

Progressive Islam: Building Tolerance with an Islamic Framework in Muhammadiyah Islamic Education Institutions

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Abstract:

This research aims to analyze the characteristics of Progressive Islam in building tolerance in Muhammadiyah educational institutions, especially at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi. Through a qualitative approach with case study methods, this research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of superior human resources within the framework of Progressive Islam and how tolerance is built in the school environment. The results of the study show that superior human resources in Progressive Islam have five main characteristics: monotheism, adhering to the Qur'an and Sunnah, living *ijtihad* and *tajdid*, developing *wasathiyah* attitudes, and realizing the principle of *rahmatan lil'alam*. Tolerance for superior human resources is developed through inclusive education, interfaith dialogue, character building, and the use of technology. This research offers insights into strategies to strengthen tolerance in Islamic educational institutions through the Progressive Islamic approach.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of a multicultural society, tolerance is an important aspect in creating peace and social harmony. In Islamic education, the values of tolerance need to be internalized from an early age to grow the younger generation who are able to appreciate differences. Muhammadiyah, as one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, is committed to carrying progressive Islamic values. The main principle carried by Muhammadiyah is the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alam*, which means Islam as a blessing for all nature. This principle is oriented towards a tolerant, open, and moderate Islam. Muhammadiyah education aims to produce a generation that has Islamic character, is tolerant of diversity, and thinks critically in the face of changing times (Burhani, 2016)



SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi is an example of a Muhammadiyah educational institution that actively implements Progressive Islamic values in the curriculum and school culture. In contrast to an approach that focuses only on memorization or religious rituals, this school supports students to think critically and progressively with a foundation of Qur'an and Sunnah values. The principles of Progressive Islam in Muhammadiyah include *tajdid* (renewal), *ijtihad* (independent thinking), and *wasathiyah* (moderation). These concepts are expected to develop an inclusive and tolerant attitude in students, which is not only beneficial in the school environment but also in the community (Mulkhan, 2000).

As an effort to realize tolerance in the educational environment, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi has implemented a number of programs that support tolerance. These programs include interfaith dialogue, tolerance-based character building, and the use of technology to facilitate inclusive teaching. The cultivation of tolerance is carried out not only as a theory, but as an active culture in every activity at school, so that students not only understand the importance of tolerance, but also apply it directly in daily life (Mela, 2020).

Based on this background, this research will focus on the main question, How is the concept of Progressive Islam applied in building tolerance in Muhammadiyah educational institutions? Taking SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi as a case study, this research will explore how Islamic progressive values are applied in the school environment and how this approach affects the formation of tolerant student character. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Progressive Islam as a basis for building tolerance at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi. This analysis includes various methods applied by schools in instilling the values of tolerance, whether through curriculum, character building programs, and daily activities that promote inclusive attitudes. By identifying the methods used by schools in implementing Progressive Islam, this research is expected to provide deeper insight into Muhammadiyah's contribution in developing a tolerant and peaceful educational environment.

This research is expected to have a wide range of relevant benefits for academics, the community, and educational practitioners. For academics, this research is expected to enrich academic studies on the implementation of the concept of Progressive Islam in the context of tolerance education. for the community, by studying Muhammadiyah's approach in building tolerance in the school environment, this research is expected to provide relevant guidelines for the wider community to build harmony in the midst of diversity. The values of tolerance instilled through education are expected to be beneficial not only to the school environment but also to the entire community, which continues to face challenges due to differences in views and beliefs. For Education Practitioners, this research makes a direct contribution to Muhammadiyah education practitioners and other Islamic educational institutions to understand and apply effective methods in instilling the values of tolerance in students. The approach found effective at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi can be used as a reference for other Islamic educational institutions that want to implement Progressive Islamic values in building tolerance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative approach provides flexibility in exploring in-depth and contextual aspects of the implementation of an activity or program at the research site. (Creswell, 2014). The location of this research is SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi, which was chosen because it is known to actively apply the principles of Progressive Islam in the formation of students' character with Islamic values of tolerance and moderation. so that the selection of this school allows researchers to obtain real and relevant data related to the research objectives (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The research subjects consisted of school principals, teachers, and students at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi. Principals and teachers are chosen as key informants because they play an important role in the implementation of curriculum, policies, and the implementation of education in schools. Students are also an important subject because of their experience in learning in an environment that is the main focus of this study. The selection of diverse subjects provides a rich and in-depth perspective on the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection was carried out using several techniques, namely interviews, observations, and documentation studies. Semi-structured interviews with principals, teachers, and students provide flexibility in exploring their views on the application of Progressive Islamic values, particularly related to tolerance. This technique allows researchers to collect in-depth and contextual data. Observation is carried out by directly observing learning activities, student interactions, and extracurricular activities that support tolerance values, while documentation studies examine school documents such as curriculum and learning modules (Merriam, 1998).

The data obtained were analyzed using a thematic analysis method, which aims to identify key themes. The stages of data analysis include data reduction, where the data obtained is organized and simplified for research focus. The reduced data is then presented in the form of a narrative to facilitate understanding. Conclusions were drawn to understand how Progressive Islam is implemented in an effort to build tolerance in this school (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The validity of the data was tested through triangulation of sources, namely by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. This technique ensures the consistency and validity of the information, so that the conclusions produced are more reliable. Triangulation is an important step in maintaining the quality of the data and ensuring accurate analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Islamic Education in Muhammadiyah Education Institutions

Muhammadiyah is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia founded by KH.

Ahmad Dahlan in 1912. Since its inception, Muhammadiyah has been committed to strengthening modern, rational, and progress-oriented Islamic education, with the main goal of enlightening and advancing the ummah. Muhammadiyah education focuses on the development of science and moral development, as well as integrating Islamic values in the educational curriculum based on the Qur'an and Hadith (Nashir, 2013). In this education system, Muhammadiyah integrates religious knowledge with general knowledge, which aims to produce a generation with noble character and is able to answer the challenges of the times (Noer, 1996).

In this context, Islamic education in Muhammadiyah aims to produce individuals who have faith, piety, noble character, and have intellectual abilities and skills that are relevant to the needs of modern society. Muhammadiyah combines general and religious sciences in its education system, so that students can develop their potential holistically (Wahyudi, 2019). The principles of progressive Islam carried by Muhammadiyah are also an important foundation in its education, where Muhammadiyah emphasizes the principles of *ijtihad* (independent thinking) and *tajdid* (renewal) to answer the challenges of the times. In its curriculum, Muhammadiyah education uses an integrative approach, which not only teaches religious science, but also general science, as an effort to build a balanced generation between religious science and world science (Ridwan, 2005).

Tolerance Education as Part of Progressive Islam

Progressive Islam developed by Muhammadiyah is a form of understanding of Islam that prioritizes progress, openness, and justice. In the context of education, Progressive Islam is implemented through various approaches that foster tolerance in the school environment and society. According to Haedar Nashir (2015), Progressive Islam focuses on creating Muslims who have open, moderate views, and are not easily caught up in extremism or exclusivism.

In Muhammadiyah education, Progressive Islam is realized through an approach that respects universal human values and respect for differences. These principles of Progressive Islam are reflected in the curriculum and learning methods that introduce students to a broad understanding of Islam, which includes the values of togetherness, respect for human rights, and environmental awareness. These values are also intended so that students can develop into a Muslim generation who are able to live in harmony in the midst of diversity.

Muhammadiyah encourages Islamic education that integrates the principles of tolerance as one of the important aspects of the learning process. This concept of tolerance is taken from the values of the Qur'an and Hadith which emphasize the importance of respecting differences and coexisting peacefully. In QS. Al-Hujurat: 13, it is stated that humans are created differently to know each other, not to disagree. This is the basis for Muhammadiyah to instill the value of tolerance in students and students (Burhani, 2018).

Tolerance education in Muhammadiyah is not only in the form of an understanding of inclusive religious concepts, but also in the form of activities that practice mutual respect. Muhammadiyah teaches students to respect and appreciate differences, both

in religion, ethnicity, and culture. In Muhammadiyah education, students are taught not to view differences as a threat, but as wealth that must be respected.

Muhammadiyah education also emphasizes the development of students' character based on noble morals which include humility, mutual respect, and maintaining social harmony. By adhering to the morals of *karimah*, students are expected to be able to become tolerant individuals and open to differences. In addition, Muhammadiyah also encourages interfaith dialogue through various programs and activities involving other religious communities. This aims to increase mutual understanding and reduce religious-based conflicts. This interreligious dialogue is considered important in order to create social harmony in a pluralistic society (Setiawan, 2016).

Characteristics of Progressive Islam in Muhammadiyah Education

The concept of Progressive Islam within Muhammadiyah education reflects an integrative framework that harmonizes spirituality, intellectuality, and social ethics in the formation of superior human resources. The foundation of *tauhid* serves as the core of personal and moral development, guiding individuals to align every thought and action with divine consciousness. This principle is further strengthened through the practical implementation of the Qur'an and Sunnah, where students are encouraged not only to memorize and understand religious texts but to embody Islamic ethics discipline, honesty, and social responsibility in everyday life. This integration of faith and practice establishes a balance between spiritual depth and practical engagement, shaping learners who are intellectually capable and morally grounded.

At the same time, the spirit of *tajdid* (renewal) illustrates Muhammadiyah's commitment to continuous innovation and adaptation to contemporary challenges. Through educational reform and the integration of digital technology, the institution nurtures students' ability to think critically, act creatively, and engage dynamically with global transformations. This aligns with the principle of *ijtihad* encouraging independent and contextual reasoning rooted in authentic Islamic values. Complementing this is the principle of *wasathiyah* (moderation), which fosters tolerance and equilibrium in the face of pluralism. Students are taught to embrace diversity while maintaining their Islamic identity, positioning Muhammadiyah graduates as agents of harmony in multicultural settings.

Finally, the value of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* reinforces the universal mission of Progressive Islam education as a means to bring benefit and compassion to all humanity. Muhammadiyah's educational philosophy, grounded in social justice and humanitarian concern, prepares students to be contributors to global peace and sustainability. Thus, the synthesis of *tauhid*, Qur'anic practice, *tajdid*, *wasathiyah*, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* encapsulates Muhammadiyah's vision of producing individuals who are pious, knowledgeable, and socially responsible—embodying both the moral integrity of faith and the progressive dynamism needed in modern society.

Implementation of Tolerance in Educational Institutions of SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi

Inclusive education is an educational approach that provides equal access and opportunities for all students, regardless of their religious background, ethnicity, physical ability, or social status. At SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi, this principle is implemented as a tangible manifestation of the concept of *Progressive Islam*, which emphasizes the values of tolerance and mutual benefit (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*). Muhammadiyah is committed to making education a means that not only educates students based on science and skills, but also teaches the values of inclusivity in daily life. Inclusive education in this school allows students from different backgrounds to learn together, build cooperation, and respect each other's differences.

SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi has integrated inclusive education into the curriculum by including materials on diversity, respect for differences, and the importance of respecting the rights of others. This curriculum adaptation includes a thematic approach to subjects that emphasize cooperation between students as well as additional materials related to the values of tolerance, diversity, and interfaith dialogue. With this approach, students are trained to think critically and be open to a variety of different perspectives in society.

This inclusive approach also includes collaborative learning activities that involve all students, without discrimination, in a variety of classroom projects. The project allows students to collaborate with their peers who may have different backgrounds, so that they can understand the importance of cooperation and respect for others, regardless of their differences.

The implementation of inclusive education at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi is also reflected in the school's efforts to create a friendly and inclusive environment for all students. The school environment is designed in such a way as to support the creation of a conducive learning climate, where every student can feel safe, comfortable, and valued. Teachers and educators at this school are also provided with training related to inclusive approaches and tolerance, which includes how to manage multicultural classrooms and instill the values of inclusivity in the learning process.

Extra-curricular activities and school programs are also designed to support positive interactions between students from different backgrounds. Through this approach, schools strive to instill the principle that differences are not barriers, but rather opportunities to learn and grow together. Thus, a welcoming and inclusive environment in this school is expected to be able to form students who have a sense of empathy, respect for diversity, and are ready to be part of a multicultural society.

The implementation of interreligious dialogue at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi is one of the tangible manifestations in building tolerance and respect for religious diversity. Muhammadiyah, which is based on the principle of *Progressive Islam*, views interreligious dialogue as an effective means to develop understanding and reduce prejudice between religious communities. In the context of education, this dialogue is not only interpreted as a discussion about religious differences but also as an effort to introduce the values of togetherness and equality to students, so as to create a harmonious and respectful learning environment.

Through interfaith dialogue, students are encouraged to understand the universal values contained in various religions, such as peace, justice, and compassion. This process creates an awareness that despite different beliefs, each individual has a moral responsibility to coexist peacefully and respectfully with each other. At SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi, this dialogue is integrated into the curriculum and extracurricular programs that aim to shape students to become open, inclusive, and able to interact with various religious groups in Indonesia's multicultural society.

The interfaith dialogue program at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi is carried out through a systematic approach in learning and developing students' character. One concrete form of this dialogue is the organization of discussions and seminars involving representatives of different religions, which aim to provide a deeper understanding of the values of each religion. Thus, students can gain an objective and in-depth picture of other beliefs, thereby reducing the potential for the emergence of negative stereotypes or prejudices.

This approach is also in line with the principle *of rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which emphasizes the importance of living in harmony and peace in the midst of differences. Through interreligious dialogue, students are taught to see differences not as a threat but as a gift that must be managed wisely (Kuntowijoyo, 2001). The program builds students' ability to dialogue with mutual respect, pay attention to communication ethics, and develop empathy for different views, which is an important part of character education in Progressive Islam.

Interfaith dialogue at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi makes a significant contribution to the development of students' character and social skills. Through this dialogue, students learn to develop good communication skills, such as active listening, understanding the perspectives of others, and expressing opinions in a polite and thoughtful manner. These skills are essential in the face of the era of globalization, where the diversity of religions, cultures, and views of life is becoming more and more evident in daily interactions.

Strengthening character at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi is an integral part of efforts to instill the values of tolerance in the educational process. Muhammadiyah, which bases its movement on *Progressive Islam*, sees character education as the key to forming human beings who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also moral and tolerant in social life. This concept emphasizes that every individual must be able to practice the values of *wasathiyah* (moderation), *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all nature), and a firm *monotheistic* attitude, so that they can face differences without compromising their beliefs or sacrificing peace.

At SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi, character strengthening is realized through various programs that integrate Islamic and national values. These values are instilled through formal and non-formal learning activities, including social skills training, religious activities, and dialogue programs between students that prioritize appreciation for diversity. This character education also aims to produce students who are committed to progressive Islamic values, such as wisdom in action, commitment to the universal good, and respect for others.

Character education at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi has been integrated into the curriculum through a thematic approach, which allows each subject to become a forum for teaching moral and ethical values. For example, Islamic religious lessons are integrated with material on the importance of respecting differences and maintaining social harmony. Teachers also have a central role in guiding students to practice the values of tolerance in daily life, both through discussions, lectures, and direct examples. This curriculum also prioritizes a practical approach, where students are invited to apply the values they learn in real situations, for example through extracurricular activities that involve interaction between students from various backgrounds. Through this process, students not only understand the concept of tolerance theoretically, but are also able to put it into practice in a relevant and contextual way. In addition, learning methods that prioritize group work and discussion between students are also applied as a way to encourage harmonious interaction and respect for different opinions.

Character strengthening at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi is also carried out through continuous spiritual coaching. Religious activities such as recitation, congregational prayers, and moral studies are routinely carried out to strengthen students' religious and moral values. This coaching aims to instill noble moral principles that underlie tolerance and mutual respect. By forming a strong spiritual foundation, students are expected to internalize values that encourage them to value differences, rather than perceive them as threats.

Religious activities are also a means to foster a sense of togetherness and solidarity between students. For example, in congregational prayer activities, students from various backgrounds participate together, creating an inclusive and harmonious environment. Through these joint activities, they learn to respect others, form a sense of empathy, and promote a universal attitude of brotherhood.

At SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi, the character of students is also formed through social and humanitarian activities. Students are involved in various activities such as social services, visits to orphanages, and assistance to communities in need. Through this activity, students are invited to understand the meaning of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which is that Islam teaches concern for fellow human beings regardless of background. These social activities also help students to see that differences are part of diversity that should be valued. In addition, hands-on experience in interacting with various community groups makes students more open and able to empathize with others. In this way, they not only learn about human values, but also develop an awareness of the importance of tolerance in social life.

In the digital era, the use of technology is an important element in education, including in efforts to instill the values of tolerance in the school environment. At SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi, technology is used as a means to introduce students to diversity and strengthen mutual respect between groups. Technology allows easy access to a wide range of information regarding diverse human, cultural, and religious values, which can help students understand and appreciate differences in an interactive and engaging way (Mubarak, 2019).

The use of digital media, such as online learning platforms, educational videos, and

interactive applications, allows students to explore material on tolerance in a global context. For example, by introducing educational content that highlights the practice of tolerance in different parts of the world, students can learn that tolerance is a universal value embraced by various societies. Access to these global sources of information helps students understand that respect for differences is not only part of Islamic teachings, but is also the foundation of a peaceful and harmonious modern society.

At SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi, the development of tolerance-based digital modules is carried out to provide relevant material for students in understanding the values of togetherness and inclusivity. These modules cover topics on religious, cultural, and social diversity, as well as ways to respond to differences with a positive attitude. With the help of this module, students can access information anytime and anywhere, making the learning process more flexible and adaptable to the learning pace of each individual.

Social media, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, are also used as a means to reinforce learning about tolerance. At SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi, students are encouraged to use social media wisely to spread positive and inspirational messages related to the values of tolerance and mutual respect. Teachers also play an active role in providing guidance on how to communicate politely on social media, as well as responding to differences with a positive attitude.

The use of social media for tolerance learning is in line with the *Progressive Islamic* approach, which supports the use of technology as a tool to spread goodness and encourage positive transformation in society. On social media, students can participate in discussions, share experiences, and provide constructive support to each other. This approach not only enriches students' understanding of tolerance, but also strengthens their communication skills in interacting with others in digital public spaces.

As part of efforts to build tolerance, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi also utilizes technology to collaborate with other schools from various backgrounds. Online information exchange programs allow students to interact with their peers from schools that have different cultural or religious backgrounds. Through these collaborative activities, students not only learn about differences but also develop an open and collaborative attitude.

Online platforms, such as Zoom or Google Meet, are used to hold cross-school discussions on topics related to tolerance, human rights, and diversity. This activity allows students to exchange views and experiences, so they can learn to respect each other despite having different beliefs or views. This collaboration is expected to form a network of friendships between students from various different backgrounds, which is an important capital in building an inclusive society in the future.

DISCUSSION

The first finding confirms that the integration of religious and general knowledge in Muhammadiyah education reflects the realization of the concept of comprehensive Islam in educational practice. This approach reflects Fazlur Rahman's (1982) integrative theory, which rejects the dichotomy between worldly and hereafter knowledge. In

practice, learning in Muhammadiyah schools balances Quran memorization with critical thinking skills and modern science, thus producing a generation that is both religious and productive. This model also addresses Al-Attas' (1991) criticism of the fragmentation of knowledge in traditional Islamic educational institutions. Thus, this integration not only creates cognitive balance but also serves as an ideological strategy in developing Muslim intellectuals capable of bridging spiritual values with scientific advancement.

Furthermore, findings regarding tolerance education indicate that the values of *wasathiyah* (moderation) and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (blessing for the universe) are translated practically into learning activities that foster social awareness. The implementation of interfaith programs, social activities, and multicultural discussions reflects the transformative learning approach outlined by Mezirow (1991), in which the learning process is directed towards changing social awareness and behavior. In the context of progressive Islamic education, this practice demonstrates the continuity between Muhammadiyah's missionary mission and its inclusive education mission. The values of moderation taught do not stop at the cognitive level but are internalized through students' collective experiences in diverse social contexts, making schools a living laboratory of tolerance.

Furthermore, the spirit of *tajdid* (renewal) in Muhammadiyah's educational innovations indicates an epistemological dynamic that adapts to changing times. Heifetz's (1994) theory of adaptive leadership is relevant in explaining how teachers transform into facilitators who guide students toward technology-based independent learning. The use of e-learning and digital media is not merely a tool but part of a renewed educational paradigm aligned with the principles of lifelong learning. This approach affirms Muhammadiyah's position as a pioneer of progressive education in the modern Islamic world—as formulated by Ahmad Dahlan, who argued that knowledge must be a means of public welfare, not merely a symbol of modernity.

Recent findings demonstrate that the use of digital technology functions not only as a communication tool but also as a medium for value formation. In this context, Ribble's (2015) theory of digital ethics education explains how digital literacy can be directed toward building moral character and social responsibility. Through online platforms, students learn to manage interactions with empathy and respect for differences, a concrete practice of the value of human brotherhood. The use of digital media in tolerance learning broadens the scope of educational *da'wah*, reaching virtual spaces as a platform for the formation of new morals contextualized to the digital era.

Overall, these four findings confirm that Muhammadiyah's educational innovations are not limited to technological aspects but penetrate ideological, spiritual, and social dimensions. The integration of curriculum, moderate learning, the spirit of *tajdid* (renewal), and digital pedagogy together form a progressive Islamic educational ecosystem that is relevant to the needs of the times without losing sight of fundamental Islamic values. Thus, the results of this study provide a theoretical contribution to the development of an integrative Islamic education model that combines spiritual intelligence, scientific rationality, and digital literacy as pillars towards a civilized society.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that the Progressive Islam approach in this institution has been successfully implemented through character building, inclusive education, interfaith dialogue, and the use of technology. The characteristics of Progressive Islam, such as the value of monotheism, the practice of the Qur'an and Sunnah, the principle of *tajdid* (renewal), the attitude of *wasathiyah* (moderation), and the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all nature), are applied in the daily life of the school. Character building also supports tolerance by strengthening noble morals and respecting diversity, while inclusive education, interfaith dialogue, and technology provide students with insight into the importance of living in harmony in the midst of diversity.

This research confirms that the application of Progressive Islam in education can be an effective solution in developing tolerance and inclusivity. The implications for Islamic education, especially in Muhammadiyah institutions, are the importance of integrating progressive Islamic values in the curriculum and daily activities to form a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also tolerant and moral. In addition, Islamic education can strengthen a multicultural approach by utilizing technology, so that students are better prepared to face differences in modern society.

The suggestion from this study is the need for continuous efforts in developing a character education module based on Progressive Islam and deeper tolerance. SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Ngawi and similar institutions are also expected to continue to collaborate with other institutions to share best practices in building an inclusive educational environment. Finally, the use of technology must be balanced with digital literacy so that students are able to use technology wisely for positive purposes and social harmonization.

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