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## **Building Harmony in Schools: Strategies for Implementing Religious Tolerance-Based Education**

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**Abstract:** This research focuses on efforts to build harmony in the school environment by implementing religious tolerance-based education. The problem identified in this study is the increasing tension and conflict caused by different religious beliefs. The purpose of this research is to formulate effective strategies for implementing religious tolerance education to create a harmonious and inclusive school environment. This research uses a qualitative approach and systematic literature review method. The results show that education plays an important role in voicing the values of religious tolerance for social provision. Several strategies can be applied to implement religious tolerance-based education in schools, which are divided into three parts, namely; integrated in subjects, through extracurricular activities, and in school policies and culture. The implementation of these strategies has a positive impact on students, teachers, and schools, but is also faced with several obstacles. The implication of this research is the need for a more in-depth approach to the implementation of effective and sustainable religious tolerance education. Thus, the next generation is expected to strengthen their identity as tolerant individuals.

**Keywords:** Tolerance-based education, Religious tolerance, Building harmony in school

### **Introduction**

Religious and cultural diversity has become a hallmark of society in the increasingly connected era of globalization (Murphy, 1999). Schools, as formal educational institutions, are significantly responsible for shaping the nature and way of thinking of the younger generation (Alkather & Gan, 2020). In this regard, education that promotes religious tolerance is crucial to realizing social welfare and reducing the likelihood of inter-group conflict (Dasli, n.d.; Kuzmenko, 2020; Raihani, 2014).

However, religious tolerance-based education often faces many challenges, such as a lack of knowledge about the concept of tolerance itself, disapproval from various stakeholders, and a lack of resources to support the program (Raihani, 2014). Therefore, a strong strategy is needed to ensure that religious tolerance education is well accepted and integrated into the school curriculum. In this case, no systematic and in-depth research has been found related to the discussion of the implementation strategy of religious tolerance-based education in schools as the main bridge in forming a tolerant community environment, that can coexist peacefully without questioning differences in beliefs.

This study aims to identify and develop effective methods for implementing religious tolerance in the school education environment. The study aims to explore various techniques that can be applied by teachers and administrators to teach the values of tolerance to students. Furthermore, the study focuses on evaluating the impact of using these approaches in creating a harmonious and inclusive school climate, as well as how such strategies can strengthen the gathering of students of different religions. This research will identify and combine data from various literature using the SLR (Systematic Literature Review) method. This research is expected to

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make a significant contribution to improving the quality of religious tolerance-based education in schools. The results will also serve as a reference for policymakers and education practitioners to create better education programs.

## **Method**

This research uses the SLR (Systematic Literature Review) method to explore the topic of religious tolerance-based education implementation strategies. This method is a way to identify, evaluate, and interpret all available research on a particular research question, topic area, or phenomenon of interest (Erkmen, 2024). The study applied the methodology of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) developed by the EPPI Center (EPPI-Centre, 2007) and Acquah & Katz (Acquah & Katz, 2020), with the necessary modifications to suit the purposes of the study. The SLR research procedures used include the following steps:

1. Scoping the review
2. Searching for studies
3. Determining inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria
4. Study selection
5. Data analysis
6. Conclusions/ recommendations

### **Scoping the Review**

In this stage, the researcher started by drawing up a research map to explore various topics related to religious tolerance-based education in schools. This process included formulating research questions, which then involved identifying key themes and relevant scope to ensure that the review covered critical aspects of the topic under study.

### **Searching for Studies**

In this stage, researchers searched for relevant studies using the Scopus database and the keywords “religious tolerance education”, “interfaith education strategies”, “religious diversity in school”, “educational strategies for religious tolerance”, and “multicultural education and religion”. The search aimed to collect studies that provide in-depth insights into the application of religious tolerance in educational contexts.

### **Determining Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria**

At this stage, researchers set inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the selection of relevant and quality studies. The inclusion criteria included studies that presented empirical data used a clear methodology, and were published in English-language scientific journals within the last five years. Meanwhile, exclusion criteria included studies that did not focus on religious tolerance-based educational strategies, were not relevant to the context of religious tolerance in educational settings, or were not related to school environment, tolerance, and religion. In addition, studies that do not demonstrate sufficient methodological validity or lack reliable data will also be excluded from consideration. By setting these criteria, the researchers aimed to ensure that only relevant, current, and methodological studies were considered, to gain an in-depth understanding of religious tolerance-based education strategies.

### **Study Selection**

At this point, the Scopus database was analyzed in September 2024 with the keywords "religious tolerance education", "interfaith education strategies", "religious diversity in school", "educational strategies for religious tolerance", and "multicultural education and religion". Furthermore, the first search did not use filters, and then the next search used filters for year, access, field of science, and document type. The search results were 252 documents which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Search results with keywords

Data Sources	Keywords	Unscreened Results	Screened Results
Scopus	Religious Tolerance Education	65	11
	Interfaith Education Strategies	40	7
	Religious Diversity in School	50	8
	Educational Strategies for Religious Tolerance	37	10
	Multicultural Education and Religion	60	11
Total		252	47

As for the selection of further articles, it is screened in 3 stages, first, the title is checked for suitability with the keywords used. Second, if the title is suitable, the abstract is checked to determine its suitability with the criteria set. Third, if the abstract has been checked and is appropriate, proceed to analyze the focus and results of the research. Finally, from the 252 documents found, and the filtration result became 47, 10 documents were selected for further analysis because they met the criteria in this study.

## Result and Discussion

Based on the Systematic Literature Review method described in the methodology section, 10 studies were identified that met the criteria and were reviewed in depth to answer the research questions that had been formulated. The results of the identification can be seen in Table 2. Literature Identification Results.

Table 2. Literature identification results

Study	Year	Type of Religious Tolerance-Based Education Strategy	Classification	Positive Impacts	Obstacles
Peacock, (2023)	2023	School Linking Program	Extracurricular	Develop a more positive attitude towards religious diversity among students.	The knowledge gained is often too simplistic and does not allow students to deeply understand the plurality of religions and worldviews.
Mashuri et al. (2024)	2024	Incorporation of multicultural values and nationalism in teaching materials. Teachers and students from different religious communities collaborate harmoniously in social and humanitarian-based activities.	Integrated in Subjects  School Policies and Culture	Increased harmony and collaboration between students from different communities	The lack of involvement of religious leaders limits the impact and effectiveness of peace efforts at the broader community level.
Cho et al. (2023)	2023	Teacher Training (Interfaith Dialogue)	School Policies and Culture	Teachers promote respect for diversity in the classroom and create an environment that supports student	Teachers' lack of deep understanding of these topics can lead to unproductive or inaccurate discussions.

					engagement in broader discussions about religion and culture.	
Foley et al., (2024)	2024	Development of Students' Religious Faith and Character Strengthening Parent-School Partnerships	Integrated Subjects	in	Increased students' faith and religiosity in their religion.	Less space for understanding or appreciating religious diversity. Limited time and commitment from parents.
Gross & Rutland, (2023)	2023	Special Religious Education	Extracurricular		Strengthen school and family relationships, support students, and integrate religious learning into daily life.	Implementation challenges and resource constraints.
Tuna (2024)	2024	Incorporate different perspectives, practices, and beliefs from within the same culture and religion into teaching materials.	Integrated Subjects	in	Helping students understand and respect religious diversity and build their identity better.	There is a risk of differences being oversimplified, which can lead to stereotyping and overemphasis on one side of a religion or culture.
Van Fossen et al. (2022)	2022	Animated Video	Integrated Subjects	in	Provides an inclusive understanding of differences in religions and cultures, and teaches students to value different views within their communities.	Limitations in practical application.
Benediktsson & Tavares, (2024)	2024	Family-School Cooperation	School Policies and Culture		Increase support for diversity.	If teacher education does not comprehensively integrate diversity, the gap between teachers and families may widen, exacerbating incomprehension and exclusion.
Rissanen, (2021)	2021	Identity Recognition and Integration across Difference	Integrated Subjects	in	Strengthen students' sense of belonging and participation in the school environment.	Lack of competence in diversity management
Dewilde et al. (2021)	2021	Multicultural Festival	Extracurricular		Active involvement of the community in creatively presenting and defending their identity.	Ignore any political, social, or conflict issues that may exist.

Based on the table above, the analysis shows various strategies used in the implementation of religious tolerance-based education. Among others, it is classified into three parts; *first*, integrated with subjects including incorporation of multicultural values and nationalism or different perspectives, practices, and beliefs in teaching materials, development of students' religious faith and character, animated video, and identity recognition and integration across difference. *Second*, through extracurricular, among them are school linking programs, special

religious education, and multicultural festivals. Then the *third* is encompassed in school policy and culture, where teachers and students from different religious communities collaborate harmoniously in social and humanitarian-based activities, teacher training (interfaith dialogue), and strengthening parent-school partnerships or family-school cooperation. These strategies have been proven effective in implementing religious tolerance-based education to create an inclusive and harmonious school environment.

Moreover, in this regard, the implementation strategy of religious tolerance education has broad and interconnected benefits. First, it helps students build an identity and appreciate differences, fostering a more positive attitude towards religious diversity and worldviews. At the classroom level, teachers have a very important role in fostering respect for diversity. Teachers help promote harmony and cooperation among students from different backgrounds by creating an environment that supports open discussions about religion and culture. In addition, religious tolerance education strategies involving family collaboration programs were also found. By involving parents in activities and discussions related to diversity, these programs strengthen the relationship between schools and families. Family involvement in these programs supports the application of tolerance values into students' daily lives and strengthens their support for education at school. Furthermore, religious tolerance education also has an impact on students' beliefs and religiosity about their religion and increases their sense of belonging and participation in the school environment. This support encourages active community participation, which displays and promotes the values of tolerance.

On the other hand, the implementation strategy of this religious tolerance-based education also faces its own obstacles, including the knowledge gained is often too simplistic and does not allow students to deeply understand the plurality of religions and worldviews. Then, the lack of involvement of religious leaders also limits the impact and effectiveness of peace efforts, teachers' lack of deep understanding of tolerance topics can lead to unproductive or inaccurate discussions, less space for understanding or appreciating religious diversity, also implementation challenges and resource constraints. Time constraints and parental commitment are also an issue. These limitations can lead to the simplification of differences, which can lead to stereotyping and overemphasis on one aspect of religion or culture, and exacerbate the distance between teachers and families, which can lead to more incomprehension and exclusion. In addition, religious tolerance becomes an obstacle when teachers do not apply it thoroughly. This is often accompanied by an inability to manage diversity and ignoring political, social, or conflict issues that may arise. These factors contribute to the difficulties faced when implementing an educational approach based on religious tolerance.

The results of this analysis provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation strategy of religious tolerance-based education, the impacts that arise from it, and the obstacles faced by educators and students in doing so. This knowledge can be the basis for developing the implementation of religious tolerance-based education in schools. This research reveals valuable findings related to the implementation strategy of religious tolerance-based education. Three main aspects need to be underlined related to this discussion, namely: diversification of the implementation strategy of religious tolerance-based education in schools which is divided into three parts, namely integrated with subjects, through extracurricular activities, and in school policies and culture, the positive impacts generated, as well as challenges in its implementation.

In this study, the author also found that awareness of religious tolerance encounters its challenges, namely the lack of understanding of the beauty of diversity and togetherness. Therefore, awareness of the importance of tolerance is a common task that can be completed by developing good things in oneself and family as the smallest group in society. In addition, the crucial, but often forgotten, part of this task lies in a strong belief in religious attitudes. This is because all faiths converge on the point that goodness is the main pillar of life, and the universe is filled with people who love each other in their own way.

## **Conclusion**

An analysis of the strategies for organizing religious tolerance-based education shows that this approach includes the integration of subjects, extracurricular activities, and school policies and culture. This strategy has proven effective in creating an inclusive and harmonious learning environment, with benefits such as shaping students' identities, increasing positive attitudes towards religious diversity education, and improving collaboration between students and families. At the classroom level, teachers play an important role in promoting respect for diversity through open discussions about religion and culture. However, significant challenges remain, including oversimplified knowledge, limited involvement of religious leaders, limited teacher understanding, and limited time and parental involvement. In addition, the risk of oversimplifying differences and failing to address social or political issues also complicates the implementation of this strategy.

The findings imply that a more comprehensive and in-depth approach is needed to ensure that religious tolerance-based education can be implemented effectively and sustainably.

## **Recommendations**

To improve the effectiveness of implementing religious tolerance-based education, several strategic steps need to be taken. First, the curriculum should be expanded to include an in-depth understanding of religious plurality and worldviews, and integrated with multicultural and national values. In addition, continuous training for teachers is essential to ensure they have adequate knowledge and skills in interfaith dialogue and diversity management. Second, increasing parental involvement through diversity-focused school programs can strengthen support for the implementation of tolerance values at home. Involving religious leaders in school activities can also provide additional perspectives and strengthen tolerance efforts at the broader community level. Third, the development of inclusive school policies and the provision of adequate resources will support more effective implementation of religious tolerance strategies. Finally, it is important to conduct regular evaluations of the implementation of this strategy, as well as to improve competencies in diversity management to better address emerging issues. With these steps, it is hoped that religious tolerance-based education can be implemented more effectively, reducing the challenges and creating a more inclusive and harmonious school environment.

## **Scientific Ethics Declaration**

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS Journal belongs to the authors.

## **Acknowledgments or Notes**

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