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Education as a Means and Effort to Increase Religious Tolerance in the Digital Era

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Abstract: In the digital age, any moment can be a lot of unexpected events. There is often opposition between people of different religions because many societies do not appreciate or understand these differences. This leads to intolerance that reflects ill effects. The study aims to instill knowledge and awareness in the harmony between individual believers through education, by improving the quality of religious tolerance primarily in human resources themselves. This type of study is a library research study. Data is collected from references to scientific articles: both primary, secondary, and auxiliary data, analyzing the content of the data obtained. Studies show that education is vitally important in improving religious tolerance efforts in the digital age. Education builds up religious tolerance marked by a difference in belief and belief. It is an essential effort to meet global challenges, so education is a strong foundation on which to create and improve the quality of religious tolerance. By understanding and appreciating differences, individuals can learn to appreciate one another and coexist peacefully. Hence, increased.

Keywords: Education; Religious Tolerance; Digital Age.

1. Introduction

Education is a lifelong learning process (long life education) and can occur in various places and situations that have a positive impact on individual development (Dave, 2014). Learning and teaching activities can be carried out anytime and anywhere, without being limited to a particular environment. The main purpose of education is to guide and direct students, which is carried out by an educator so that they gain knowledge and skills that are useful for their lives. The education received by students does not only come from formal education held by the authorities, but also involves the role of family and society (Israel et al., 2001). These two elements are very important as a place of development that can encourage and develop knowledge and understanding. In addition, education also includes providing examples, learning processes, direction, and improving ethics and morals

Education is one of the main pillars in the development of a nation, education is also a means of knowledge, good values and skills for the younger generation. Education also functions as the formation of individual character to contribute to society. In education, not only learning to gain knowledge, but also learning about ethics, morals, and social responsibility. Education also plays an important role in advancing the economy for a country (Grant, 2017). Good education can improve the quality of human resources. If a country has a strong education, it will tend to be able to compete and invest. Education is very important as an effort to build better tolerance in the digital world, so that technology can be a positive means to strengthen relations between religious communities, not vice versa.

Indonesia is a country with diverse ethnicities, cultures, races, and religious beliefs. Through this diversity, citizens have freedom of religion and uphold religious tolerance in society (Spinner-Halev, 2000). In the digital era, it shows that the attitude of religious tolerance in society is very low. Although the internet provides convenience as a medium

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of communication and brings together various cultures and religions, the internet is often used to spread hatred and discrimination against certain groups. On social media, hate speech and hoax news spread very quickly, worsening relations between religious communities, eliminating mutual respect, and creating conflict in society. Someone who commits acts of intolerance always forces his will, his opinions, and his existence on others (Oberdiek, 2001).

Inadequate education often prevents individuals from gaining a deep understanding of universal values, such as mutual respect, cooperation, and the importance of diversity as a social wealth. In the context of religion, low education can lead to a lack of insight into the teachings of other religions, thus encouraging the emergence of negative prejudice (Abrams, 2010). This is made worse by the lack of critical thinking skills, which makes individuals more likely to believe in information that denigrates certain religious groups. As a result, an exclusive attitude develops where someone feels that their religion is the most correct, while other religions are considered a threat. This ignorance also often gives rise to conflicts in everyday life, both on a small scale, such as tensions between individuals, and on a large scale, such as social clashes involving religious groups. Therefore, quality education not only teaches basic skills but also instills the values of diversity and tolerance so that it is very important to build a harmonious and peaceful society.

Education in the digital era plays an important role as a means to increase religious tolerance, by utilizing information technology to disseminate a deeper understanding of religious diversity, encourage dialogue between religious communities, and build an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation for differences, so that the younger generation can grow into open and inclusive individuals in a multicultural society. Through technology-based education, the younger generation can learn to be open individuals and appreciate differences, thereby reducing the potential for inter-religious conflict. We can broaden our understanding of religious diversity, reduce prejudice, and build constructive dialogue between religious communities. Through easier access to various sources and communication platforms, individuals can learn about the traditions and beliefs of other religions, thereby creating a more peaceful and harmonious environment (Wani et al., 2015).

Tolerance is a form of adaptation in social interaction. As creatures living in society, religious individuals cannot ignore the fact that they must relate not only to fellow believers of the same religion, but also to adherents of different beliefs (Slone, 2007). Therefore, an attitude of tolerance needs to be developed so that social harmony is maintained and avoids potential conflicts, both in the form of ideological differences and physical tensions between religious groups (Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2017). An attitude of mutual respect in diversity plays an important role in creating social stability by preventing the imposition of beliefs or conflicts that can lead to violence. In community life, social and religious aspects should not be separated, but must complement and strengthen each other.

2. Materials and Methods

This study uses a library research method with a descriptive normative approach. The main focus of this study is to analyze various relevant data sources. Library studies involve a series of efforts to collect information related to the topic or problem being studied (Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2017). Sources of information can be academic books, research reports, scientific papers, theses, regulations, official decisions, yearbooks, encyclopedias, and various other written references, both in print and digital formats.

According to Satori and Komariah (2017), qualitative research is a method used to explore, identify, describe, and explain various aspects or characteristics of a social phenomenon that cannot be explained, measured, or illustrated using a quantitative approach.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Understanding the Meaning of Education

Education in a broad sense is an effort made consciously and planned to create a supportive learning environment and an effective learning process for students, so that they can develop their potential optimally. Guidance in education covers various aspects, including strengthening religious values, self-control, personality formation, emotional intelligence, and internalization of moral norms and skills needed, both for the benefit of individuals and society (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). In addition, education can also be interpreted as a systematic process that aims to improve the quality of life and achieve better progress. Through education, character formation can be done through various activities, such as instilling values, strengthening morals, and developing religious principles.

Education acts as a learning tool that helps students understand, deepen, and improve critical thinking skills. Any experience that has a significant impact on a person's way of thinking, feeling, or behavior can be categorized as an educational process (Council et al., 2000). Education has various goals, one of which is to form individuals who believe in and are devoted to God Almighty, have noble morals, and become healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent citizens, and have a democratic spirit (Hadi, 2019).

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, education comes from the word "didik," which refers to efforts to foster and provide training, guidance, and direction related to a person's moral and intellectual development (Abdullah et al., 2019). In general, education is a process that aims to change the attitudes and behavior of individuals and groups in order to achieve maturity through various forms of teaching and training (Pope et al., 2019). In a broader scope, education can be understood as a systematic process that applies certain methods so that individuals can gain knowledge, insight, and mindsets that suit their needs.

a. Character Education

In Islam, the term "character" has a meaning that is in line with "morals." The Prophet Muhammad SAW once said, "I was sent to perfect morals." Morals reflect the values embedded in the Islamic faith, including manners, behavior, and ethics in everyday life. As part of moral formation, character development has a crucial role in improving the quality of human resources and must be implemented optimally (Althof & Berkowitz*, 2006). Therefore, in facing the challenges of globalization, the design and implementation of character education is an important aspect in the world of education.

The basis for character education is found in the Al-Quran, especially in Surah Luqman verse 17 which states, "*O my son, establish prayer, invite what is good and forbid what is evil, and be patient with what happens to you. Indeed, this is one of the things that Allah has required.*" The Koran clearly emphasizes the importance of proclaiming and upholding the truth by avoiding wrong actions. A father instills character education in his child by encouraging prayer and practicing patience (White, 2002).

b. Islamic Religious Education

Islamic education is guidance or direction given by educators consciously aimed at the physical and spiritual development of students, so that in the end it forms their ideal character (insan kamil) (Zubaidillah, 2018). Islamic education involves guidance given by one individual to another, which facilitates optimal growth in accordance with Islamic teachings. Islamic religious education is an ongoing effort and process to instill Islamic knowledge and values. This process is characterized by a reciprocal relationship between the first party (adults, teachers, educators) and the second party, which includes students, with the ultimate goal being the instillation of noble character (akhlakul karimah) (Herwati, 2024).

The goal of Islamic education is to foster individuals who have harmonious and balanced personalities, which include not only religious and academic knowledge but also moral skills and character (Ismail, 2016). A significant challenge for Islamic education, especially in Indonesia, lies in the implementation of Islamic values in a comprehensive and holistic manner. This approach must ensure that students not only gain knowledge but also develop strong faith and exemplary moral behavior (Narvaez, 2006).

c. Digital Era Education

Digital education focuses on providing skilled education and utilizing science and technology effectively (Council et al., 2011). The advancement of the era provides opportunities as well as challenges for educational institutions in achieving their educational goals, namely forming an intelligent and noble generation. The digital revolution facilitates fast access to information, which can be optimally utilized in the learning process. The rapid development of technology has encouraged a shift in learning models towards technology-based (Pirani & Hussain, 2019).

The education system must be able to adapt to the ever-growing technological advances. Therefore, in an effort to develop digital-based education, educators who have high competence and professionalism are needed. Educators are required to be able to balance technological advances with cultural values that must still be maintained. Digital education itself is a concept that refers to the delivery of learning materials to students through various multimedia devices, such as computers, laptops, smartphones, videos, audio, and other visual aids (Anshari et al., 2017).

The application of technology in the world of education is expected to improve the ability of individuals and society to sort and assess information or global issues that are circulating. With the ability to filter this information, society can be wiser in receiving news and avoiding invalid or misleading information. This ability also contributes to building an attitude of tolerance and preventing the emergence of intolerant actions in the social environment.

3.2. Challenges of the Digital Era

The digital era is a time when various aspects of life have developed towards more advanced digitalization. The presence of this era aims to replace traditional technology with more efficient, practical, and modern solutions. One significant impact of this progress is the existence of social media which is developing along with the rapid innovation of digital technology (Ali, 2011). The digital era has also brought significant changes in the way people practice their religious lives. One of the impacts is a decrease in attachment to religious institutions, a shift in authority in religious matters and an increasing tendency towards individualism (Clarke, 2009).

Hoaxes and disinformation related to religion also have the potential to cause tension and confusion among religious communities, making it difficult to form inclusive dialogue and disrupting tolerance efforts. The spread of false information or hoaxes related to ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group (SARA) has become easier through social media. Religious information on digital platforms is often manipulated or exploited for certain ideological, economic, or political purposes, which can damage public trust in religious institutions or religious leaders, as well as threaten harmony and stability between religious communities (Kumowal, 2024).

In the digital era, the use of digital media is increasingly widespread in various aspects of life, including in the world of education. Digital-based learning requires students and teachers to interact actively using information and communication technology, such as computers or laptops connected to the internet, smartphones with various supporting applications, and other digital devices (Wong et al., 2015). Therefore, information technology can be used as one of the strategies in the learning process in the digital era. The implementation of this strategy aims to improve the quality of technology-based learning.

The educational landscape has undergone a complete transformation due to digital technology, changing the way we interact with the world, access information, and learn. In this context, understanding the role of digital technology in educational transformation is important because in the digital era, education faces major challenges as well as offers significant opportunities. Religious understanding can be strengthened through the use of digital technology as an effective tool. However, strict supervision of content is needed along with efforts to address the digital divide and accessibility so that education in the digital era can develop optimally. With the continued and effective use of digital technology, education can become more relevant, inclusive, and innovative (Ainscow & Miles, 2008).

In the world of education in the digital era, technology can be used as a source of knowledge and reference in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the integration of technology in education aims to enrich learning methods while teaching students how to use technology to complete various academic tasks. This concept is known as educational technology or eduteach (Sadriani et al., 2023).

The digital era allows information about the importance of religious tolerance to spread quickly and be easily accessed by all levels of society. One form of implementing religious tolerance in the digital era is by utilizing digital public spaces and social media by religious figures. They can socialize the values of tolerance through various types of content, such as videos, articles, opinions, or publications of works, which are disseminated to digital spaces in order to reach a wider audience (Bari & Jamila, 2023).

Advances in digital technology have enabled the formation of interfaith communities online. Through social media, online discussion forums, and various other digital platforms, individuals can interact with people from diverse religious backgrounds. Virtual spaces become a means to build interfaith dialogue, strengthen understanding, and foster tolerance, thus creating an inclusive environment for the exchange of culture and religious knowledge (Kumowal, 2024).

3.3. Modern Tolerance

Etymologically, the term tolerance comes from the English word *toleration*, which means an attitude of mutual respect. In Arabic, this concept is known as *altassamuh*, which reflects the meaning of tolerance, empathy, and an open attitude towards differences. Meanwhile, in the terminological sense, tolerance is interpreted as an attitude that gives freedom to individuals or groups to do things according to their respective interests. In social, cultural, and religious life, tolerance includes attitudes and actions that reject all forms of discrimination against groups or individuals who have differences in society (Amalia & Nanuru, 2018).

Tolerance can be interpreted as balance in diversity, namely the willingness of individuals and communities to live side by side with all existing differences. This concept reflects respect, acceptance, and appreciation for the diversity of cultures, expressions, and ways of life of humans. In addition, tolerance can also be understood as a form of self-control in dealing with something that may not be in accordance with personal views (Pitaloka et al., 2021).

As one of the principles in building social interaction, tolerance is a way to create harmonious relationships between individuals. This is based on the understanding that humans as social beings have the ability to dialogue and establish relationships without having to see the differences that exist. Tolerance involves an attitude of mutual respect, acceptance, and respect for differences of opinion and belief. Therefore, the application of an attitude of tolerance requires magnanimity and an awareness of the importance of respecting the principles of other individuals (Mahpudz, 2024).

In social life, tolerance and harmony between religious communities have a very crucial role, especially in Indonesia which is known for its cultural and religious diversity. This diversity is a valuable cultural asset, but it can also cause conflict if not managed wisely. Therefore, understanding and practicing tolerance are very important in building social harmony, especially in educational environments that are places where the character of the younger generation is formed. Religious teachings, especially in the Qur'an and Hadith, emphasize the importance of mutual respect and appreciation of differences. Tolerance is not just an attitude of accepting differences, but also an active effort to build harmonious relationships, prioritize dialogue, and create a safe and peaceful environment for every religious adherent (Sukandarman & Sofa, 2024).

4. Conclusions

Education plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes of tolerance, especially in dealing with religious diversity. In the digital era, the flow of information moves quickly and is easily accessible, which can influence people's perspectives on differences in beliefs. Therefore, the education system must be an effective tool in instilling values of tolerance by utilizing

technology wisely. Education in the digital era not only aims to create individuals who are capable of using technology, but also equips them with a deep understanding of the importance of tolerance, a sense of responsibility, and respect for religious diversity. With this approach, education can play a powerful role in building a more harmonious, peaceful, and inclusive society amidst existing differences. Readers are expected to realize that education has a major contribution in shaping attitudes of tolerance, especially in the midst of the development of the digital era. Therefore, it is very important to encourage the integration of values of tolerance in the education curriculum, from elementary to college. Value-based and inclusive education can help the younger generation understand the diversity of religions, cultures, and different perspectives. In addition, in the digital era filled with the flow of information, people also need to equip themselves with digital literacy in order to be able to become smart users of technology. By utilizing social media and online platforms positively, every individual can contribute to spreading messages of tolerance and harmony in community life.

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