

# Religious Learning on Students Believe in Sapta Dharma at School

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## ABSTRACT

Religious education is a right that must be given to every citizen according to their religion and. However, access to religious learning for students who believe in Sapta Dharma at school is still limited and not maximized like other religious studies such as Islamic, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian Religions. This study uses qualitative research methods located in Bandungan District, Semarang Regency, Central Java Province. Methods of data collection in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation. This study aims to determine the problems faced by students who believe in Sapta Dharma in receiving religious learning in formal schools based on the beliefs they profess. The results of this study are: 1) Prior to the release of Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (Permendikbud) 27 of 2016 concerning religious education services being applied to education units, all students who believe in beliefs take part in one of the six official religious lessons. 2) Changes in the forms and materials of religious learning in schools are caused by equal access to education for all citizens, including the granting of rights for adherents of local beliefs to receive religious learning in accordance with their beliefs. 3) The existence of religious learning for students who believe in beliefs has an influence on the existence of a belief system so that they are no longer a marginal group, especially in religious learning in formal schools.

**Keywords:** *Formal School, Religious Learning, Sapta Dharma Belief, Students*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Bandungan is one of the areas located in Semarang Regency, Central Java. Bandungan is one of 19 sub-districts in Semarang Regency. District distance from the city of Ungaran about 16 km. Bandungan is a new sub-district as a result of regional expansion in 2017 and has a distance of about 16 km from Ungaran City. Bandungan District is bordered by Kendal District (north), Sumowono District (west), Bergas and Bawen Districts (east), and Ambarawa District (south). Bandungan sub-district has 10 villages, namely Bandungan, Banyukuning, Candi, Duren, Jetis, Jimbaran, Kenteng, Mlilir, Pakopen, and Sidomukti.

Geographically, Bandungan is located at the foot of Mount Ungaran, at an altitude of 751-1000 masl. The area of Bandungan is ± 4,823 hectares, consisting of 70 RW and 329 RT with a population of around 58,281 people. Its location in the highlands affects the variety of people's livelihoods, including vegetable farmers, fruit farmers, flower plant cultivators[1], hotel and inn

employees, home industry entrepreneurs, hawkers, culinary businesses (restaurants, fishing, and stalls) and others[2]. In this area, there are leading tourism destinations in Semarang Regency, including Umbul Sidomukti, Celosia Flower Park, Setiya Aji Flower Farm, Clapar Krisan Village, Susan Spa & Resort, Gedong Songo Temple, Bandungan Tourism Market, and so on.

In addition to the diversity of economic activities and tourism destinations, there is also diversity in religion including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and beliefs. This diversity is marked by the presence of several places of worship, namely mosques, churches, monasteries, temples, and studios. In the field of education, there are schools at various levels ranging from kindergarten, elementary, junior high, high school and religious-based education (pesantren). Uniquely, in religious-based learning activities, students belonging to local religions have been gained access to study in formal schools, including the Sapta Dharma belief. From year to year, access to

religious learning in the educational environment has been shown a significant development[3], [4].

**2. METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative research method which was carried out from April to October 2021 and is located in Bandungan, West Ungaran District, Semarang Regency. In the data collection process, the techniques used were observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies. The research subjects are students who follow the faith of Sapto Dharmo, their teachers and their parents. This validation uses source and method triangulation techniques.

**3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Forms of Religious Learning in Students of Sapta Dharma Beliefs**

Religious learning in school institutions is a religious learning instilled by teachers to students through school institutions. Generally, school institutions only teach religious learning or beliefs that are included in major religions in Indonesia such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. But interestingly, there is a belief that is Sapta Dharma which is taught in school institutions. In this belief, they call themselves as followers of the Sapta Dharma as someone who adheres to the belief and carries out its practices. Bandungan, as an area that develops the teachings of Sapta Dharma adherents, has also entered schools to provide faith learning for students who become Sapta Dharma adherents.

Sapta Dharma learning has also begun to develop in formal schools around the Bandungan area in elementary, junior high, and high school. The schools that have provided access to religious learning for students with faith in the Bandungan area are as follows:

**Table 1.** Sapta Dharma students who study in formal schools

No	Name of School	Number of students
1	SD Bandungan 1	4
2	SD Samban 2	3
3	SD Nderekan	1
4	SD Candigaron 4	1
5	SMP Negeri 2 Ungaran	1
6	SMP Negeri 1 Ambarawa	1
7	SMP Negeri 3 Ambarawa	2

8	SMA Negeri 1 Ambarawa	1
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In the learning process, a teaching teacher is not called a religious teacher, but a belief teacher or an extension of Sapta Dharma. Historically, learning at these institutions did not merely reap the easy path because it required a long struggle and time. Lack of support, infrastructure, and poor stereotypes from the community also become obstacles in fighting for the practice of Sapta Dharma followers' beliefs.

According to Mr. Tasminto, an instructor or teacher trusted by Sapto dharmo at school, local religious learning has begun to enter school institutions since 2016 at the elementary, junior high, high school levels. But it has not penetrated into universities. At that time, learning to live in faith was still minimal because it did not have a curriculum. Even before 2016, the adherents of the Sapta Dharma belief in the learning process arguably did not get access to learning about the values of Sapta Dharma at school. Pre-2016 Sapta Dharma students are usually directed to take part in other religious studies that have been recognized by the state and institutions. In certain conditions, students and their parents are rejected by educational institutions due to their religious status. This then became a problem for Sapta Dharma adherents prior to 2016, considering that the unavailability of access to understanding the values of Sapta Dharma in schools had an impact on the spiritual experience for the students.

The above conditions then improved with the emergence of a positive response from the government of educational institutions through the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 27 of 2017. With the issuance of this regulation, religious learning, especially regarding the flow of beliefs, began to be given access to the world of formal education in schools. This is shown by the availability of KI and KD (Core Competencies and Basic Competencies), trust books as the technical basis for the learning process in schools[5], [6]. The renewal of this decision from the government then became a new era for the process of internalizing the values of Sapta Dharma's beliefs in formal schools. This condition also raises a good motivation for learning for the students who appreciate it. Although in some aspects the government still needs to pay attention to, such as the even distribution of the rules of Permendikbud (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture) No. 27 of 2017 in all schools so that students with appreciation can get access to learning related to belief values equally. The government has also issued a new regulation to facilitate access and technical belief flow learning in formal schools[7].

In the education sector or an extension worker/teacher, the values of belief in Sapta Dharma in formal schools still have a low level of welfare, when

compared to religious teachers in general. The small number of extension workers must spend time in various schools to provide an understanding of trust. In addition, the busy teaching hours seem to be still not in accordance with the wages received because they are still below the standard of teachers in general. This condition can occur because an educator or extension worker still lacks a trusted bachelor's graduate, so he cannot become a State Civil Apparatus (ASN). They only get status, facilities, and support from the government in collaboration with the Central MLKI (Institution of Belief in God Almighty Indonesia) to become teachers of trust or extension of belief in God Almighty. An extension worker also cannot hold the title of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) because he must meet religious educational qualifications such as Islamic religion teacher, Christian religion teacher, and others. However, problems in its development have begun to be considered by the government, one of which is the provision of education for teachers or extension workers of faith at the undergraduate degree.

### ***3.2. Responses to Religious Learning for Students of Sapta Dharma Beliefs***

Equitable access to religious education for students in formal schools has gradually shown good progress. Especially in the Bandung District, Semarang Regency. Several formal schools at various levels of education starting from kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and high school in the area began to provide access to religious learning for students who believe in Sapta Dharma. The release of Permendikbud in 2016 has given new hope to believers in all regions of Indonesia, including Sapta Dharma believers. Since the issuance of the regulation, most of the students no longer participate in learning other religions such as Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, and so on, as in previous years[8]. With the emergence of this new policy, many have received various responses. Following are the responses from students, teachers, and parents to access to religious learning in schools:

#### ***1.1.1. Student Response***

In general, the students who believe in Sapta Dharma in Bandung District show a positive response to the existence of religious learning in schools. This can be seen from the responses of Nimas (8 years old), Sekar (10 years old), and Eko (14 years old) elementary school and junior high school students, who said that studying religion at school was very fun because it was on par with fellow religious followers. another formal.

Most of the students who believe in Sapta Dharma are happy. In the end, they can learn religion according to their beliefs. Thus, the knowledge they get at home from their parents is discussed in more detail when they

meet the teacher (extension) at school. With the implementation of religious learning for students of appreciation, there is a certain joy in it. Given this is something that has been expected by students. As stated by a 9th grade junior high school student named Frida (14 years old):

*“In the past, I received different religious lessons between what I learned from my parents and what I learned at school. Because at that time I was included in other religious lessons. When I was in elementary school, I had to take Christian lessons when I was at school. Even so, I am also happy because I can add new knowledge about other religions. Now I am very happy because finally there is religious learning for us as followers of local beliefs. So, now we can be the same as other friends by receiving religious lessons at school”.*

The transition period in taking lessons from other religions to religious lessons for students who believe in beliefs makes them learn about tolerance. Differences in religion do not make it difficult for them to socialize and adapt to their peers at school. In addition to studying religion theoretically, the participation of students who live in other religious subjects has in fact quite a positive impact on them. The students of appreciation became more aware of the diversity of religions in Indonesia. Not only that, they become aware of the religious and cultural holidays that exist in each religion. This allows them to apply the knowledge gained so that they are able to interact well with friends of different religions at school. Armed with a fairly high sense of tolerance, this change seems to be easier. Their rights as citizens in accessing religious education are slowly starting to materialize.

#### ***1.1.2. Teacher Response***

The response of teachers or extension workers who share in the learning process also has a positive impact on the sustainability of the Sapta Dharma belief. Extension workers as educators strive to provide education for believers in faith to children who are believers in school, both elementary, junior high, and high school. The efforts of extension workers in providing education to enter school institutions are not easy. Because not all schools are willing to accept students who believe in beliefs. However, parents of religious students still struggle to get the right to access education for their children. To enter a school institution, there must be approval from the school, so that extension workers (teachers who believe in beliefs) must socialize the existence of a Minister of Education and Culture concerning the adherents of beliefs. However, not all schools in Bandung were given socialization. Only schools that have students who believe in Sapta Dharma. From the internal side, it will record families who have children who are in school.

Then the extension worker will try to enter the school in order to provide learning about faith. This was also stated by Mr. Tasminto, one of the extensionists who believe in faith:

*"But there are also schools that can accept verbally, so there is no need for a statement letter, but there are also schools that have to use letters and the process is also long. Not immediately entered then accepted. Someone who came in and was accepted was asked what the equipment was, how was it, who was the teacher, and that was asked too."*

The statement emphasizes that an extension worker who believes in Sapta Dharma really needs effort to provide education to students who believe in faith. When at school, the material taught is very diverse, ranging from drawing, singing, introducing religious figures, and practicing the values of Sapta Dharma teachings to always do good to others. In the school environment, extension workers and students carry out the learning process in a special room, such as in a library or other room. The learning guide used is a book of appreciation of beliefs from the ministry of religion.

However, religious learning for students who live this belief is still experiencing obstacles. During the Final Semester Assessment (PAS), a practicing teacher must give a grade, but gets into trouble in the process of filling out student report cards. This is because the column for the grade of religious lessons does not yet exist for students of religious beliefs, so they must be entered in a certain religion column, for example in the Christian religion column.

### *1.1.3. Parents Response*

In addition to the responses from students and teachers (extension of the adherents of Sapto Dharmo), parents of students also feel happy about religious education for their children. The policy regarding education for students who believe in faith issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2016, is a solution to the problems they have been experiencing. In the past, when they were educated at school, there was no religious education for students who live with local beliefs. Even their children who have graduated from elementary and middle school also feel the same way. They follow other religious studies at school.

*"Since I went to school. If my time did not exist. Then my first child has never received a lesson in faith. My first child got a new religious lesson when he was in high school. My little child has received religious lessons. However, when I was in kindergarten, there were no religious lessons because schools had their own policies."* (Pak Adi, 46 years old, student's parent)

This happiness was also felt by Mbak Surani (Nimas and Sekar's parents). She said that religious learning for students who believe in beliefs is something that parents have been waiting for all this time. Because in the past he also did not get it when he was in school.

*"Yeah, I'm happy. Because now the learning has been carried out in schools. We are given the same opportunities as others. So that we follow faith education in schools is something extraordinary. As a parent, I'm happy too, right?"* (Surani, 35 years old student's parent)

### **3.3. Barriers and Efforts to Implement Religious Learning for Sapta Dharma Believers**

As a religious teaching, the Sapta Dharma Belief has several obstacles, both in its spread and in its preservation. Adherents of the Sapta Dharma belief often feel obstacles in their status as followers, both internal and external obstacles. These obstacles have an impact on affirming their identity as believers, so they make efforts to preserve their beliefs and declare themselves as adherents of the Sapta Dharma belief to the surrounding community. Based on the findings, some of the obstacles they experienced such as lack of attention from the government towards believers, lack of support from school institutions in carrying out learning, challenges to maintaining trust, and negative stereotypes from the community towards believers[9].

From the government's perspective, the obstacle they experienced was in the process of determining the Sapta Dharma belief category in the administrative system. The government includes the Sapta Dharma Belief in the category of sects of belief, even though according to Sapto Dharma followers, this is not right because they are not a sect of belief that has many sects. For them, followers of the Sapta Dharma belief need to get a special category that distinguishes them from other local beliefs. In addition, another challenge that must be faced is the lack of support for religious learning in schools.

At school, families of believers who have school-age children sometimes have to choose schools to get spiritual learning. Not all schools in Bandung have instructors, because of the limited number of extension workers who believe in Sapta Dharma. In addition, not all schools can easily accept children who want to receive special religious education for the Sapto Dharma belief. Some schools still impose strict administrative requirements if a teacher or extension worker of the Sapto Dharma belief will teach at their school.

In addition to obstacles that come from the government and school institutions, obstacles to the preservation of believers in beliefs are also a problem in the sustainability of Sapta Dharma belief. One of them is regarding the sustainability of the successors of the

Sapta Dharma belief. As in the case of marriage. Sapta Dharma believers who marry adherents of another religion or belief often follow the religion of their partner. This causes the number of followers of the Sapta Dharma belief to decrease in Bandungan.

Before the Sapta Dharma belief was inaugurated by the government as a belief, the religious status of Sapta Dharma adherents was left blank in the religion column, as seen in the KTP (Identification Card), school cards, and others. Often followers of Sapta Dharma also use other religious identities such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and so on for certain purposes[10]. By using other religious identities, they can qualify for the administrative requirements in the religion column[11].

With various obstacles, adherents of the Sapta Dharma belief make efforts to preserve their belief. The steps taken include collaborating with school institutions so that they can teach the teachings of Sapta Dharma to students who are adherents of Sapta Dharma. In addition, the institution of Sapta Dharma adherents also seeks to have teachers or instructors who are adherents of the Sapta Dharma belief to provide religious learning and internalization of values based on the Sapta Dharma belief. An instructor can take other formal religious lessons instead of teaching the Sapta Dharma belief to its adherents.

To get public recognition of Sapta Dharma's beliefs, his followers declare their beliefs directly. The followers who were previously still in an unclear status, have now received recognition as a believer. They made an effort to record the adherents of the Sapta Dharma belief to the ministry of religion by including the number of adherents and forming an association of Sapta Dharma adherents. After getting recognition of trust from the government, believers in faith get a clear status on their religious identity, namely as believers. Although not all of them include a column of belief in filling in their identity, many of the Sapta Dharma followers are satisfied, because they have been able to obtain religious identity status as believers in self-identity such as ID cards, student cards, and others.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Sapta Dharma is one of the beliefs that exist in Indonesia. Although in government regulations Sapta Dharma is still part of the belief system and is considered different from religion, internalization and deepening of Sapta Dharma values for its adherents remains an important process, especially in religious life. One way to deepen the values of Sapta Dharma is through religious learning in formal schools. Through religious learning in formal schools, the basic values of Sapta Dharma can be internalized to its adherents from an early age (school age). However, in practice, the internalization process in schools encountered several

obstacles, such as limited teaching materials, and teaching of Sapta Dharma values. In addition, the role of Sapta Dharma, which is still listed as a sect of belief, is also a problem in itself.

The issuance of Permendikbud Number 27 of 2017, would be the government's answer in an effort to equalize the process of religious education in the formal education sector. This gave rise to a positive response from the parents and students of Sapta Dharma adherents, as well as teachers/instructors of Sapta Dharma values in schools. Nevertheless, some obstacles are still encountered, such as the lack of welfare of the extension workers, and the uneven application of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 27 of 2017 especially in all schools in Semarang Regency. This then still has an impact on some technical education in formal schools, such as the assessment process. Problems like this then become a challenge and task for the government to continue to pay attention and improve the process of equalizing access for every sect of belief in Indonesia, one of which is Sapta Dharma, especially in the school environment.

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