

**STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS MODERATION THROUGH FABLE  
ACTIVITIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD  
(Phenomenological Studies On Implementation of Religious Moderation )**

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**Abstrak**

This study aims to determine the relationship between the values contained in religious moderation taught in early childhood through the fable method. This is based on the spread of teachings of hatred and hostility towards adherents of other religions and beliefs which is a phenomenon today. These teachings can certainly damage the value of religious moderation in early childhood, where teachers and children are faced with issues that are contrary to Pancasila values and religious norms. Religious moderation is an effort to instill peace-loving values in children as an effort to deradicalize religious education, especially Islamic religious education. To deal with this, we need a method that suits the needs and stages of early childhood development, namely through the storytelling method. Where in the storytelling method contains stories that describe tolerance in making friends and respecting cultural differences in religion. This study explores data through observation, interviews, and documentation, in the form of qualitative descriptive research to find a picture of the pattern of reinforcement in natural religious education and to instill an attitude of love peace, and tolerance in early childhood. This study found 1) a close relationship between puppet media in storytelling activities in learning to deepen the concept of tolerance and peace-loving towards differences in early childhood at the age of 5-6 years, 2) the method used by the teacher succeeded in instilling the teachings of kindness in the form of moderation and peace-loving, 3) habituation according to the examples in fable activity can affect the character and behavior of children to moderation in religion. So it can be said that fable activities in early childhood are closely related to strengthening values in religious moderation.

*Keywords: Religious Moderation, Storytelling, Early Childhood.*

**Introduction**

Currently, early childhood is often associated with understandings that direct children to be intolerant of other children of different religions. Of course, this can affect the character and attitude of children in dealing with other people who are not in the same flow with their beliefs. This is in accordance with recent research on the prevalence of The radicalism movement that continues to penetrate the early childhood (Anwar et al., 2021). It is proven that the involvement of family members has recently become a series of acts of terrorism. In 2018 there was a bombing that involved one family, the victim is a husband, wife, and children in Surabaya, in other words, this terrorist act used children (Rosyida Nurul Anwar, 2018). Efforts to prevent radicalism from entering into children, not only parents who have a strong core role in children's lives, but also educators. Educators play an important role in shaping the character of children to prevent children from negative behaviors that are contrary to the values of inner religious moderation. Educators can instill giving values and children's perspectives on differences in religion in scheduled habituation activities, provide direct examples of appreciating differences in religious beliefs or educators create a fun activity

according to the stages of children's fantasy through storytelling or storytelling activities. With various characteristics of children who are relatively similar to one another (Idris, 2016), strengthening religious moderation can be packaged in the storytelling method. Storytelling activities are considered a powerful solution to instill a good perspective on different religious beliefs.

The storytelling method is often used by educators to understand children and provide a moral message that cannot be conveyed by other methods because intolerance and radicalism occur in the world of early childhood education, where the storytelling method is predicted to face problems that are contrary to the values of Pancasila and religious norms. Religious moderation aims to instill peace-loving values in children in the context of deradicalizing freedom in religion. To achieve this formulation, we need a method that is close to children that counteracts teachings that are not appropriate in the concept of religious moderation in early childhood. Researchers are moved to provide a detailed explanation of strengthening religious moderation in early childhood. With various questions that arise in the application of strengthening moderation for various early childhood, this article will explore the criteria of fable activities that can be the basis that storytelling is not only for communicating but also for preventing radical actions and reinterpreting forms of religious moderation.

### **Understanding religious moderation**

The phenomenon of religious moderation has become popular among ordinary people and religious leaders in recent years (Massoweang, 2020). The term religious moderation refers to the word "*ummatan wasatan*" which is contained in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143. In this verse of the Qur'an, Muslims are claimed to be the chosen people because of their role as fair witnesses to these actions or people who deviate from the truth. This role is obtained by moderate Muslims, partly because they are people who have the right faith in Islam, believe in and embody the five pillars of Islam, and accept the legacy of Islamic tradition but at the same time provide modifications in certain aspects of Islam to realize the moral goals that are at the heart of that belief.

The term *wasatan* was then used in several terms such as "moderation in Islam", "moderate Islam" and also "*wasathiyah Islam*". (Joseph, 2018) which has led to the meaning of fairness, a balance between the two, and the best choice between opposing positions (Sumarto, 2021). This meaning shows that Islam is a medium and a combination of strengths as a religious balancer that correlates balance and middle ground by prioritizing the interests of justice so as not to be trapped in a radical attitude.

Furthermore, the term is used as a terminology for studies that discuss the middle way in Islam based on the projections of the Qur'an about self-identity and the way of life of Muslims to produce virtues that help create harmonization and social balance in life, individual life, family, community and wider human relations (Rozi, 2019). The concept of moderate Islam actually invites how Islam can be understood contextually, understanding that differences and differences are *sunnatullah*, their existence cannot be denied. If this is practiced, it can be believed that Islam will become the religion of *Rahmatan Lil `alamin*. (Minftahuddin, 2015)

Based on these various definitions, it can be concluded that the meaning of religious moderation is certainly very broad and needs to be instilled in children from an early age. This is to anticipate the occurrence of misunderstandings about Islam which in the future can lead to extreme and radical attitudes.

### **Early childhood**

According to the Law on the Protection of Children (Law of The Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2002) Chapter I Article 1 it is stated that a child is someone who is not yet 18 years old and includes a child who is still in the womb. Meanwhile, according to the National

Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 Article 28 paragraph 1, the range of early childhood is 0-6 years which is reflected in the statement: Early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six that is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to assist physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have the readiness to enter further education (Sujudi, 2003). Early childhood is the right time to provide a foundation for moral religious values in terms of religious moderation. Religious moderation is more appropriate to be embedded in education (Yuliana et al., 2022). Strengthening religious moderation through education in schools, one of which is the storytelling method. The habit of storytelling from an early age needs to be done in order to instill moderate values in religion so that they take root in themselves and continue to be applied into adulthood.

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) has an important role in the further development of the nation, in the early stages of life starting at the age of 3 years, children begin to be able to receive skills and lessons as the basis for the formation of knowledge and thought processes. So in early childhood learning needs to get attention in terms of physical and spiritual development (Rahman, 2002). Law Number 20 of 2003 Chapter I Article 1 paragraph 14 has stated that: "Early childhood education is an effort aimed at fostering children from birth to the age of six years which is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to assist physical growth and development and spiritually so that children have the readiness to enter further education (Sujudi, 2003). This is in line with the law that educating and developing Indonesian people means preparing every child of the nation to become responsible Indonesian citizens and able to create a just and prosperous society.

### **Why storytelling?**

Several studies describe ways to instill the values of moderation and religious tolerance in early childhood, including through the closest people, namely the family to form an attitude of tolerance in a pluralistic society (Tumpal Daniel, 2019). Furthermore, according to Sari, the values of moderation should be instilled through early Islamic religious education by PAUD teachers (Sari, 2012). Similar research, namely the use of Islamic stories is effective in increasing understanding of the values of moderation through Islamic tales (Baa & Jaya, 2019). And strengthened by Septiana, that the method applied by the Prophet Muhammad SAW in applying the value of moderation is by storytelling (Septiana et al., 2021). These studies show that concrete steps in inculcating the value of religious moderation have been carried out from an early age by involving both formal and non-formal education processes through storytelling methods.

In conveying learning and delivering values, the Prophet Muhammad SAW applied several methods, including the storytelling method, the storytelling method has long been used in education to instill lessons and moral values. This method is very effective in conveying messages because children can easily pick up messages from the story in the fable activities.

The use of storytelling in teaching listening is becoming a popular method, especially for young learners. In contrast to conventional techniques that look like one-way communication where the teacher comes to class and plays an audio cassette that has been designed for listening and then asks young children some questions related to the topic, which is more likely to test rather than teach. Learning through storytelling, on the other hand, allows early childhood to develop their receptive language in an entertaining and meaningful context. Teachers can be storytellers and early childhood as listeners or become storytellers and share stories with their friends.

Storytelling in learning has criteria as effective teaching for students. This is supported by several teaching and learning theories, as follows; First, storytelling creates a fun and

meaningful learning situation. The entertaining effect of the story effectively reduces the anxiety of early childhood (Irawan & Zulaikha, 2020). Second, it engages early childhood on a deeper level than many teaching methods can not field (Rossiter, 2005). The power of stories that evoke the feelings of readers or listeners is the key to effective storytelling because learning related to emotions is easy to store and retrieve (Nur Laylinaumi Rahmawati, 2011). Third, it has an advantage over the active situational created (Irawan & Zulaikha, 2020). The interaction between storytellers and listeners involves early childhood to become active participants in the learning process.

In the context of learning in Indonesia nowadays, the use of storytelling in listening learning is still dominated by the use of world popular stories, fables, and legends. Although there are good moral values that are reflected through fable or popular world stories, on the other hand, it may have some content that is not good for young Muslim students. There are several stories that carry the origin or cultural values of the country that are not in accordance with Muslim life. Against this problem, Ain (2014) shows a good example of English material that contains Islamic values by using the stories of the prophet as a learning resource in English lessons. Therefore, Islamic storytelling can be a solution to this problem. That way, early childhood can learn from the noble character of the prophets who still maintain their Islamic identity, so they are not easily influenced by negative western values and at the same time, they will have good English skills as preparation to face their future.

There are several studies that have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of the application of storytelling in teaching listening comprehension. The results show that it is effective for improving early childhood listening comprehension (Hemmati, Gholamrezapour, & Hessamy, 2015), increasing early childhood interest and motivation (Sandaran & Kia, 2013), and can make the learning process more effective (Baa & Jaya, 2019). In line with the above statement, this article would like to investigate:

1. Is the use of storytelling methods strengthen religious moderation in early childhood?
2. Early childhood interest in listening to fables in the form of religious moderation methods
3. Reasons other than early childhood interest in the use of religious moderation methods in fable activities.

## **Method**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. This research has been sourced from various collections of previous articles in order to compile this article. This research using the qualitative descriptive method aims to collect research results related to religious moderation which is packaged in the use of fable as media. The sample of this study is the result of research on the use of storytelling methods in early childhood in inculcating tolerance values early childhood at the Al-Azhar Kindergarten institution.

Qualitative descriptive research results can be trusted in answering research problems because the content of qualitative descriptive research is a collection of studies that have been carried out previously by other researchers. Therefore, the collection of the results of previous research on inculcating the value of religious moderation in early childhood will explain the importance of applying the storytelling method in this regard.

Before conducting research, researchers must prepare the tools used in research, then researchers determine and know for sure the scientific sources needed. These sources can be books, journals, and other relevant data or information. After collecting sources, researchers can read scientific sources. After doing the analysis, the researcher draws conclusions from the various studies that have been collected.

## **Result and Discussion**

Religious moderation is a character value that must be instilled since early childhood education, including in the Al-Azhar Kindergarten unit. One example of religious moderation in this unit is religious tolerance. Religious tolerance can be realized with the 5k strategy according to Fidesnirur (Faiqoh, 2015), including: consensus, namely 1) mutual agreement between teachers and parents about the character to be built; 2) commitment, namely there is obedience and shared responsibility by teachers and parents in carrying out the agreement on the application of attitudes to children; 3) consistent, namely there is a consistent attitude in applying attitudes through playing activities, both in PAUD institutions and in the family; 4) continuously carried out continuously every day, throughout the year until the behavior becomes a habit which is then engraved in the soul and mind of the child so as to form an attitude; consequences: there are 5) consequences that are applied and must be obeyed by both teachers, parents, and children if there is a violation of the commitment to developing the child's attitude. From five strategies that have been implemented for the past year, however, the unit has encountered various obstacles in implementing the strengthening of religious moderation. Several things that are suspected to be elements of the less than optimal strategy for strengthening religious moderation are habits that have not been consistently applied, besides that there is no continuity of handling for children who have been exposed to intolerant values, so other solutions are needed to strengthen the religious moderation program.

There are several forms of moderation that can be shown in children's attitudes, such as children tend to show tolerance for others regardless of differences, show respect for adults and figures who have authority, be open to knowing people from different backgrounds and beliefs, voice feeling unhappy and caring when someone is insulted, helping a weak friend, refraining from making malicious comments to his friend, always thinking positively despite the many differences around him (Soraya, 2013).

The unit finally found a simple solution by trying to apply the storytelling method to strengthen religious moderation in early childhood. The application of this fable method was initially used by educators using storybook media with the theme of tolerance in religious differences by introducing various houses of worship, various religions in Indonesia, holy books, and clothing for worship, then educators tried to use audio-visual media in the form of videos that tell about appreciating a religion. The final solution for teachers is to use the storytelling method by Al-Azhar educators for children aged 5-6 years using hand puppets which are considered very effective for strengthening religious moderation.

In this study, researchers found 1) a close relationship between puppet media in storytelling activities in learning towards deepening the concept of tolerance and peace-loving towards differences in early childhood at the age of 5-6 years, 2) the method used by the teacher succeeded in instilling the teachings of kindness in the form of moderation and love of peace, 3) habituation according to the examples in fables can influence the character and behavior of children to moderation in religion. So it can be said that fable activities in early childhood are closely related to strengthening values in religious moderation.

## **Conclusion**

The current research has given sufficient indications to come to the conclusion that the strengthening of religious moderation in Al-Azhar Kindergarten has been going on for 1 year. The process of religious moderation is carried out through various activities, specifically; 1) the use of media in the form of audio-visual videos in religious moderation, 2) the use of the fable activities method which contains stories on the theme of tolerance, 3) the habituation strategy to instill values in religious moderation, one of which is tolerance.

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