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The Role of Religious Teachers in Internalizing Religious Moderation Values for Children with Special Needs

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ABSTRAK

Moderasi beragama memiliki peran penting dalam membangun sikap toleransi dan mencegah ekstremisme di masyarakat yang beragam, termasuk bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus (ABK). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran guru agama dalam menginternalisasi nilai-nilai moderasi beragama di Sekolah Luar Biasa Negeri (SLB) Kaliwungu, Kudus. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi non-partisipatif dan wawancara mendalam dengan guru yang aktif dalam pembelajaran ABK. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru berperan sebagai instruktur, fasilitator, dan teladan dalam membangun nilai-nilai moderasi beragama. Metode pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman, bercerita, penggunaan media visual, serta sistem penghargaan diterapkan untuk membantu siswa memahami dan mengamalkan nilai-nilai seperti toleransi, saling menghormati, dan hidup berdampingan secara damai. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi berbagai tantangan, seperti perbedaan kemampuan kognitif siswa, ketidakstabilan emosi, dan hambatan komunikasi. Namun, tantangan ini diatasi melalui adaptasi kurikulum, strategi pengajaran yang disesuaikan, serta kolaborasi aktif dengan orang tua.

ABSTRACT

Religious moderation is crucial for fostering tolerance and preventing extremism in diverse societies, including among children with special needs. This study analyzed the role of religious teachers in internalizing Religious Moderation Values at Kaliwungu State Special School, Kudus. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed in this research. Data were collected through non-participant observation and in-depth interviews with teachers actively involved in teaching students with special needs. The findings showed that teachers acted as instructors, facilitators, and role models in cultivating Religious Moderation Values. Applied teaching methods included experiential learning, storytelling, the use of visual media, and a reward system to help students understand and practice values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. The study also identified various challenges, such as differences in students' cognitive abilities, emotional instability, and communication barriers. However, these challenges were overcome through curriculum adaptation, tailored teaching strategies, and active collaboration with parents.

Keyword:

The Role of Religious
Teachers,
Children With Special
Needs,
Values of Religious
Moderating

Introduction

Indonesia is renowned as a country with extraordinary diversity in terms of culture, religion, and ethnicity (Oktaviana & Munawwarah, 2021). This diversity is both a national treasure and a challenge in maintaining social harmony. This challenge necessitates the strengthening of Religious Moderation Values as an effort to uphold social cohesion and national integrity. Religious moderation, which encompasses tolerance, respect for differences, and the rejection of extremism, is a crucial foundation for building a peaceful and inclusive society (Irmawati & Mardiana, 2024).

The importance of religious moderation is not only relevant to the general public but also holds a high urgency in the world of education. Specifically, instilling these values is paramount for children with special needs attending Special Schools. Ensuring that all students, regardless of their condition, internalize these values is key to fostering an accepting and harmonious future generation.

Children with special needs are a group that is vulnerable to marginalization and discrimination (Suryadinata, 2024). Children with special needs have the same rights to receive quality education, including in the development of moral and spiritual values. Special school, as an educational institution that serves children with special needs, has a strategic role in shaping the character of its students. Teachers at special school are not only tasked with teaching academic and vocational skills, but also as the main facilitators in instilling the values of religious moderation. This is important to do because children with special needs require a special approach that is appropriate to their conditions and abilities (Dahri et al., 2024).

Religious moderation reinforcement is a teacher's effort to help students understand the importance of respecting religious diversity by instilling religious moderation values in their lives. It is expected that students are able to believe in the religion they adhere to by paying attention to principles and staying away from radical ideologies, acts of violence and criminal behavior. Religious moderation plays an important role in maintaining balance, especially in Indonesia, which is rich in diversity of races, ethnicities, cultures and beliefs. Therefore, strengthening religious moderation is important to be instilled in students as the next generation of the nation (Haris et al., 2024).

The internationalization of religious moderation values in special schools has its own challenges. Children with special needs have limitations in understanding abstract concepts, such as moderation and tolerance (Ningrum, 2022). Therefore, teachers in special schools need to develop creative and adaptive learning methods. Thus, research on the role of teachers in facilitating the internalization of religious moderation values in special schools is very important to explore strategies, implementation, as well as inhibiting and supporting factors for the development of children with special needs. In addition, religious moderation education for children with special needs also has broad implications for society. Children who successfully internalize the values of religious moderation will grow into individuals who are more able to respect differences and contribute to creating an inclusive environment (Rusmiati, 2023). This can reduce the potential for conflict between individuals or groups caused by differences in beliefs. Therefore, the formation of the character of children with special needs through religious moderation education in special schools not only has an impact on the individual, but also on the wider community.

Teachers in special school play a key role in teaching the values of religious moderation to children with special needs. Teachers are the closest people to students and have a great influence in building their character (Judrah et al., 2024). Teachers must create a friendly and supportive learning atmosphere, so that children feel comfortable learning and internalizing the values taught (Za'diyah et al., 2024). However, the challenges faced are not simple. Teachers need to understand the special needs of each child, use appropriate learning strategies, and establish good communication with parents and the school community. Considering the complexity of the challenges and opportunities, this study aims to examine the role of religious teachers at Kaliwungu State Special School in internalizing the values of religious moderation in children with special needs. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of better inclusive education policies, as well as become a reference for educators and stakeholders in efforts to build a moderate, tolerant, and inclusive generation.

Extensive research has been conducted on the handling of children with special needs in various environments, especially in educational settings. To educate children with special needs, success in the learning process is not only supported by complete educational facilities, but also the ability and strategy of teachers in delivering the material. One study conducted by (Khoriyah et al., 2021) shows that teachers not only function as teachers, but also as directors and assessors, which contributes to the success of internalizing these values among students with special needs.

A teacher is not enough to just convey learning materials to students, but must also be able to internalize existing educational values. Children with special needs certainly need an extra role for teachers in internalizing educational values. In a study conducted (Sari et al., 2024) showed that teachers need learning media and ways to instill the values of tolerance, anti-violence, and patriotism. The training conducted succeeded in increasing teacher insight, with 65% of participants feeling very helped. The average score of teacher understanding increased from 69% in the pretest to 90% in the posttest, reflecting an increase of 21%. The implementation of religious moderation values is expected to help students with special needs interact with the community and reduce acts of violence. In addition, the introduction of local cultural wisdom, such as the art of Reog Ponorogo, also plays an important role in shaping student character. Recommendations for further training related to violence in SLB were also conveyed.

The third study that discusses the role of teachers in instilling educational values, namely research conducted by (Lastri et al., 2023) concluded that: Internalization of religious values in children with special needs at Alam Mahira Junior High School, Bengkulu is carried out by habituation so that the Internalization of religious values is embedded in them, If associated with the theory of Internalization of religious values in children with special needs. Research that also discusses the importance of the role of teachers in internalizing educational values in students with special needs, namely research by (Shufi et al., 2024) shows that in instilling Islamic educational values for Children with Special Needs at SLB ABC Melati Aisyiyah Deli Serdang is carried out by instilling faith values, sharia values (worship), and moral values at the SMPLB and SMALB levels with special needs for deaf and mentally retarded children. The methods and strategies used are lectures, demonstrations, stories, habits, role models, *targhib* and *tarhib*. Supporting factors are principals, teachers, parents, environment, private tutoring. Inhibiting factors are inadequate facilities and infrastructure, communication barriers, and the absence of lesson plans. Solutions include improving facilities and infrastructure, improving communication patterns, and creating lesson plans.

Theoretically, the concept of religious moderation (*moderasi beragama*) refers to an attitude of balance in understanding and practicing religious teachings neither excessive nor neglectful while upholding principles of tolerance, justice, and respect for diversity. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag, 2019) and Azra (2020), religious moderation emphasizes four core indicators: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture. In the context of inclusive education, this concept is closely linked to social inclusion theory, which upholds equality, participation, and respect for differences among all learners (Ainscow et al., 2006). Integrating religious moderation into inclusive learning environments thus serves as a means of fostering not only spiritual and moral development but also social empathy and acceptance among students with special needs.

Based on previous studies, in its implementation, there are certainly challenges for a teacher in an inclusive school, especially when dealing with children with special needs. Research by (Mirrota, 2024) shows that the main challenges faced by religious teachers are the gap in students' understanding levels, limited resources, and the difficulty of communicating effectively with students with special needs. However, the teacher's maximum efforts and school support are able to overcome these various obstacles. The factor that distinguishes the researcher's research from previous studies is the topic discussed by the researcher and the elements studied, namely regarding the Role of Religious Teachers in Internalizing the Values of Religious Moderation in Children with Special Needs at Kaliwungu State Special School. The factor that explicitly distinguishes this research from previous studies is its specific focus. Previous studies have not specifically explored the role of religious teachers in internalizing

religious moderation values among special-needs students within the context of a dedicated Special School like Kaliwungu State Special School.

The purpose of this study is 1) To determine the role of religious teachers in internalizing the values of religious moderation at Kaliwungu State Special School. 2) To determine the implementation of the values of moderation at Kaliwungu State Special School. 3) To determine what are the supporting and inhibiting factors of religious teachers in internalizing the values of religious moderation at Kaliwungu State Special School. This study contributes to building equal dignity and respect and maintaining unity and harmony of religious communities among students.

Methods

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at examining the role of religious teachers in facilitating the internalization of religious moderation values among children with special needs at Kaliwungu State Special School, Kudus. This approach was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences, teaching strategies, and the contextual factors influencing the learning process.

Data were collected through non-participant observation and in-depth interviews. Non-participant observation was conducted from January 14 to January 23, 2025, to ensure consistency across data collection phases. This method enabled the researcher to directly observe teaching and learning activities without interfering with classroom dynamics. Observations focused on how teachers applied inclusive and adaptive teaching methods to instill religious moderation values. The researcher maintained detailed field notes and photo documentation to support the validity of observations.

In-depth interviews were conducted within the same period (January 14–23, 2025) with two religious teachers at Kaliwungu State Special School who were actively involved in the teaching process. The limited number of informants was considered sufficient because both participants represented the core subjects responsible for religious instruction in the school and demonstrated consistent patterns in their teaching experiences. Thus, data saturation was reached when no new information or themes emerged during the interviews. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, which involves six stages: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. This framework allowed the researcher to systematically identify recurring patterns and meaningful categories that reflected the teachers' roles, strategies, and challenges in internalizing religious moderation values. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, triangulation was applied by comparing the results from observations, interviews, and supporting documents such as lesson plans and school reports.

To enhance methodological transparency, a summary of data sources is presented below.

Data Source	Type of Participant	Duration / Period	Purpose
Observation	Classroom and extracurricular religious learning activities	Jan 14–23, 2025	To observe teachers' strategies and interactions with students
In-depth Interview	2 Religious Teachers	Jan 14–23, 2025	To explore experiences, perceptions, and challenges in teaching religious moderation
Document Review	Lesson plans, syllabi, school activity reports	Jan 2025	To complement field data and verify consistency of information

All participants provided informed consent, and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality and avoid any potential conflict of interest.

Results

1. The Role of Religious Teachers in Internalizing the Values of Religious Moderation at Kaliwungu State Special School in Kudus

Religious moderation is an approach that emphasizes balance in understanding and practicing religious teachings, without falling into extremism. In the context of education for Children with Special Needs at Kaliwungu State Special School, the role of religious teachers is crucial in instilling the values of religious moderation in students. Teachers not only act as instructors who deliver subject matter, but also as facilitators who guide students in understanding the concept of religious moderation, mentors who provide support and motivation, and guides who lead students in internalizing these values in their daily lives.

A religious teacher at Kaliwungu State Special School, stated, "Because it's a Special School, first of all, teachers must be patient. Patient in teaching and patient in all things." This statement illustrates the importance of patience for a teacher who teaches Children with Special Needs. Patience is the key to facing the challenges and difficulties that may arise in the learning process. Religious teachers at Kaliwungu State Special School are required to have a high level of patience and the ability to adapt teaching methods to the individual needs of students. This is because students at Special School have diverse conditions, such as visual, hearing, and intellectual impairments, each requiring different learning approaches. The religious teacher then explained, "I teach from 1st grade to high school. It's diverse, those with visual impairments require special attention. Those with hearing impairments require sign language, the hands must be in constant communication." This statement illustrates the diversity of student needs at Kaliwungu State Special School. Teachers must be able to understand the characteristics and needs of each student in order to provide effective and appropriate learning. Patience and understanding of children's characteristics are needed in the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation. Teachers must be able to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere for students to learn and interact, as well as provide support and motivation so that students can develop their potential optimally.

In an effort to internalize the values of religious moderation, experience-based and direct practice-based learning strategies become one of the main approaches applied. For example, in the context of teaching ablution to students with intellectual impairments, students are not only invited to understand the theory of ablution, but also to experience the direct sensation of touching water as part of multisensory learning. The religious teacher explained, "Every day I teach them ablution, the practice of ablution. The important thing is how to make the children happy with the teacher." Through this approach, students not only memorize the movements and readings of ablution, but also directly feel the sensation of the water used for purification, so that their understanding of religious teachings becomes deeper and more meaningful.

In addition to direct practice methods, the cultivation of interreligious tolerance values is also integrated into daily social interactions within the school environment. The religious teacher observed, "If there are Christian friends, do their friends respect them or not? Yes, they respect each other." This attitude of mutual respect is not only taught through words, but also practiced in real daily actions, so that the values of religious moderation do not only become abstract concepts, but also become part of students' behavior and interactions at school. Thus, students not only understand the importance of tolerance, but also apply it in their daily lives, creating a harmonious and inclusive school environment.

In an effort to convey the values of religious moderation to students, storytelling becomes a very effective tool for religious teachers. Teachers not only convey material theoretically, but also weave stories or writings that are interesting and relevant to students' daily lives. Sometimes, playing methods are also used to make learning more interactive and fun. For example, teachers can give simple examples of how people who do good will receive goodness in return. Thus, students can more easily understand abstract concepts about religious moderation through a storyline that is attractively packaged.

In addition to storytelling methods, religious teachers also involve students in social activities that are oriented towards real action. These activities not only provide an understanding of the values of religious moderation, but also direct experience in applying them. For example, students are invited to share food with friends in need, help friends who are experiencing difficulties, and participate in joint activities that can foster a sense of belonging and togetherness. Through these activities, the values of religious moderation not only become part of the learning material in class, but also become part of students' daily lives.

For example, the religious teacher once held a social activity where students were invited to share food with friends in the school environment. This activity received a positive response from students, and they were even very enthusiastic to go to school on the day of the food distribution. This shows that social activities like this are not only effective in conveying the values of religious moderation, but are also very popular with students.

In an effort to create interesting and effective learning, religious teachers do not only rely on conventional lecture methods. They utilize a variety of visual aids, one of which is a projector, to support students' understanding. The use of this projector allows lesson materials, such as text or images, to be displayed in a larger and clearer format, making it easier for students to digest information visually. The religious teacher revealed that the use of learning media such as projectors provides a sense of comfort for students. Thus, students who previously had difficulty understanding text or verbal instructions can be more helped by the visualization of the material presented.

In addition, religious teachers also implement a reward-based approach as a motivation strategy. This approach involves giving gifts or rewards to students who actively participate or show a good understanding of the subject matter. The gifts given vary, ranging from snacks such as snacks and candy, to small toys. The religious teacher explained that when students feel happy and appreciated, they tend to be calmer and more focused in following the learning. This reward system not only motivates students to participate, but also encourages them to apply the values of religious moderation in their daily lives.

Another challenge faced by religious teachers is the different backgrounds of each student. Each student has a different level of understanding and experience, so teachers must be able to adjust their teaching methods so that the material can be conveyed properly to all students. This requires teachers to continue to innovate and seek new and effective strategies.

To summarize, the table below presents the roles of religious teachers and their corresponding strategies and examples in internalizing religious moderation values at Kaliwungu State Special School.

Teacher's Role	Main Function	Learning Strategies / Examples
Instructor	Delivering knowledge and guiding students to understand the core concepts of religious moderation.	a) Using experiential learning (e.g., direct practice of ablution and prayer). b) Utilizing visual media such as projectors and pictures to explain concepts clearly.
Facilitator	Creating an inclusive and adaptive learning environment that accommodates different student abilities.	a) Adapting teaching methods to various disabilities (sign language for hearing-impaired students, tactile learning for visually impaired). b) Encouraging collaboration and mutual respect among students of different backgrounds.
Motivator / Role Model	Inspiring students to apply values of tolerance and respect through attitude	a) Implementing a reward system (snacks, toys, praise) to reinforce positive behavior.

and behavior.

b) Demonstrating patience, empathy, and respect as a daily example for students to emulate.

2. Implementation of religious moderation values in the curriculum at Kaliwungu State Special School in Kudus

Kaliwungu State Special School implements a unique and adaptive approach in applying the Independent Curriculum, a curriculum designed to provide flexibility and autonomy to educational units in developing learning that suits the needs of students. However, at Kaliwungu State Special School, this flexibility is key because of the diverse characteristics of the students with different levels of understanding. Teachers at Kaliwungu State Special School, explained that teachers have a central role in adapting the curriculum to the needs of each student. Sometimes, the existing curriculum is not entirely suitable for all students, so teachers must take the initiative to create their own curriculum that is more relevant to the abilities and characteristics of each child.

In the context of religious moderation values, Kaliwungu State Special School integrates it into the curriculum through the habit of worshiping together. Religious teachers give examples, such as when a teacher performs Dhuha prayers, students will naturally be encouraged to imitate. This method not only introduces religious teachings theoretically, but also instills spiritual values in everyday practice. Thus, students not only understand the concept of religion, but also internalize and practice it in daily life.

In addition, the values of tolerance are also a major focus in education at Kaliwungu State Special School. Teachers not only teach tolerance through words, but also through real actions. Religious teachers emphasize the importance of exemplary behavior in students' character education. When teachers show tolerant behavior in daily interactions, students will tend to imitate and adopt these values. This exemplary-based approach helps students understand that tolerance is not just an abstract concept, but an integral part of a harmonious social life. Thus, Kaliwungu State Special School not only provides academic education, but also shapes the character of students who have noble values, such as tolerance, which are very important in the context of a diverse Indonesian society.

3. Supporting and inhibiting factors for religious teachers in internalizing the values of religious moderation at Kaliwungu State Special School in Kudus

The success of internalizing religious moderation values at Kaliwungu State Special School is inseparable from a number of key factors that play an important role in the learning process. One of the main factors is the teacher's ability to establish effective communication with children with special needs. Teachers are required to have skills in using sign language and Braille to ensure that religious teachings can be well understood by students with hearing or visual impairments. Teacher at Kaliwungu State Special School, explained that although mastering sign language and Braille is not easy, the effort to learn and use them in the learning process is very helpful in building students' understanding of religious values. By understanding the language used by students, teachers can more easily convey material clearly, so that students are not only able to passively receive lessons but also can interact and ask questions if there are things that are not understood.

In addition to effective communication skills, the reward system is also one of the strategies implemented to support the learning of religious moderation values. Teachers give appreciation for student achievement in various forms, such as praise, small gifts, or special attention, which aims to increase motivation and a sense of comfort in learning. Teacher at Kaliwungu State Special School emphasized that when students feel valued for their efforts, they will be more encouraged to follow the learning process well. For example, teachers sometimes give snacks, toys, or candy as a form of appreciation for students who show positive behavior or successfully understand the lesson material. With this reward system, students become more calm and focused in receiving lessons, and are more motivated to practice the values of religious moderation in everyday life.

Despite the various supporting factors in the internalization of religious moderation values, Kaliwungu State Special School also faces a number of challenges in the teaching process. One of the main challenges faced is the emotional condition of students which is often unstable and can affect the learning process. Some students sometimes feel lazy, not interested in learning, or even show naughty behavior that makes it difficult for teachers to deliver material. This condition is exacerbated by external factors, such as the atmosphere at home or students' personal experiences that can bring emotional impact when they come to school. Teacher at Kaliwungu State Special School explained that there are times when students come to class in a state of anger or upset due to problems at home, making it difficult to direct them to stay focused on learning. In situations like this, teachers are required to have high flexibility and empathy to be able to adjust the learning approach to the emotional condition of students.

To overcome this challenge, teachers at Kaliwungu State Special School continue to develop various learning strategies that are more effective and adaptive. They not only use teaching methods that are tailored to the characteristics of each student but also try to establish good communication with parents so that the learning process can be supported continuously at home. With good coordination between the school and the family, teachers can obtain information about the emotional condition of students and the factors that may affect their behavior at school, so they can design a more appropriate approach in delivering learning. In addition, patience and perseverance in guiding students individually are also important factors in creating an inclusive learning environment that supports their development.

Overall, the success of internalizing religious moderation values at Kaliwungu State Special School is the result of synergy between various supporting factors and ongoing efforts in facing existing challenges. The ability of teachers to communicate effectively with children with special needs, the application of a reward system to increase learning motivation, and awareness in managing the emotional condition of students become important aspects in creating a more inclusive and effective learning process. With a strong commitment from educators and support from parents, Kaliwungu State Special School continues to strive to provide quality education and instill the values of religious moderation as a provision for students in living life in an increasingly diverse society.

Discussion

1. The Role of Religious Teachers in Internalizing the Values of Religious Moderation at Kaliwungu State Special School in Kudus

The research findings indicate that religious teachers at Kaliwungu State Special School play a complex role in teaching the values of religious moderation. They act not only as instructors but also as facilitators, motivators, and mentors for students in understanding and applying religious teachings in a moderate way. This role aligns with research conducted by (Mursyidah et al., 2022), which concluded that teachers have the task of not only teaching material but also shaping the character of students to become individuals who have good social skills and know how to act and make sense of life and become better individuals. Another study by (Pradnyaswari et al., 2022) revealed that teachers at Special School must have special skills in teaching children with special needs. This is in line with the findings of this study, where patience and the ability to adapt teaching methods are the main keys in the learning process. Teachers must be able to adjust their approach based on the individual needs of students, for example, using sign language for students with hearing impairments or multisensory methods for students with intellectual disabilities. This supports the theory of inclusive education put forward by (Ainscow et al., 2006) which emphasizes the importance of flexibility in teaching for children with special needs.

The results of this study indicate that the internalization of religious moderation values is carried out through an experience-based and direct practice approach. For example, in teaching the procedures for ablution, students are not only given theory but also directly practice it to better understand the essence of the worship. This method is in accordance with research by (Rasmitadila et al., 2021) which states that SIPAO-based learning is effective in increasing religious understanding for children with

special needs. In addition, the inculcation of tolerance between religious communities is also carried out through daily social interaction in the school environment. The results of this study found that students from various religious backgrounds can respect each other, which shows the success of internalizing the values of religious moderation. This is reinforced by findings from (Irwansyah et al., 2024) which concluded that religious education makes a significant contribution in shaping attitudes of tolerance, which is reflected in a deep understanding of universal values such as love, justice, and peace. In other words, a school environment that supports diversity becomes an important factor in shaping a moderate understanding of religion.

In this study, the use of learning media such as projectors and storytelling methods proved to help students understand the concept of religious moderation. Religious teachers also apply a reward system as a motivational strategy so that students are more enthusiastic in learning. This finding is supported by research (D. S. Rahayu et al., 2022), which shows that visual-based learning media are quite effective in helping children with special needs understand the subject matter. On the other hand, the use of storytelling methods is also in line with the results of research conducted by (Putri, 2024), which revealed that storytelling allows the delivery of abstract material, such as moral values, to become more concrete and easily understood by students. Stories with strong moral messages can help students internalize the values of religious moderation more easily.

This study found that one of the main challenges in teaching religious moderation to children with special needs is the difference in the level of understanding and background of each student. Teachers must continue to innovate in implementing effective teaching strategies according to the needs of each student. This is in line with research conducted by (Pujiaty, 2024), which emphasizes that differentiation in teaching affects the success of inclusive education. One solution found in this study is an experience-based approach and active student involvement in social activities. Activities such as sharing food and helping friends who are in trouble have been shown to help students internalize the values of religious moderation more effectively. This solution is also supported by research (I. Rahayu et al., 2024), which states that direct experience is effective in increasing student understanding. And it is also in line with constructivism theory which states that direct experience helps students build more meaningful knowledge.

The results of this study have several implications for the education of children with special needs, especially in the context of values education and religious moderation. First, an approach based on exemplary behavior and habituation is proven to be more effective than instructional methods in internalizing the values of religious moderation. Second, the application of the Independent Curriculum provides opportunities for schools to adjust learning materials to the needs of students, so that the values of tolerance can be more easily understood and applied in everyday life. Another implication that needs attention is the need for training for teachers in implementing religious moderation education more effectively. As revealed in research (Ra, 2023), the success of a teacher in instilling moral values is influenced by various factors, including the strategies applied in learning. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of teachers through training and workshops related to inclusive teaching methods needs to be a concern for schools and education policymakers.

2. Implementation of religious moderation values in the curriculum at Kaliwungu State Special School in Kudus

The research results indicate that Kaliwungu State Special School implements the values of religious moderation through an adaptive approach in the Independent Curriculum. The implementation of these values is carried out through the habit of joint worship and the teacher's exemplary role in shaping student character. This finding is in line with the conclusions of research conducted by (Harmita et al., 2022), which states that the internalization of religious values in education uses a practice-based approach and the exemplary role of educators. In the context of inclusive education, research from (Sira et al., 2024) emphasizes that effective learning for children with special needs must involve relevant practical experiences and be more flexible in designing learning that suits the needs of students. Thus,

the methods applied at Kaliwungu State Special School are in line with the principles of inclusive education, which emphasizes the importance of differentiation in religious learning to suit the characteristics of each student.

Teachers have a very important role in shaping the understanding and attitudes of religious moderation in children with special needs. Based on research conducted by (Ningsih, 2025), teachers not only act as instructors, but also as facilitators who help students understand religious teachings with a contextual and applicative approach. This is evident in the habit of joint worship implemented at Kaliwungu State Special School, where teachers become role models for students. In addition, research from (Salim et al., 2024) mentions that one strategy that has proven successful is the exemplary-based approach applied by teachers. Teachers not only convey material about morality in theory, but also strive to be a direct example by showing behavior that is in accordance with Islamic values. This leads to the strengthening of student character formation, as they tend to imitate the behavior they see from their teachers. By displaying an attitude of tolerance and respecting diversity in everyday life, teachers at Kaliwungu State Special School indirectly instill the values of religious moderation in students.

Tolerance education is one important aspect in the character building of children with special needs at Kaliwungu State Special School. These research results show that tolerance is not only taught theoretically, but also through real examples given by teachers in daily interactions. This finding is supported by research conducted by (Syahara et al., 2022), which states that in character education, exemplary models are very influential in the character formation of students. Furthermore, research from (N. A. Rahayu et al., 2024) reveals that the lack of direct experience and visualization of the concept of religious diversity makes it difficult for students to understand it thoroughly. In this case, Kaliwungu State Special School has implemented relevant strategies, where teachers show an attitude of tolerance in daily interactions, thereby becoming an example for students in applying these values in their lives.

These findings confirm that the application of religious moderation values must be carried out flexibly and based on direct practice so that it is more easily understood by children with special needs. In addition, the role of teachers as role models in shaping student character is a key factor in the successful internalization of religious moderation values.

3. Supporting and inhibiting factors for religious teachers in internalizing the values of religious moderation at Kaliwungu State Special School in Kudus

This research shows that the success of the internalization process is influenced by several supporting factors such as the ability of teachers to communicate effectively with children with special needs and the application of a reward system to increase learning motivation. However, there are also inhibiting factors in the form of fluctuating emotional conditions of students and the influence of the family environment that can have an impact on the learning process.

Effective communication is a major factor in conveying the values of religious moderation to children with special needs. Teachers must be able to adapt communication methods accordingly, such as using sign language for deaf students and Braille for blind students. The study conducted by (Supriyadi et al., 2023) confirms that language use is a very influential aspect of success. There are several things to consider in language use. First, the language used should be communicative and easy to understand. Second, in using language, teachers must pay attention to the level of student development. This research is also in line with the findings from research conducted by (Oktaviani & Harsiwi, 2024), which highlights the importance of special training for teachers in mastering inclusive communication methods so that material delivery can be more effective. In the context of religious moderation, appropriate communication allows students to understand the concepts of diversity, tolerance, and inclusive attitudes in everyday life.

Another strategy applied in teaching religious moderation at Kaliwungu State Special School is a reward system. This method has proven effective in increasing student learning motivation, as explained by Khoirul in this research. A study by (Gopalan et al., 2017) on motivation theory shows that

rewards are a form of external motivation that contributes to individual success, especially for those who are less in a stressful condition. The application of this reward system is also supported by research (Sa'adah et al., 2024) which confirms that forms of appreciation, whether in the form of praise, small gifts, or special attention from the teacher, can increase students' comfort and confidence in participating in religious lessons. With higher motivation, students are more likely to accept the values of religious moderation such as tolerance and respect for differences.

However, in practice, there are challenges that teachers must face in internalizing the values of religious moderation to children with special needs. One of the main challenges is the unstable emotional condition of students. This is also confirmed in the book written by (Selian, 2024), saying that children with special needs face challenges in managing their emotions. This may include difficulties in dealing with anxiety, anger, or frustration. These difficulties can affect their ability to interact socially with others and learn. In addition to internal factors, external factors such as the family environment also have an influence on the success of learning. Some students come to school with disturbed emotional conditions due to family problems, making it difficult to concentrate on understanding religious subject matter. This is in line with the research results from (Subasman et al., 2024), which emphasizes the importance of synergy between schools and families in supporting the learning process of children with special needs.

To overcome these challenges, teachers at Kaliwungu State Special School implement more adaptive and flexible learning strategies. They coordinate with parents to understand the emotional condition of students before entering the classroom, and adjust teaching methods based on the child's psychological condition on that day. This is in accordance with research conducted by (Mulyani & Abidinsyah, 2021), which emphasizes that an individual approach in learning for children with special needs can overcome obstacles in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, this research also confirms that the teacher's patience and perseverance in guiding students is a key factor in creating an inclusive learning environment. As mentioned by (Samadi et al., 2023), the emotional stability of the teacher is an important foundation in creating a conducive learning environment. As a class leader, an emotionally stable teacher is able to handle challenges calmly and provide appropriate responses to student needs.

Based on the research results and comparison with previous studies, it can be concluded that the role of religious teachers in internalizing the values of religious moderation in children with special needs is very complex and requires diverse approaches. The application of effective communication and reward systems has proven to be a strategy that can support the success of learning. However, challenges in the form of students' emotional conditions and the influence of the family environment remain obstacles that need to be overcome with more comprehensive strategies.

Conclusion

This study shows the important role of religious teachers in internalizing the values of religious moderation in children with special needs at Kaliwungu State Special School, Kudus. Teachers not only act as instructors but also as facilitators, motivators, and mentors in helping students understand and apply the values of religious moderation in their daily lives. Through direct experience-based approaches, storytelling methods, the use of learning media, and reward systems, teachers successfully create an inclusive and adaptive learning environment. This study also found that approaches based on exemplary behavior and habituation are more effective than instructional methods in instilling the values of tolerance, respecting diversity, and building mutual respect among students.

The findings of this study contribute to the development of learning strategies in inclusive school environments, particularly in teaching the concept of religious moderation to children with special needs. The practical implications of this research indicate that curriculum adaptation, strengthening teachers' communication skills in sign language and Braille, and using more interactive learning methods can improve students' understanding of the values of moderation. In addition, the active role of parents and the school community in supporting the learning process is also an important factor in ensuring the successful internalization of these values. Therefore, inclusive education policies should

pay more attention to pedagogical aspects that are appropriate to the needs of children with special needs.

However, this study has limitations due to the small number of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across multiple special schools to obtain a broader perspective and deeper understanding of religious moderation practices in inclusive education settings. Although this study has identified various effective strategies, there are several challenges that still need to be addressed, such as the fluctuating emotional conditions of students and the limited supporting facilities at the school. Therefore, further research can explore how the influence of intensive training for teachers can improve the effectiveness of learning religious moderation values. In addition, comparative studies between various learning models in other Special Schools can also provide broader insights into best practices in inclusive education based on the values of diversity and tolerance.

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