



Artstep's Virtual Exhibition: Enhancing Religious Moderation Attitudes and Sociocultural Literacy

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Abstract. The increasing number of cases of intolerance and radicalism occurring in Central Java, especially among students and university students, has raised public concern, particularly in Demak Regency. *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA/Islamic high school) Miftahussalam Demak offers an innovative solution to enhance religious moderation and socio-cultural literacy as a prevention against the threats of intolerance and radicalism through a virtual exhibition showcasing the cultures of other regions, such as Sumatra, Bali, Papua, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and others. This research reveals three main themes: (1) Transformation of dialogue space: Artificial Intelligence (AI) creates a safe space for exploring multicultural values without socio-religious distance. Strengthening critical literacy: Content personalization by algorithms enhances contextual understanding of religious narratives. (3) Identity negotiation: The platform facilitates the reconciliation between Islamic identity and global citizenship. This study shows that AI-based virtual exhibitions (Artsteps) are a valuable way to break down biases by allowing people to interact with each other, promote understanding of moderate religious views through engaging experiences, and reduce online radicalization by analyzing feelings. The research implications provide a practical framework for AI-driven Islamic education with an adaptive model for *madrasah* in Indonesia.

Keywords: Artstep, Virtual Exhibition, Religious Moderation, Socio-Cultural, Artificial Intelligence.

1 Introduction

Recent developments in immersive digital technology and the implementation of network connections have created many applications. This new concept opens up increasingly innovative scenarios and perspectives on how we understand and experience virtual spaces and environments [1]. The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) also offers tremendous transformative potential in education [2]. Moreover, history records that the emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID)-19 pandemic provided a new perspective on the importance of holding virtual exhibitions [3]. Virtual exhibitions make it easier for the public to attend from a distance if they cannot be present in person, like in a traditional exhibition [4]. The practical procedures

explained when designing a virtual exhibition also enhance students' awareness and knowledge about creating a virtual exhibition. The virtual exhibition will leverage the potential of digital technology to provide rich, layered, and multimodal content such as digital narratives, which will contextualize artworks, offer additional materials, and engage the audience more meaningfully [5].

Meanwhile, intolerance and radical attitudes remain a serious threat in Indonesia, especially in Central Java [6]. One of the solutions that must be implemented is a comprehensive mapping of textbooks used in Islamic education at various educational levels to identify and address potential threats to peace and develop activities and programs that support religious moderation and socio-cultural literacy [7]. Islamic education is a strategic platform to maintain students' moral foundation and encourage peaceful coexistence in society. Additionally, students are expected to understand and identify socio-cultural issues well to become agents contributing to peace solutions in their communities [8], [4]. This encompasses religious tolerance, equality, socio-cultural aspects, and interfaith collaboration [9]. In this way, combining religious and general subjects and using technology to improve education quality is vital [10], [11].

Although there are concerns about the impact of AI usage, with moral responsibility and control from religious authorities, AI has great potential benefits when guided by Islamic values. Socio-cultural factors will also significantly influence how religious communities interpret emerging technologies [12]. Indonesian Muslims need to find a balance between their beliefs, moral values, and new technologies, which adds to the larger conversation about Islamic ideas and changes in society today especially if AI, like Artstep, can help tackle issues like radicalism and social breakdown among students [13]. Moreover, the teacher's mindset can help explain how the developed mindset interventions successfully reach the students, making both students and teachers feel optimistic about using AI [14].

The *Profil Siswa Pancasila dan Proyek Penguatan Siswa Rahmatan lil 'alamin (P5RA/The Pancasila Student Profile and the Rahmatan lil 'alamin Student Strengthening Project)*, initiated by the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, aims to develop an adaptive curriculum in madrasahs [15]. Using controversial topics in society, like intolerance, social division, youth radicalism, and artificial intelligence (AI), can help improve critical thinking skills, which supports the goals of the Pancasila Student Profile and assists with the transition to the Merdeka Curriculum through careful planning, execution, and evaluation [16], [17]. One of the most appropriate programs to be implemented at MA Miftahussalam Demak is project-based learning, specifically by creating a virtual exhibition, as it will provide numerous benefits to the students, including improved digital literacy, enhanced attitudes of religious moderation, and socio-cultural literacy [18]. The virtual exhibition's content revolves around diversity, *tawassuth*, or choosing the middle.

2 Method

Methodologically, this study was conducted using a qualitative research approach [19], [20]. The research objectives were based on the research method, which in this context was to explore how a virtual exhibition using Artstep can improve attitudes toward religious moderation and cultural understanding among students at MA Miftahussalam Demak, Central Java. This study aimed to explore how the use of Artstep can shape participants' experiences, perceptions, and responses to virtual exhibition content related to religious diversity, culture, and tolerance for local students. Furthermore, this study also examined how AI technologies, such as chatbots, multicultural content analysis, and personalized recommendations, help create a more inclusive understanding of religion within the madrasah education system.

Regarding the types and sources of data, the study utilized two types of data: primary and secondary data. Both were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with 10 participants (6 eleventh-grade students and 4 teachers), and a review of previous studies relevant to the focus of this study. Overall, the research process took six months, from the pre-fieldwork phase to the preparation of the post-fieldwork research report.

3 Result and Discussion

The P5RA are key components of the independent curriculum implemented in Islamic schools. At MA Miftahussalam Demak, P5RA activities involve the integration of various disciplines, including religious and general subjects. The virtual exhibition themed "Diversity and *Tawasuth*" (*Tawassuth*) (Taking the Middle Path) exemplifies the integration of general and religious subjects. We implemented this virtual exhibition for eleventh-grade students at MA Miftahussalam Demak, specifically for classes XI-A, XI-B, XI-C, and XI-D. To implement this project, the four classes were divided into eight groups, each guided by four teachers with different teaching backgrounds: a religious teacher, a social studies teacher, a science teacher, and a computer teacher.

To complete the P5RA project with the theme "Diversity and Moderation," the creative process involved six steps. These six steps included selecting the platform most appropriate to the needs, followed by selecting the layout and design of the exhibition space. The platform must align with the project's identity and be designed to facilitate enjoyment of the exhibited art or culture. It concludes with an evaluation phase to validate the system and the project's effectiveness. Implementation of follow-up measures, such as marketing and promotional plans, privacy guarantees, and technical support for users, is crucial to ensure the proposed space is frequently used, updated, and improved. Special support for the themes of diversity and moderation is also emphasized, with the ultimate result being an increase in religious moderation and socio-cultural literacy among students.

Several students expressed their excitement in working on this virtual exhibition project, as it provided a new experience combining religious and general subjects with technology, guided by several teachers on the team. Meanwhile, the teachers involved also expressed tremendous enthusiasm in the mentoring, as all teachers and students in each group collaborated well and cohesively. This virtual exhibition is an effective way to improve religious moderation and socio-cultural literacy at MA Miftahussalam Demak, considering that the entire madrasah is Muslim and the majority of its students are Javanese. Through this virtual exhibition, students will learn and understand the cultures of other regions such as Aceh, Kalimantan, Sumatra, Papua, Bali, and others.

In practice, the virtual exhibition of student work aimed at improving religious moderation and socio-cultural literacy among students at MA Miftahussalam generally involves visualizing various images embodying religious moderation values, such as regional arts, culture, and various local wisdoms that reflect the socio-cultural landscape of Indonesian society as a whole (see Fig. 1).

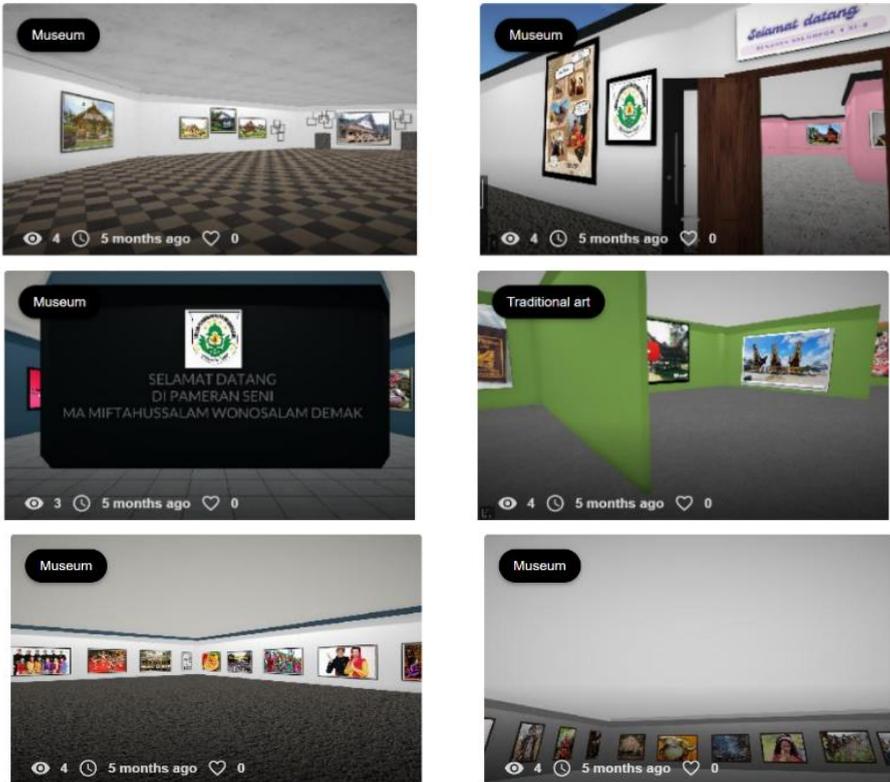


Fig. 1. Virtual exhibition produced by MA Miftahussalam students in the P5RA to enhance religious moderation and socio-cultural literacy among students.

Based on the visualization of the image above, it is clear that religious institutions bear significant responsibility as centers of moral authority, promoting social cohesion through the education they provide. This influence presents a unique opportunity to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [21], [22]. A real challenge in Indonesia is radicalism and intolerance [23]. Preventing radicalism and intolerance can involve the physical environment. These namely educational facilities provide information about attitudes, values, and ethics in Islam that align with a pluralistic society and prevent extremism and radicalism. Therefore, promoting attitudes and perspectives of religious moderation in madrasas is very important [24]. Multicultural values instilled in the madrasa environment will foster a strong sense of interfaith tolerance, cultural appreciation, and inclusivity. Improving attitudes of religious moderation and socio-cultural literacy is possible by utilizing technology, such as virtual exhibitions using Artstep [25], [26].

4 Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, an important finding was obtained: the numerous cases of intolerance and radicalism occurring in Indonesia, particularly in Central Java, prompted MA Miftahussalam Demak to provide a solution through a virtual exhibition implemented as one of the P5RA activity projects. This virtual exhibition facilitated the transformation of dialogue spaces by utilizing AI to create a safe environment for students to explore multicultural values without socio-religious barriers. Students also experienced the strengthening of critical literacy that began to emerge, namely the personalization of content by algorithms, which then improved the contextual understanding of religious narratives. Ultimately, identity negotiations also began to take shape. Optimal use of Artstep will facilitate reconciliation between Islamic identity and global citizenship. This study shows that AI-based virtual exhibitions (Artsteps) are highly effective in breaking down prejudice by enabling people from various groups to interact, helping individuals adopt more moderate views of their religion through engaging experiences, and reducing online radicalization by analyzing feelings. This study offers a useful plan for using AI in Islamic education with a flexible and evolving approach for Madrasahs in Indonesia, particularly at MA Miftahussalam Demak.

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