for maintaining Islamic identity.

Research on peace education emphasizes dialogue as a primary instrument. Peace education cannot be separated from a religious context. Islamic religious education holds great potential in this regard. Integrating an interfaith approach strengthens the peace dimension. This research provides a practical framework for implementation.

Empirical studies of students' attitudes toward diversity demonstrate the significant influence of education. Students accustomed to dialogue tend to be more tolerant. Dialogic Islamic religious education has a positive impact on social attitudes. These findings support the development of an interfaith approach. However, further research is needed.

Previous research has also discussed the concept of *wasathiyah* in Islam. This concept emphasizes balance and moderation. The interfaith approach can be seen as

an implementation of wasathiyah. Moderate Islamic religious education is relevant to the needs of society. This study strengthens the theological foundation of the interreligious approach.

Educational policy studies demonstrate support for tolerance-based education. However, policy implementation is often inconsistent. Islamic religious education has not been fully oriented toward dialogue. This research fills the gap between policy and practice, thus making the research contribution more applicable.

Research on critical pedagogy in religious education is also relevant. Critical pedagogy encourages students to think reflectively. Interfaith dialogue is one method of critical pedagogy. Islamic Religious Education can adopt this approach contextually, enriching learning methods.

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that the interreligious approach has a strong theoretical foundation. However, specific research on comparative studies of Islamic Religious Education is still limited. Therefore, this study holds a strategic position. It integrates various previous findings. Thus, this research contributes to the development of science.

Method

This study uses library research as its primary approach. This method was chosen because the research focus is conceptual and theoretical. Library research allows researchers to examine various written sources in depth. These sources include books, scientific journals, and policy documents. This approach is suitable for comparative studies and conceptual analysis. Using this method, researchers can identify key patterns and concepts.

The first stage in this method is the collection of literature sources. Researchers select sources relevant to Islamic Religious Education and the interfaith approach. Selection criteria include credibility, relevance, and novelty. The sources selected include both classical and contemporary works. This is essential for gaining a comprehensive perspective. The selection process is carried out systematically.

The second stage was data classification and categorization. The collected literature was grouped by theme. These themes included the concepts of Islamic Religious Education, interfaith dialogue, and comparative studies. This categorization facilitated analysis and synthesis. This way, relationships between concepts could be identified. This process was repeated to ensure consistency.

The third stage is content analysis. Researchers analyze the main ideas from each source. This analysis aims to identify similarities and differences in perspectives. Furthermore, the analysis also identifies research gaps. This analytical approach is qualitative. The results of the analysis form the basis for the discussion. The final stage is synthesis and drawing conclusions. Researchers integrate the various findings into a conceptual framework. This synthesis yields new insights into the interreligious approach. Conclusions are drawn based on systematic analysis. Thus, the research's

conceptual validity can be justified. This method ensures the depth and breadth of the study.

Results and Discussion

I. The Concept of Islamic Religious Education from an Interreligious Perspective

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a broad orientation, not only instilling religious knowledge, but also shaping the personality and religious character of students.¹²In the context of a plural society, the orientation of Islamic education needs to be directed towards developing inclusive, tolerant and dialogical religious awareness.¹³The new paradigm of Islamic scholarship needs to integrate religious, humanitarian, and cultural approaches so that religious education is not exclusive and merely textual.¹⁴

The interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education starts from the awareness that religious plurality is a social reality that cannot be avoided.¹⁵Therefore, Islamic Religious Education must be able to raise awareness to appreciate differences and build an attitude of empathy across religions.¹⁶ In this case, interreligious approach understood as an educational method that emphasizes interaction, communication, and cooperation between religious communities without obscuring the identity of each individual's faith.¹⁷

Interfaith dialogue is the path to "the pluralistic hypothesis," namely the recognition of diverse truths in human religious experience.¹⁸This shows that the main goal of religious education is not only the affirmation of the superiority of a religion, but the formation of a universal spiritual awareness that supports peace.¹⁹

In the context of Islam, the interreligious approach can be justified through the principle of rahmatan lil 'ālamīn, as emphasized in QS. al-Anbiya' [21]:107 that the Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy for all the worlds.²⁰Islam, as a religion of rahmatan lil 'ālamīn (blessing for all nature), possesses universal values that support dialogue and harmony between religious communities. This principle serves as the

¹²Azyumardi Azra, *Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization Towards the New Millennium* (Jakarta: Logos Discourse of Science, 1999), h. 12

¹³Mr. Amin Abdullah, *Islam as a Cultural Capital in Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2018), h. 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59

¹⁵ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), h. 21.

¹⁶Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Doctrine and Civilization* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), h. 198

¹⁷ Leonard Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), h. 30

¹⁸John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), h. 64.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁰M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbah* (Jakarta: Lantern of the Heart, 2002), h. 251.

theological foundation for Islamic educational practices that prioritize the welfare and interfaith dialogue.²¹

The research results show significant differences between conventional Islamic religious education and the interreligious approach. Conventional education tends to focus on doctrinal aspects. The interreligious approach adds dimensions of dialogue and empathy. These differences impact learning objectives and methods. Education becomes more contextual and reflective. These findings demonstrate the potential for pedagogical transformation.

The interreligious approach broadens the scope of Islamic Religious Education material. The material goes beyond discussing internal Islamic teachings. Students are also introduced to universal values across religions. This process is conducted critically and selectively. Islamic identity remains central to learning. Therefore, the expansion of the material is not assimilative.

Interfaith dialogue has proven to be an effective method of learning. Dialogue encourages active student participation. Through dialogue, students learn to listen and appreciate. This process develops social and emotional skills. Islamic religious education becomes more vibrant and dynamic. These findings support the theory of dialogical pedagogy.

Comparative studies show that an interfaith approach increases tolerance. Students become more open to differences. This attitude does not diminish religious commitment. Instead, it leads to a more mature understanding of Islam. This demonstrates that tolerance and religiosity can go hand in hand. This finding dispels the concerns of some.

2. Interfaith Dialogue as a Means of Islamic Education Learning

Interfaith dialogue (interfaith dialogue) is not only a means of interfaith communication, but also a learning vehicle for understanding the diversity of theological perspectives.²²In Islamic education, interfaith dialogue functions as a pedagogical strategy to foster an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation between religious communities.²³

Effective dialogue must be based on four main principles: honesty, equality, mutual listening, and openness to other truths. The Qur'an itself provides a strong foundation for an interreligious approach. This principle aligns with Islamic teachings, which emphasize the importance of ta'āraf (getting to know one another), as stated in QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of

²¹ Ibid., 255.

²² Syamsul Arifin, "Interreligious Education and Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Islamic Studies* 28, no. 1 (2021): h. 8.

²³ Dindin Solahudin, "Inclusive Islamic Education and Interfaith Dialogue," *Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (2018): h. 120.

you.."²⁴This verse emphasizes that diversity is God's will and its purpose is to get to know each other (definition), not to negate or antagonize each other.

Furthermore, the principle of "lakum dinukum waliya din" (to you your religion and to me my religion) in Surah al-Kafirun demonstrates Islam's recognition of religious pluralism and respect for religious freedom. This principle serves as the basis for healthy dialogue and respect for differences in belief without diminishing each person's faith. In Indonesia, the implementation of interfaith dialogue in education has been carried out through various models, such as living values education, interfaith social project-based learning, and religious sharing.²⁵These models have proven effective in strengthening religious moderation and reducing negative interfaith stereotypes.²⁶

Students involved in interfaith dialogue programs demonstrate increased social empathy, critical thinking skills, and commitment to the values of peace.²⁷Meanwhile, international studies in Malaysia confirm that an interreligious approach to Islamic education encourages social transformation towards a more tolerant and harmonious society.²⁸Thus, interfaith dialogue not only functions as an interfaith activity, but also as a pedagogical method that supports the humanistic and multicultural goals of Islamic education.²⁹

3. Comparative Study of the Application of the Interreligious Approach in Islamic Education

A comparative study between the application of the interreligious approach in Indonesia and other countries shows a similar orientation, namely building moderation and social harmony.³⁰However, there are differences in context and implementation strategies that reflect the character of each society.

In Indonesia, the interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education has developed through policies Religious Moderation initiated by the Ministry of Religion.³¹This strategy is implemented through teacher training, development of multicultural Islamic Education modules, and integration of interfaith dialogue values into the curriculum.³²

Meanwhile in Western countries such as England and Canada, interreligious education is implemented through subjects Religious Education (RE) which introduces

²⁴Alwi Shihab, *Inclusive Islam: Towards an Open Attitude in Religion* (Bandung: Mizan, 1997), h. 45.

²⁵Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Research and Development and Training of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019), h. 32

²⁶Mudjia Rahardjo, *Philosophy of Islamic Education* (Malang: UIN Malang Press, 2010), h. 122

²⁷Arifin, "Interreligious Education," h. 15

²⁸Rahimin Affandi Abd. Yusof, "Interreligious Dialogue in Islamic Education: A Comparative Study," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 30, no. 3 (2019): h. 329

²⁹Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), h. 97.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 99

³¹Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Religious Moderation*, h. 44

³²Solahudin, "Inclusive Islamic Education," h. 125.

the world's major religions with an objective and reflective approach.³³This approach aims to foster awareness of global citizenship and appreciation for spiritual diversity.³⁴

Meanwhile, in Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Egypt, the interreligious approach is still limited, but is starting to receive attention within the framework of Islamic education reform.³⁵Reforming Islamic education towards an interreligious approach demands a revision of the curriculum and updating of religious interpretation methods to make them more contextual.³⁶

By looking at these various practices, it can be concluded that the interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education has enormous prospects in strengthening religious moderation, especially if supported by government policies, adequate teacher training, and support from multicultural communities.³⁷

Implementing an interreligious approach requires curriculum support. The curriculum must provide space for dialogue and reflection. Without structural support, this approach is difficult to implement. This study found that a flexible curriculum is more adaptive. This is an important recommendation for policymakers. The curriculum serves as a foundation.

The role of teachers is a key factor in this approach. Teachers function as facilitators of dialogue. Teacher competence determines the quality of learning. This research found that teacher training is essential. Teachers need to be equipped with interfaith insights. This way, an interreligious approach can be implemented appropriately.

The following table compares approaches to Islamic Religious Education:

No	Aspect	Conventional Approach	Interreligious Approach
1	Focus of Material	Internal doctrine	Universal values and dialogue
2	Method	Lectures and memorization	Dialogue and reflection
3	Objective	Understanding the teachings	Understanding and tolerance
4	The Role of Teachers	Information center	Facilitator
5	Social Impact	Tends to be exclusive	Inclusive and dialogic

The table shows fundamental differences in educational orientation. The conventional approach emphasizes the transmission of knowledge, while the interreligious approach emphasizes the transformation of attitudes. This difference

³³ Robert Jackson, *Religious Education for Plural Societies* (London: Routledge, 2019), h. 28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁵ Yusof, "Interreligious Dialogue,"h. 331

³⁶ Saeed, *Islamic Thought*, h. 102

³⁷ Abdullah, *Islam as a Cultural Capital*, h. 78

impacts learning outcomes. Education becomes a means of shaping social character. Analysis of the table clarifies the research findings.

Further discussion shows that the interreligious approach aligns with Islamic values. Values such as *rahmatan lil alamin* (blessing for the universe) serve as the theological foundation. Islamic religious education does not lose its identity. Instead, Islamic values are presented contextually. This strengthens the relevance of education. This finding is theoretically significant.

This approach also contributes to social development. Education plays a role in creating social cohesion. Interfaith dialogue reduces prejudice, leading to more harmonious societies. Islamic religious education serves as an agent of peace. These findings have practical implications.

However, the study also identified implementation challenges. Resistance from some stakeholders persists. This challenge stems from misconceptions. Therefore, disseminating the concept is crucial. A phased approach is recommended. These findings serve as the basis for evaluation.

The comparative discussion shows that context significantly influences implementation. Each educational institution has unique characteristics. An interreligious approach needs to be adapted to the local context. Flexibility is key to success. This demonstrates the importance of a contextual approach. These findings enrich the methodological discourse.

This research also emphasizes the importance of ongoing evaluation. Implementing a new approach requires monitoring. Evaluation ensures that objectives are achieved. Islamic religious education must be adaptive to change. The interreligious approach is dynamic. These findings emphasize managerial aspects.

Overall, the research results demonstrate the great potential of an interfaith approach. Islamic religious education becomes more relevant and humanistic. Dialogue becomes a bridge across differences. These findings are consistent with modern educational theory. Thus, the research contribution is significant. This discussion integrates theory and practice.

4. The Relevance of an Interreligious Approach to Strengthening Religious Moderation

Religious moderation demands balance in understanding and practicing religious teachings in a fair and tolerant manner.³⁸PAI with an interreligious perspective provides space for students to learn to respect differences without losing their faith.³⁹

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, indicators of religious moderation include four aspects: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and acceptance of local traditions.⁴⁰All these indicators can be developed through interfaith

³⁸Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, *Religious Moderation*, h. 14.

³⁹Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), h. 74

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

dialogue-based learning and comparative religious studies.⁴¹ Thus, the interreligious approach is not only a pedagogical strategy, but also a strategic instrument in building a plural, peaceful, and democratic national character.⁴² True religious education must restore the spiritual dimension of humans to love fellow creatures of God.⁴³

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the modern era faces significant challenges due to the increasingly powerful forces of globalization, cultural diversity, and the potential for religious-based conflict. In this context, the interreligious approach presents itself as an alternative paradigm that emphasizes openness, tolerance, and respect for religious diversity. Through comparative studies and interfaith dialogue, Islamic education can transform into a platform for developing moderate, humanistic, and democratic character in students.

Theoretically, an interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only teaches Islamic religious knowledge but also trains students to develop empathy and interfaith awareness. This process aligns with the vision of Islamic Religious Education, namely *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), which is the core of Islamic teachings, and supports the national policy on Religious Moderation initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. In addition, the comparative application of interreligious approaches in various countries shows that religious education can serve as a bridge for peace across cultures and religions when supported by inclusive policies and adequate teacher competence. In the Indonesian context, this implies the need to strengthen educators' capacity, develop a multicultural-based curriculum, and create spaces for dialogue in schools and madrasas that foster mutual respect. Thus, interreligious-oriented Islamic education is an urgent necessity to address the challenges of plurality and intolerance. This approach does not negate Islamic identity; rather, it enriches the meaning of religiosity with universal values such as compassion, justice, and brotherhood.

This study concludes that an interreligious approach is highly relevant in the development of Islamic Religious Education. This approach does not conflict with Islamic values. Instead, it strengthens the ethical and social dimensions of Islamic teachings. Comparative studies demonstrate the superiority of a dialogical approach. Education becomes more contextual and inclusive. Thus, an interfaith approach is worthy of consideration. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of curriculum support and teacher competency. Implementing an interreligious approach requires structural and cultural readiness. Existing challenges can be addressed through outreach and training. This research provides theoretical and practical contributions. The results can serve as a reference for educational development. Islamic Religious Education is expected to be able to constructively address the challenges of plurality.

⁴¹ Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding*, h. 41

⁴² Arifin, "Interreligious Education," h. 20.

⁴³ Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, h. 84.

Conclusion

The interreligious approach in Islamic Religious Education represents a renewed educational paradigm that integrates theological, social, and humanitarian values. This approach emphasizes that authentic religiosity should foster peace, not conflict. Interfaith dialogue and comparative religious studies are strategic tools for fostering mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation among religious communities. This model is effective in strengthening the value of religious moderation in Islamic educational institutions. Comparative applications of the interreligious approach in Indonesia and various other countries demonstrate a positive correlation between interfaith education and social stability and interfaith harmony.

Religious moderation can be strengthened through a contextual Islamic Religious Education curriculum, interreligious-based teacher training, and educational policies that emphasize interfaith dialogue as a learning practice. Thus, Islamic Religious Education from an interreligious perspective is not merely an academic endeavor but also a tangible contribution to the development of a peaceful, inclusive, and civilized civilization. True religious education fosters spiritual awareness and a love for God and all creation.

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