

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i1.632>

Trajectory of Intolerance in Schools and its Prevention: An Attempt to Apprehend Social Harmony

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the phenomena of intolerance in schools, the context, and prevention efforts as critical efforts in achieving harmonious social relationships in the educational setting. The study was carried out in seven high schools in Surabaya, Indonesia. Data were collected using interview, questionnaire, and focus group discussion. The obtained data were examined qualitatively using the identification results. The results revealed that some high schools in Surabaya had grown tolerance very well while others had not successfully responded intolerance. Students' intolerance stemmed from a lack of confidence, inadequate socialization, and disregard for diversities. To address this issue, a collaborative effort was required to improve the instruction of ethical principles, religion, and social awareness both inside and outside of the school. The study's novelty was the comprehensive approach involving teachers and school committees to permeate the principles of ethics, religion, and social awareness in curriculum.

Keywords: Trajectory, Social Harmony, Intolerance, School, Prevention.

Introduction

Preventive measures must be carried out to ensure that intolerance does not spread to the world of education, particularly among high school students, who are prone to becoming trapped in an intolerant attitude. In terms of achieving a peaceful and tolerant world, moderate understanding and attitudes are essential particularly among students in cooperating the scheme of tolerance learning process (Alazeez et al., 2024; Yani et al., 2022). In order to respond to the current phenomenon of intolerance, it is necessary to develop tolerance insight and attitudes in the context of social life, particularly through education, so that social harmony and mutual respect can be upheld within diversities (Arifin, 2019; Isac et al., 2018; Sakalli et al., 2021). To achieve a harmonious and tolerant existence, positive insight and attitude are required because both influence a person's behavior in life. It is consequently essential for teachers particularly to eliminate intolerance occurred in school settings. Thus, this study aims to showcase how the phenomena of intolerance occurs in schools and how it can be prevented.

Tolerance is an integral aspect of Islam's universal ideals, as expressed in the notion of *Islam Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin* (Khalli et al., 2020; Yani et al., 2020; Yani & Hanafi, 2022). In coping

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with the present study's context, it is critical to instill a positive attitude in students, particularly at the secondary school level, in order to promote social harmony and peace in national and state life. In this case, schools must serve as role models in perceiving tolerant characteristics. Tolerant mindset is a social capital to enhance unity in diversities (Ahdan et al, 2024).

According to the findings of a study conducted by Alamsyah M. Dja'far, a Wahid Foundation Researcher, the increasing exposure to hate speech in various media and social settings contributes to the possibility for radical and intolerant activities. Radicalism is more likely to develop among persons who take religion teachings literally and reject the exercise of civic rights (Dja'far, 2021). Consequently, character education is essential in reducing intolerance and extremism and it must be internalized when undertaking a teaching and learning process in schools (Arwandi, 2023). School-age children are at a critical stage in their education. One considered resolution is to incorporate tolerance instruction into a learning process carried out in schools. This is a vital instrument to shield Indonesia's young generation from the threat of terrorism and radicalism (Kusuma & Azizah, 2018; Seniwati, 2024). On October 8, 2019, the Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Religion published a book entitled *Religious Moderation* at the Ministry of Religion Head Office in Jakarta. The book launch, which included a discussion, featured three speakers: Komaruddin Hidayat, Chancellor of the International Islamic University of Indonesia; Adian Husaini, Head of the Islamic Education Doctoral Program at Ibn Khaldun University Bogor; and Elga Sarapung, Director of the Interfaith Dialogue Institute (DIAN) Interfidei Yogyakarta.

Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the Minister of Religion, takes time in his introduction remarks at the book's presentation to ask questions about how people can integrate the ideal of religious moderation. How is religious moderation realized in daily life? To answer this, we must first prove what is true in religious moderation, covering moderation to avoid extremists. Religious moderation entails honoring differences and valuing diversities (Hanipun et al., 2023). Reviewing the notion of the book *Religious Moderation*, it is important to lay the groundwork for mainstreaming religious moderation in the Ministry of Religion's National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024. All Indonesian citizens must promote religious moderation in all levels of national and governmental affairs. Islam's discourse known as *rahmatan lil alamin*, *kalimatus sawa'*, and *ummattan wasatan*, fosters compassion, tolerance, and mutual collaboration. As a consequence, Indonesia can develop greater and more affluent (Yani et al., 2020; Yani & Hanafi, 2022). It is vital to cultivate a tolerant attitude in order to restore the identity of religion, which has recently been interpreted in an extreme way by some of its devotees, resulting in an attitude of intolerance, such as tension and hatred. This can be responded by innovating in social life, including in schools, and refining a favorable attitude toward everyone who differs in many ways.

Suwendi, Head of the Research and Community Service at Sub-Directorate of the Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, believes that religious moderation is a key solution in strengthening Indonesian citizens' commitment to nationality and religion (Islam). These religious concerns have recently become increasingly intertwined with politics in Indonesia. There are at least two keywords for comprehending religious moderation. First, religious moderation necessitates that religion can be practiced in everyday life in order for it to serve its purpose (Arifinsyah et al., 2020). Religion's function includes ensuring the dignity of human beings. Human identity must be protected, valued, and prioritized in religious attitudes. In truth, God revealed religion to humans because people need

it. In this framework, it is vital to define, comprehend, and situate religion as what human beings need (Yani et al., 2020). As a result, comprehending religion requires critical-rational thinking and a humanist viewpoint on religion. Critical-rational thinking is essential to ensuring that a teaching does not become locked in dogmas that people cannot grasp (Yani et al., 2020; Pratama, 2018). Lexical, literal, and textual knowledge that is separated from the context of human spaces has the ability to destroy the content of religion while the humanist viewpoint will foster greater human implementation and practice of religion. The second term in understanding religious moderation is to consider the relationship between religion and productive nationalism. Religion provides principles and ideals that guide national and governmental activities (Fuadi & Suyatno, 2020). Similarly, the nation-state ensures that the interests of various religions are respected, cared for, and appropriately structured. The connection between religion and state is one of mutual necessity and complementarity, rather than one of negation.

According to Abdullah and Yani (2009), religious teachings communicate their followers the principles of multiculturalism and pluralism, specifically how to get to know one another despite differences in cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, language, and gender. However, historically and experimentally, there are occasional, if not frequent, acts of violence committed by some members of society under the guise of religion. Therefore, the present study proposed the following research questions:

1. What are the phenomena of intolerance in schools in Surabaya?
2. What is the context for the intolerance actions?
3. What do schools carry to prevent it?

Methods

This study used qualitative research approach. This approach started with identifying and analyzing themes and trends in descriptive data. Qualitative study focused on the complicated events that were difficult to quantify because it emphasized a deeper understanding of the context, perspectives, and subjective experiences of individuals or groups. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and the completion of questionnaire supplied by researchers and filled out by the respondents. Data were collected from seven schools in Surabaya with varying characteristics, including three public schools (e.g., SMAN 18 Surabaya, SMAN 6 Surabaya, and SMA 13 Surabaya), two private religious-based schools (e.g., SMA Al-Hikmah Surabaya and SMA Santa Lois), and two private public schools (e.g., SMA Kemala Bhayangkari and SMA Trimurti). Informants and respondents came from a variety of backgrounds, including teaching experience, responsibilities and positions, courses, and roles in the schools. The obtained data were methodically evaluated by organizing, categorizing themes or patterns, and presenting the data, followed by interpretation of the findings. This interpretation was intended at understanding the observable events and explaining the results to obtain the study's novelty.

Results

Intolerance Occurred in Secondary Schools in Surabaya

The study's findings suggested that, while viewing the phenomena of intolerance among students, there were diverse points of view and experiences that demonstrated the varying viewpoints of each educational setting. A number of respondents said that their school environments had no noticeable trend toward intolerant attitudes. In fact, numerous schools reported that students' views toward tolerance increased positively. This was most likely affected

by a learning strategy that emphasized cooperation, mutual assistance, and tolerance teaching.

Meanwhile, teachers' responses to the phenomena of intolerance while instruction differed widely. The majority stated that they had never witnessed or faced incidences of intolerance in the school environment or during the learning process. Numerous teachers reported seeing cases of intolerance in many forms, such as less courteous behavior, bullying acts against physical, language, or religious differences, and actions to degrade students. Intolerant attitudes included criticizing or teasing peers because of physical characteristics, skin color, religion, or nationality. There were also some examples in which students teased or laughed at classmates who differed in looks or views.

Regarding the phenomenon of intolerance in the curriculum and subjects, the majority of respondents claimed that there was no curriculum or specific subject that directly contributed to the spread of intolerance in the school environment. Instead, they stressed that the curriculum material led to an attitude of tolerance, notably in religious subjects or subjects that discussed harmony between various communities.

Similarly, in terms of school activities, rules, and programs, the majority of respondents claimed that there were no actions, attitudes, or behaviors that overtly contribute to the establishment of intolerance in their school environment. On the contrary, numerous participants noted that existing school rules, activities, and programs attempted to create an inclusive and harmonious atmosphere that encouraged an attitude of tolerance.

Although the majority of respondents stated that no intolerance-related attitudes emerged, numerous examples of attitudes that were still existing in schools as intolerance included: (1) mocking or bullying friends' physical appearance, such as making harsh remarks about someone's posture or physical traits; (2) inviting friends to breach religious requirements, such as rushing away to the restroom instead of praying; (3) ignoring environmental cleanliness, covering no cleanliness awareness and littering actions; (4) exclusive attitudes, encompassing specific attitudes of students who are known to be exclusive, but without additional detail. According to the findings presented, indications of intolerance in the school environment impair students' self-development in a variety of ways: (1) low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority, such as feeling inferior, lack self-confidence, and motivated to withdraw from social contacts; (2) changes in attitudes and intolerance indications, such as becoming more closed or less welcoming of diversity; (3) lack of socialization and selfish attitudes; (4) reduced levels of social interaction; and, demonstrating disrespect. There were indicators that some pupils demonstrated disrespect, such as not respecting the flag ceremony. The following table portrays the tolerance teaching implementation conducted in high schools in Surabaya.

School Names	Tolerance Teaching Implementation
SMA St. Louis	Schools expressly promoted tolerance and diversity. They tried to develop students who could appreciate and comprehend diverse religions, cultures, and backgrounds. In this effort, they invited speakers from diverse backgrounds, such as the army, police, and different places of worship.
SMA Trimurti	Tolerance values were included into all elements of the school's curriculum, such as the celebration of religious festivals. This school aimed to teach students about respect for religious and

	cultural diversity.
SMAN 13 Surabaya	As part of its character-building curriculum, the school used the 5S approach (e.g., Senyum/ <i>smile</i> , Salam/ <i>salute</i> , Sapa/ <i>greet</i> , Sopan/ <i>polite</i> , and Santun/ <i>etiquette</i>). This was done to establish a nice and welcoming environment, where students could feel comfortable and interact positively.
SMAN 6 Surabaya	Schools created activities that connected feelings and school parenting motivation as steps toward fostering a sense of community and family among all school members. This gave an opportunity to discuss and share a greater understanding.
SMAN 18 Surabaya	Schools developed character and strengthened religious education. In order to mitigate the harmful effects of social interaction. It was important to instill character, particularly social ideals such as religious and cultural tolerance. Religious education had a significant part in forming students' character.
SMA Kemala Bayangkari	The school took a preventive approach, such as teaching students to shake hands and speak respectfully in school. This was meant to cultivate a sense of humility and tolerance among kids.
SMA Al-Hikmah	This school's instructional program centered on character development and students' awareness of religious and Islamic principles. The mentorship and deepening programme were carried out through activities such as morning ceremony and other national events.

Table 1. Tolerance implementation in high schools in Surabaya

Prevention of Intolerance Behaviors

Schools had taken several ideas to prevent students from developing intolerant attitudes and behaviors. First, the teaching of tolerant attitudes was undertaken through learning process, such as by conducting Civic Education and religion subjects, as well as other school-related courses. Second, early school year activities were permeated with tolerance teachings, involving discussions or circulars on preventing intolerance. Third, socialization about tolerant attitudes occurred during several meetings between teachers and students under guardianship or during classroom coaching. Fourth, during the School Environment Introduction Period, students were taught the significance of tolerance. Fifth, flag ceremonies, mentoring, spiritual, and co-curricular events all provided as opportunities for socializing tolerant attitudes. At last, teaching tolerance could be undertaken through social activities, tutoring on manners, student minutes, and community service initiatives.

After being socialized, policies to fight intolerance in schools were implemented in a variety of methods that required active cooperation of all school stakeholders. The first policy was the implementation of coaching and guidance where schools used physical, mental, and spiritual ways to help students understand and apply tolerance concepts. Second, violation points and rules of procedure was implemented through sanctions in the form of violation points and through the application of mandatory rules that needed to be followed consistently and routinely monitored. Third, school members encompassing guidance and counseling team, team of rules of procedure, and students were involved to handle and supervise implementation. The following table shows

the preventive efforts of intolerance in high schools in Surabaya.

School Names	Preventive Efforts for Mitigating Intolerance
SMA St. Louis	The school implemented policies against acts of bigotry. Students who engaged in intolerant or bullying behavior faced severe consequences, including expulsion from the school.
SMA Trimurti	The school took actions to address the intolerance issue, such as mentoring, parent hearings, and, if required, disciplinary punishment. This demonstrated that the school took a comprehensive approach to tackling intolerant behaviour.
SMAN 13 Surabaya	Schools tried to deal with it by implementing various programs and communicating with students and parents. Although schools offered programs that fostered tolerance and positive character, indicators of intolerance or improper behavior could occasionally originate from outside the classroom.
SMAN 6 Surabaya	The Religious Holidays Development and Nationality Program was organized at SMAN 6 Surabaya to reinforce the school's commitment to understanding and respecting the religious diversities. Additionally, actions that emphasized nationality, such as singing the song of Indonesia Raya, demonstrated efforts to foster solidarity and affection for the homeland.
SMAN 18 Surabaya	Schools enhanced character development, monitoring, and connection with parents.
SMA Kemala Bayangkari	The school followed a dialogue-based approach. If bullying or intolerance happened, victims were urged to tell their homeroom teacher about their experiences, after which the victim and perpetrator were approached separately.
SMA Al-Hikmah	The school taught different religions using a classical method with involving diverse topics.

Table 2. Preventive efforts for intolerance behaviors undertaken by high schools in Surabaya

Discussion

The phenomenon of intolerance in schools was a prominent topic in the educational world. In a study including wide-ranging educational environments, students' opinions toward tolerance were various. Several respondents observed an increase in favorable attitudes toward tolerance in their schools, which was aided by a collaborative learning style and ingrained tolerance principles. UNESCO emphasized the need of lifelong learning (Akther, 2020). Other perspectives, however, pointed increasing intolerance behaviors among students as a result of social media's widespread effect, political polarization, and increasing use of gadgets. Lack of awareness of moral principles, religion, and internal school elements were also considered the primary triggers for intolerance attitudes in the world of education (Abdullah, 2020; Darmody & Smyth, 2017; Latif & Hafid, 2021).

Teachers had diverse reactions to the phenomenon of intolerance in classrooms. Although the majority did not witness the intolerance behaviors, some of them witness disrespectful treatment

or bullying of physical, linguistic, or religious differences in classroom learning setting (De Wet, 2020). The majority of respondents claimed that there was no single curriculum or subject that contributed to the development of intolerance. However, efforts to direct attitudes of tolerance were primarily seen in religious studies or interfaith harmony education (Amri et al., 2020; Hasan, 2018).

Intolerance indications in educational environment had an impact on student development, resulting in a lack of self-confidence, a lack of socializing, and disregard for differences (Utomo & Wasino, 2020). The greatest challenge in the field of education was the growth of intolerant student behavior (Juwita et al., 2018). Internal variables such as school rules and students' difficulty in socialization were key influences on the occurrence of intolerance, while external factors such as the family environment and the influence of social media also played a significant role (Blinka et al., 2020). To address this issue, a collaborative effort was required to strengthen moral values, religion, and social awareness teaching both inside and outside of schools. Teachers must also take an active part in raising understanding and awareness of tolerance (Wajdi & Tobroni, 2020). It is intended that a thorough understanding of the phenomena of intolerance in schools, combined with the efforts of all parties involved, would result in an inclusive, harmonious, and supportive educational environment for student growth (Aderibigbe et al., 2023). The emergence of intolerance could be influenced by the enormous social media (Jost et al., 2018), as well as the entry of a political year that triggered polarization and fanaticism. In addition, high gadget usage and free access to social media were also supposed to influence students' mindsets and behaviors in responding to diversities (Suroso et al., 2021).

Several respondents also stated that students' lack of awareness about morals, religion, and social values contributed to the growth of intolerant attitudes. Individuals' hectic personal lives made them more susceptible to negative effects from their surroundings. Dissociative attitudes among students had also been linked to a lack of care, ignorance, and comprehension of the value of tolerance and mutual respect. This indifference might lead to an attitude of triviality toward other students or neglecting the surrounding conditions, which increased divisions among them (Harmadi et al., 2022).

Thus, in the field of education, the most significant concern was the growth of intolerant conduct among students (Utomo & Wasino, 2020). Various perspectives from the parties involved highlighted the variables that were thought to be the basis of the problem in the development of intolerance in the school setting. The first aforementioned internal factor was school regulations or procedures, which sometimes led to religious fanaticism or a lack of a thorough understanding of religion and the importance of tolerance. Second, students' failure to undertake open socialization and effective engagement had been another significant factor in the development of intolerant attitudes in the educational environment. External factors, such as the family environment and the impact of socialization outside of school, played a considerable role (Yani et al., 2022). The family setting, parenting styles, and a lack of parental control of children's social media access or social surroundings were all thought to contribute to intolerant attitudes among students. Social media, which provided wide access to information without sufficient monitoring, served an equally important purpose. This was also a result of the outbreak. In pandemic conditions, social isolation was imposed, social media use increased, and unsupervised access to poor information aggravated the issue, making youngsters more likely to be exposed to intolerant attitudes.

Conclusion

According to the above analysis and deliberation regarding intolerance attitudes in the school environment, intolerance becomes the rising issue among students in high schools in Surabaya. These intolerance actions have a negative impact on student development by causing a lack of self-confidence, socializing, and respect for differences. To fight prejudice, social peace in the school environment must be fostered by promoting tolerance, equality, harmony, and diversity awareness. As a result, students will benefit from a more inclusive, harmonious, and supportive educational environment.

Acknowledgment

The researcher express their gratitude to funded by Universitas Negeri Surabaya by contract number B/33471/UN38.III.1/LT.00/2024.

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