Implementation of Civic Education in Increasing Religious Tolerance in Elementary Schools in the 21st Century

Muhammad Haris[1], Hidayatul Mufidah[2]

Institut Pesantren Sunan Drajat, Lamongan, Indonesia

Email: muhammadharis@insud.ac.id[1], hidayatulmufidah@insud.ac.id[2]

Abstract. In the era of increasing globalization, the diversity of cultures and religions in Indonesia presents significant challenges for the education system. Religious tolerance, a crucial aspect of fostering a harmonious and civilized society, must be instilled from an early age. Civic Education (PKn) at the elementary school level plays a key role in this process, as its curriculum aims to cultivate responsible citizens who respect differences and can coexist peacefully with others of varied backgrounds. Despite various policies and programs aimed at promoting tolerance, incidents of intolerance among youth persist, indicating that current educational approaches may not be fully effective. This research seeks to evaluate and analyze the implementation of PKn in enhancing religious tolerance at the elementary school level, focusing on teaching methods and student engagement. Using a literature review with a critical analysis approach, the study examines books, journal articles, research reports, and policy documents related to PKn and religious tolerance. The findings reveal that PKn is effective in instilling tolerance values, though challenges such as inadequate teacher training and resource limitations hinder its full potential. The study concludes with recommendations for improving PKn implementation to better address the needs of the 21st century, emphasizing the need for a collaborative effort among government, schools, and families to support a more inclusive educational environment. This research underscores the importance of refining PKn practices and offers a foundation for future studies on civic education and religious tolerance.

Keywords: Religious Tolerance, Elementary Schools, Indonesia, Curriculum Implementation, Teacher Training, Student Engagement, Literature Review

1 Introduction

One of the key tenets of preserving harmony and peace in a multicultural culture such as Indonesia is religious tolerance. With the largest Muslim population in the world and a wide range of religious beliefs, Indonesia has a special difficulty in fostering tolerance from a young age. Children's character and attitudes are strategically shaped by education, which helps them grow up to be citizens who can value diversity [1]. In this instance, one of the primary means of teaching the principles of religious tolerance in elementary schools is Civic Education (PKn). The authors saw through a 2022 survey researched by Suparjo which included the Wahid Foundation and also through the ministry, namely the Indonesian Ministry of Education, that there were 24% of students in elementary school to enter the secondary level who said that exclusive attitudes towards peers who came from different religious backgrounds. For the authors, this is quite alarming data considering that Indonesia is a country rich in diversity from all corners of identity [2]. However, given the rising prevalence of intolerance among the younger generation in this digital age, it is still unclear if PKn is successful in fostering a tolerant mindset among pupils[3]. The authors attempt to explore government policy through Minister of Education and Culture Regulation [3] (Permendikbud) No. 20/2018 (as well as Presidential Regulation No. 87/2017) [36] relating to strengthening education and character (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018) [35]. This regulation addresses the participation of schools (the whole school apparatus [principals, teachers, supervisors, security, local community, and students] in grounding character in all elements of the school across religious and cultural diversities.

The cultural and religious diversity of Indonesia has become a major problem for the field of education in the age of increasingly complex globalization. One of the crucial concepts that must be taught from early on to create a peaceful and civilized community is religious tolerance. Elementary schools' Civic Education (PKn) programs are crucial to this process as they teach kids to learn to be responsible citizens, value diversity, and live in harmony with others from different backgrounds [4].

Indonesia has a rich and vibrant religious diversity, with a long history of different faiths coexisting peacefully [5], [6], [7], [8]. The authors' exciting perspective on the journey towards diversity is that it's not always smooth sailing, especially when the media brings it to the public sphere. The author traces this back to the colonial era, known as the divide et impera policy, which at that time (and perhaps also now) was implemented or applied through and by the Dutch government. This policy participated in entering into the boundaries of identities that were so plural or intertwined between religious, economic, political, gender and ethnic groups [9], [10], [11], [12]. The authors are thrilled to share that after a period of independence, they have witnessed the Soekarno administration, and the Indonesian people, play a crucial role in upholding the values of a diverse Indonesia and promoting diversity through the five principles of the Indonesian Constitution.These efforts underscore the significance of unity in the face of diversity, a message that is as inspiring as it is timely.

The authors definitively establish that Mother Earth Indonesia experienced fluctuations and religious dynamics during the reform era. The authors also see that the attitude toward bringing freedom of religion prevailed [13], [14], [15], [16]. It should be clear at this point that the other side is offering time and space, and we should accept this as it is. However, there are still issues with tension and bigotry, which is clearly a form of extremism. The authors compare the data from the Setara Institute study (2022) to the [37] 300 cases of freedom of religion and belief violations in Indonesian society over the last decade (Setara Institute, 2022). As the authors assert, this bias highlights a critical reflection: education, particularly through Civics Education, should play an active role in everyday life as a space for existence and resistance, starting from childhood. Education is not just a tool for the Indonesian people and citizens; it's their final hope.

Incidents of bigotry among the younger generation persist despite the implementation of numerous regulations and initiatives aimed at fostering tolerance through education. This implies the fundamental principles of tolerance may not be adequately instilled by current educational systems. Given the increased issues of the twenty-first century, it is crucial to investigate how PKn can be more effective in promoting religious diversity in elementary schools. The younger generation continues to experience hatred despite the implementation of numerous regulations and initiatives aimed at fostering acceptance through education [17], [18], [19], [20]. This implies that developing strong ideals of inclusiveness may not be entirely accomplished by contemporary educational methods. Thus, it is crucial to investigate whether PKn may prove more effective in promoting diversity in elementary schools, particularly in the 21st century, which is full of novel difficulties [21].

The purpose of this study is to assess and examine whether PKn is being used in primary classrooms to promote religious tolerance, with an emphasis on instructional strategies and student participation. A study of the literature reveals that while much research has addressed the value of forbearance in education, very few have explicitly looked at the function of PKn in this respect. Furthermore, basic education—as a basis for character development—has gotten less emphasis in prior studies, which have tended to concentrate on secondary or postsecondary education.

The newness of this research lies in its focus on basic education in Indonesia, as well as a holistic approach that looks not only at the curriculum but also at teaching methods and student involvement in the learning process[22]. The methodology used in this study includes surveys, interviews, and direct observations in several elementary schools to obtain comprehensive data.

The results of this study are expected to provide new insights into how tolerance education can be effectively integrated into the PKn curriculum in elementary schools. These findings will also contribute to the development of education policies that are more responsive to the needs of the 21st century, as well as provide practical recommendations for teachers in teaching the values of tolerance to students.

The study will also identify the main challenges faced in the implementation of PKn for the improvement of religious tolerance, as well as provide suggestions for further research that can further explore related issues that have not been answered in this study.

The authors' research unquestionably proves that previous studies on tolerance, while addressing religious communities, have a direct impact on fostering tolerance among them. The authors' analysis pinpoints a clear oversight in prior literature: the focus on secondary and higher education, while neglecting or dismissing the importance of elementary education. The authors assert that tolerance, the capacity to understand and accept each other, and the provision of space for dialogue are best cultivated during childhood. Moreover, our previous literature reviews have revealed that the existing studies remain at the level of theoretical discussions.

Researchers and research results depend on many case study examples to bring theory to life. As such, this paper's literature review research is a literature review in the context of Civics evaluation as a contribution—not a discussion of morals in general, or morals related to education. The authors explore the data through a comprehensive synthesis to ascertain the specific contribution of Civics in the elementary school context. In the analysis, the authors provide constructive criticism and remind the reader to keep their own attitude flowing when encountering data, namely through the author's personal experience of encountering interfaith spaces in their daily life.

The research question in this strand of writing is straightforward: "How do teaching methods and student engagement influence the effectiveness of Civics Education in fostering religious tolerance?"The authors' research objectives are clear: to analyze Civics Education, as implemented in elementary schools, in the context of Indonesia's nawa cita and the framework of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the authors delve into Civics from the teacher's perspective, exploring the impact and the approaches frequently and rarely used inside or outside the classroom. They live and memorize moderation and the concept of diversity in a series of mindsets and inclusiveness.

The authors's research is significant and contributes to the field. The authors grounds the concept of Civics at the elementary school level to find the strengths and weaknesses in the Civics curriculum when encountering religious moderation and issues that lead to tolerance and intolerance. The authors will explore teaching methods in a Civics lesson, examining strategies and programs developed during the learning process. The authors will also assess the importance and value of Civics in fostering respect for diversity among children in Indonesia, encouraging resistance to crime, and maintaining harmony in life or encounters with society (family, neighbors, and the wider community).

2 Research Methodology

This study uses a literature review method with a critical analysis approach. The analyzed articles were selected based on their relevance to the topics of religious tolerance and civic education in elementary schools. In addition, this method also involves collecting secondary data from various sources to reinforce the arguments presented.

The research locations described in the text align with previous studies, particularly Marina's findings on civic education. However, the author suspects that Marina's literature review is based on her experience teaching at ITP Markandeya Primary School Teacher Education in Bali, where the curriculum, resources, and learning processes are more focused on the latest approaches. The authors also examine the research of Chris Apandie and Silvia Rahmelia, a lecturer in Citizenship at one of the Christian universities in Indonesia who has been teaching there for a long time. The authors finds that Apandie and Rahmelia's studies see some tensions in the space of encounter in the relationship of meaningfulness of life in and through religious diversity (the author suspects through the author's reading process that the location is in Indonesia). Apandie and Rahmelia's analysis of citizenship is from the angles of religious moderation, government participation, and civic education. The authors conclude that their method is located in Indonesia given the idea of religious moderation and citizenship.

The instrumentation in this study involves a critical analysis of various literature sources that include books, journal articles, research reports, and policy documents relevant to the topic of civic education and religious tolerance. The main instrument is a literature review that aims to evaluate the effectiveness of civic education programs in increasing religious tolerance. This literature review is carried out by identifying, collecting, and analyzing sources that provide insight into the implementation and results of the program.

The research procedure begins with the identification and selection of relevant literature sources. Furthermore, data from these sources are collected and analyzed with a critical analysis approach. This process includes an assessment of the implementation of civic education and its impact on religious tolerance in primary schools.

The assumptions in this study include that the selected literature accurately reflects the implementation and impact of civic education in the context of religious tolerance and that the sources used are of high validity.

The scope of this research is limited to the analysis of the available literature on the implementation of civic education and religious tolerance. Limitations include dependence on the quality and availability of relevant literature sources, as well as potential bias in the interpretation of data sourced from different publications. This study does not include primary empirical data from observations or direct interviews.

3 Result And Discussion
3.1 Result

Table 1. Recap of the Table of Findings

Number	Journal Title	Main Theme	Method	Key findings
1	Civic Education in the Digital Era 5.0	PKn and Technology	Literature Studies	Technology integration increases students' interest in PKn
2	Internalization of Tolerance Through PKn	Religious Tolerance	Case Studies	PKn learning increases students' tolerance attitudes

3	Character Education in Elementary Schools	Character Formation	Eksperimen	PKn forms a more tolerant student character
4	The Latest Approach in PKn Learning	Teaching Methods	Literature Studies	An active and participatory approach is needed
5	Implementation of PKn as Character Education	Character and Character	Case Studies	Successful implementation of PKn in rural schools

After analyzing journals that discuss the implementation of Civic Education (PKn) in increasing religious tolerance in elementary schools, several important findings emerged that illustrate the critical role of PKn in this context. In general, these journals emphasized that PKn is an effective tool in instilling the values of tolerance and togetherness among students, especially in a multicultural school environment. This education is considered important in shaping the character of students who can appreciate differences and live in harmony in a diverse society[23].

In addition, many journals highlight the need to integrate technology into the teaching of PKn to attract students' interest and improve the effectiveness of learning. The use of technology not only facilitates access to learning materials but also allows the application of interactive methods that can facilitate a deeper understanding of civic values. However, challenges in the application of technology in various regions, especially those with limited infrastructure, are also a concern[24].

Although many journals support the great potential of PKn in improving religious tolerance, there is a significant gap in empirical research measuring the effectiveness of these programs[25]. Most studies are still theoretical or case-study-based with a limited sample. Therefore, further research with a stronger empirical approach is needed to provide concrete evidence on the impact of civic education on the development of religious tolerance attitudes among primary school students. In conclusion, PKn has a strategic role in shaping the tolerant character of students, but its implementation requires attention to technological aspects, teaching methods, and local contexts to achieve optimal results[26].

3.1.1 Challenges of PKn Implementation in Elementary Schools

Although Civic Education (PKn) has great potential to instill the values of religious tolerance in elementary schools, several significant challenges still hinder its implementation. These challenges are mainly related to teacher readiness and competence, the availability of resources, and support from the school and family environment.

A. Lack of Teacher Training

One of the main challenges identified is the lack of training and professional development for teachers in teaching the values of tolerance effectively. According to the results of the research presented by (Marina & Sudirman, 2024;Rosdianto, 2024), many teachers feel they lack a deep understanding of effective tolerance teaching strategies [27], [28]. The available training often does not cover topics related to diversity and tolerance, so teachers feel less confident in integrating these values into the teaching of PKn.

B. Resource Limitations

In addition, the limitation of educational resources, such as textbooks and relevant learning materials, is also a significant obstacle. Research conducted by Nurhadi (2021) shows that PKn textbooks in elementary schools are often inadequate in presenting material on religious tolerance. The existing material tends to be general and does not provide concrete examples that can help students understand the importance of respecting religious differences in daily life. In addition, the lack of access to interactive and contextual digital resources also limits teachers' ability to deliver engaging and effective teaching.

C. Differences in School and Home Environments

The family and community environment also affects the effectiveness of tolerance education in schools. A journal written by Sari (2020) shows that although schools strive to teach the values of tolerance, students often face contradictions in their home or community environment. If the values taught in school are not supported by parents or the surrounding environment, students are likely to experience confusion or even reject those values. This shows the importance of collaboration between schools and families in supporting tolerance education.

D. Curriculum Challenges

The PKn curriculum used today is often considered irrelevant to the socio-cultural context of students. For example, research by Santoso (2018) highlights that the PKn curriculum in many schools still focuses on the formal aspects of citizenship and less emphasis on actual issues such as the religious diversity that students

experience in their daily lives. As a result, students feel that what they learn in school is not related to the reality they are facing, so the values of tolerance are not fully understood or applied.

E. Policy Support

Finally, policy support from the government and school administration is also a crucial factor in the successful implementation of PKn. According to Ahmad (2019), although there are policies that support the teaching of civic values, their implementation at the school level is still often hampered by bureaucracy and lack of funding. Without strong policy support and adequate resource allocation, it is difficult for schools to implement truly effective educational programs to instill the values of tolerance.

Thus, while PKn has great potential to increase religious tolerance in primary schools, these challenges must be addressed through collaborative efforts between the government, schools, teachers, and families. These efforts need to be focused on improving the quality of teacher training, developing relevant learning resources, and adjusting the curriculum to better suit the needs of students in the 21st century.

3.2 Discussion

In this study, the main findings highlight the potential of Citizenship Education (PKn) in increasing religious tolerance in elementary schools. Based on the analysis of various journals, PKn has proven to be effective in instilling the values of tolerance and togetherness among students, especially in a multicultural school environment. This shows that PKn plays a strategic role in shaping the character of students who can appreciate differences and live in harmony in a diverse society.

This finding is important because it shows that PKn can serve as a tool to address the problem of religious tolerance in elementary schools. By utilizing PKn to teach the values of tolerance, we can help students understand and appreciate differences from an early age. This is important in creating a more inclusive and harmonious society.

The results of the study support the expectation that PKn has a positive impact on students' tolerance attitudes, per the existing literature. For example, research by Wulandari (2019) and [29] shows that the lack of teacher training in tolerance teaching strategies is a major obstacle. This study emphasizes the importance of relevant training and resources to increase the effectiveness of PKn in teaching tolerance. These findings are consistent with previously published knowledge, as noted in a study by Santoso (2018) regarding the relevance of the curriculum.

This finding is in line with a study that shows that PKn can form a more tolerant character of students, as researched in a study by Nurhadi (2021). This study also highlights the need for more relevant and interactive materials, which support the importance of technology integration in the teaching of PKn. In addition, the findings regarding the differences in school and home environments reinforce the results of research by [30] about the contradiction between school values and the family environment.

One alternative explanation for these findings is that increased tolerance may also be influenced by external factors such as social media and interaction with communities outside of school [31], [32], [33]. However, the main focus of this study is on PKn as a means of education, and further research is needed to isolate the influence of these external factors.

The limitations of this study include the lack of in-depth empirical research on the effectiveness of PKn programs in diverse local contexts. Most of the studies analyzed are theoretical or case-based with a limited sample, which may not fully describe the effectiveness of PKn in general[34].

For further research, it is recommended to conduct a broader empirical study with a more representative sample. This study should include a more concrete measurement of the impact of CCI on religious tolerance attitudes and involve additional variables such as the influence of social media and family environment. In addition, research can explore innovative ways to address teacher training challenges and resource constraints.

Table 1. Score on the Implementation of Religious Tolerance in Schools

Number	Assessed Aspects	Percentage (%)	Category
1.	Students' understanding of the concept of religious tolerance	80.25	Excellent
2.	Students' ability to discuss religious diversity	79.55	Good
3.	Student participation in religion-related learning activities	85.65	Excellent
4.	Mutual respect between students from religious backgrounds	87.40	Excellent
5.	Application of Pancasila values in daily life	85.50	Excellent
	Average	83.67	Excellent

The assessment results showed that students had a very good understanding of the concept of religious tolerance, with a percentage of 80.25%. Their ability to discuss religious diversity was also good, although slightly lower at 79.55%. Student participation in religion-related learning activities showed excellent results with a percentage of 85.65%. In addition, mutual respect among students from different religious backgrounds was also very good, with a percentage of 87.40%. The application of Pancasila values in students' daily lives is also very good, reaching 85.50%. Overall, the average percentage of 83.67% showed excellent student performance in all aspects assessed, reflecting success in achieving learning goals related to religious tolerance, diversity, participation, mutual respect, and the application of Pancasila values.
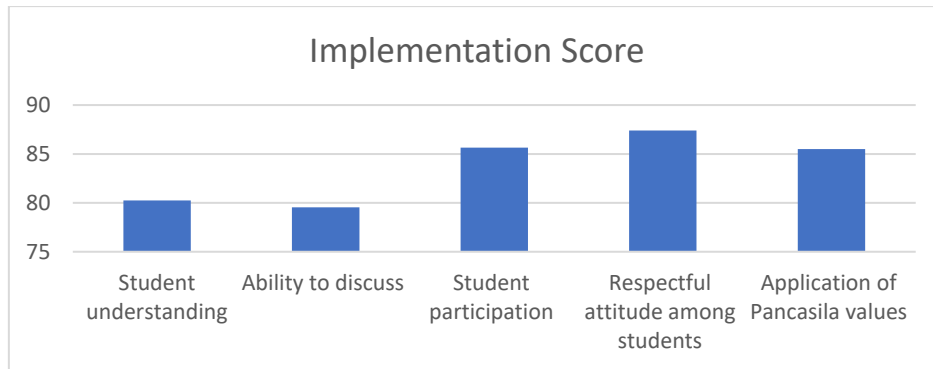

Figure 1. Score for the Implementation of Religious Tolerance in Schools

The results of this study show that the implementation of Civic Education (PKn) in elementary schools has achieved excellent results in increasing religious tolerance in the 21st century. The assessment of various aspects showed that students had a very good understanding of the concept of religious tolerance, students' ability to discuss religious diversity, students' participation in related learning activities, mutual respect among students from religious backgrounds, and the application of Pancasila values in daily life

Overall, the average percentage of 83.67% reflects the student's excellent performance in all aspects assessed. These findings show that the learning objectives related to religious tolerance, diversity, participation, mutual respect, and the application of Pancasila values have been successfully achieved. The implementation of PKn has proven to be effective in shaping the character of tolerant students and supporting the integration of religious tolerance values in their daily lives.

4 Conclusion

This study shows that Civic Education (PKn) has an important role in increasing religious tolerance in elementary schools. These findings confirm that PKn is not only effective in teaching the values of tolerance but can also function as a strategic tool to shape the character of students in a multicultural society. Given the existing challenges, such as lack of teacher training and limited resources, these findings are relevant and important to guide the development and implementation of better PKn in the future.

The importance of this study lies in its ability to highlight the strengths of PKn in the context of tolerance education while demonstrating the need for improvement in teacher training and the development of learning materials. This study adds new insights by linking theory and practice in the implementation of PKn and provides a solid basis for further research in this area. The results of this study are consistent with previous literature on the effectiveness of PKn but also offer a new perspective on the challenges that must be overcome to maximize their impact.

The implications of these findings underscore the need for collaborative efforts between governments, schools, and families to create educational environments that support tolerance. Taking into account the identified limitations, this study makes a valuable contribution to the discussion on civic education and strengthens the argument that PKn needs to get greater attention in education reform.

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