

Strengthening Students' Tolerance in the Context of Plurality:

What are the Relevant Methods?

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Abstract—In the context of religious plurality, tolerance is one of the potential values to prevent conflicts between religious adherents. Therefore, educational praxis in schools is important to encourage religious tolerance or facilitate students to think critically about multicultural contexts. This study aims to examine the spread of students' understanding of tolerance and how learning methods have the potential to develop students' awareness of religious tolerance. This study used a cross-sectional survey approach, namely research with an extensive dataset to see the relationship between variables related to tolerance. The results of a survey conducted by distributing questionnaires randomly to 250 grade 9 students from four public junior high schools and two private public schools in the city of Bandung showed that students' tolerance attitudes had a significant positive correlation with learning praxis using the group discussion method. In conclusion, the learning method through group discussion is more effective for developing students' tolerance attitudes.

Keywords—tolerance, student, learning methods, teachers, school

I. INTRODUCTION

Tolerance is not innate or is not an automatic nature in humans [1, p. 1046], but is a value developed in a social context through dialogue and cooperation in order to create harmonious relations in differences and common society [2-6]. Therefore, the meaning of tolerance refers to an open attitude or acceptance to minority groups who are often discriminated against by the majority group [7, p. 46; 8, p. 745]. This means that tolerance remains actual to be discussed and developed in the context of plurality to prevent violence against others.

In the context of plurality in Indonesia, the development of tolerance is important especially because the phenomenon of intolerance tends to strengthen and recently the discourse of intolerance has entered schools through the regeneration system, spiritual flushes in places of worship controlled by

intolerant groups, publishing information in the form of magazines, booklets, books, and various websites on the internet [9, p. 159]. As a result, many students are affected by intolerant thoughts [10, pp. 208-209].

The results of a survey by the Institute for Islamic Studies and Peace (LaKIP) with a sample of 993 junior and senior high school students randomly taken from 59 private schools and 41 public schools in 10 in the Jakarta and surrounding areas showed that 50% of respondents were intolerant [10, pp. 208-209]. The results of Fadjar et al. research on 2466 students showed a similar phenomenon that 88% of all respondents admitted to supporting the sweeping action only because of their belief and view that the action was part of a religious order [11, p. 35].

Different from previous studies that focused on the phenomenon of strengthening intolerance among students, this study offers a group discussion method as a relevant learning method for preventing intolerance among students. The challenges of implementing the group discussion method in praxis, for example, are teachers who think intolerant. The result to be achieved in this study is that the group discussion method is proven to be significant for strengthening student tolerance.

II. RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLES

This research aims to examine whether the praxis of learning in schools can influence the growth of religious intolerance as a seed of radicalism among junior high school students. This study conducted a cross-sectional school survey by distributing questionnaires containing statements related to religious tolerance and the students as samples were asked to respond to the each of the given statements. This was to measure and prevent the potential for radicalism among junior high school students in Bandung.

The questionnaire distribution was conducted the randomly selected 250 grade ninth students of the four state and two private junior high schools in Bandung. The data collected was processed and analyzed through descriptive techniques and simple causal modelling using partial least square to indicate whether there are research indicators that potentially impacted on the spread of intolerance among the the students sampled. This study examined the simple correlation of some independent variables that were successfully measured with some indicators of intolerance as an initial form of radicalism that could develop later in life among the junior high school students.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outside the context of education, students' tolerance or intolerance can be influenced by the social environment and information exposed to them. In the context of education, student tolerance or intolerance can be related to the learning methods applied by teachers in schools. To find out the relevant methods, this study lists nine types of learning methods used by the teacher, and students asked to choose which learning method they like best. The results can be shown in Table 1 below.

TABLE I. DISTRIBUTION OF THE PERCENTAGE OF LEARNING METHODS THAT STUDENTS LIKE

No.	The way of learning that students like at school	Percentage	N
1	Listen to Teacher's lecture	38.8%	97
2	Reading (Books, newspaper, etc)	54.8%	137
3	Study in the Library	21.2%	53
4	Writing/Composing	36.4%	91
5	Class / Group Discussion	65.6%	164
6	Experiment (in the Laboratory)	70.0%	175
7	Visiting nursing homes, orphanages, etc.	69.2%	173
8	Class Matches/race	67.2%	168
9	Observe problems in the field	39.6%	99

Source: Results of Data Processing.

Table 1 above illustrates the percentage of learning methods in schools that the respondents prefer in this study. The learning process in schools, whatever the method, affects the character development of students [12, p. 13], both moral character and performance character [13, p. 380]. Phenix even said that the educational process in schools must be able to arouse students' understanding of symbolic, empirical, aesthetic, synoetic, ethical, and synoptic meanings [14, pp. 6-7] which are important for character development. However, is the learning method that students like above relevant to developing students' awareness of tolerance in the context of religious plurality or vice versa? The significant correlation between the learning methods preferred by students in school with tolerance is shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE II. CORRELATION BETWEEN LEARNING METHODS THAT STUDENTS LIKE WITH ATTITUDE INTOLERANCE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS (N=247)

No	Independent variables	N r
1	Listen to Teacher's lecture	.155*
2	Reading (Books, newspaper, etc).	0.025
3	Study in the library	0.002
4	Writing/composing	0.006
5	Class/Group Discussion	-.134*
6	Experiment (in the laboratory)	-0.060
7	Visiting (museums, nursing homes, orphanages, etc).	0.014
8	Class Matches	.130*
9	Observe problems in the field	0.024

Source: Results of Data Processing.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 above shows that tolerance is significantly correlated, in the same opposite directions, with several learning methods favoured by students in school.

First, table 2 above shows that students who enjoy learning by listening to the teacher's lecture have a significant negative correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) with tolerance. This data indicates that the lecture method has the potential to cause increased intolerance among students. In this study, the number of respondents who enjoyed studying in school by listening to teacher lectures reached 38.8% (97 people). However, student intolerance can also be influenced by intolerant-minded teachers who teach in schools [15].

Second, table 2 above shows that student tolerance has a significant positive correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) with the learning method through group discussion. This data can mean that the group discussion method is relevant for the development of student attitudes. In group discussions, learning is characterized by openness and critical dialogue between students in the group [16]. Group discussions also foster mutual acceptance, respect, and respect in the context of plurality, training people to show courtesy in words and actions towards others [17, p. 20]. Therefore, learning through group discussions is relevant for preventing intolerance among students.

Third, table 2 also shows that intolerance has a significant positive correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) with the learning method through classroom competition. This means that students who enjoy learning through competition in class tend to be intolerant. Because learning through competition in class has the potential to cultivate selfishness and individualistic attitudes in order to win. In the context of inter-group competition, cooperation which requires tolerance only occurs between each group member.

IV. CONCLUSION

The discussion above shows that although all aspects of education effect on students' character development, the relevant learning method for strengthening or developing student tolerance is group discussion. In group discussions, all group members have the same rights and opportunities to express opinions; express criticism and suggestions for the success of the group in overcoming the problems being discussed. Learning through group discussions is generally characterized by pluralistic dialogues that promote openness, recognition of equal rights, respect for differences in views, being democratic, prioritizing critical thinking, cooperation and synergy of views among group members.

Therefore, the group discussion method is significant and relevant for developing students' awareness of tolerance to others. On the other hand, the results of this study indicate that learning methods that potential to cause intolerance among students are lectures and competitions in class.

The lecture method can be significant for expanding and increasing students' knowledge of tolerance when the teacher is tolerant of others. Conversely, if the teacher who teaches is an intolerant person, the lecture method is vulnerable to being used by the teacher to spread the discourse of intolerance among students.

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