

RATIONALISM OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE AMONG SYSTEM IN SHAPING RELIGIOUS MODERATION AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TAMANSISWA MEDAN

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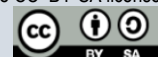
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ABSTRACT

Religious moderation has become one of the major challenges in Indonesian education amid increasing social and religious diversity. Although numerous studies have examined Islamic Religious Education (IRE) and character education separately, limited research has explored the integration of the rationalism of Islamic Religious Education with the Tamansiswa Among System as a comprehensive educational approach to fostering religious moderation. This study aims to analyze the synergy between the rationalism of Islamic Religious Education and the Among System in promoting religious moderation at Tamansiswa Junior High School Medan. The study employed a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of educational practices integrating the values of religious rationality and the Tamansiswa educational philosophy. The participants included Islamic Religious Education teachers, the school principal, students, and relevant institutional documents. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, documentation, and descriptive questionnaires, and were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the integration of rational Islamic Religious Education with the Among System is implemented through dialogic learning, contextual case discussions, reflective questioning, and teacher mentoring based on the principles of *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*, *Ing Madyo Mangun Karso*, and *Tut Wuri Handayani*. This learning model encourages students to express differing religious perspectives respectfully, engage in collaborative problem-solving, and internalize values of tolerance in everyday school interactions. The study further found that students demonstrated greater openness toward diversity, stronger attitudes of mutual respect, and a preference for resolving differences through dialogue and deliberation rather than confrontation. These findings indicate that the synergy between the rationalism of Islamic Religious Education and the Among System provides an innovative educational model for cultivating moderate, inclusive, and socially responsible religious character within multicultural school environments.

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INTRODUCTION

Rationalism in Islamic Religious Education represents an epistemological approach that positions faith and reason as complementary dimensions in understanding Islamic teachings rather than contradictory ones. Rooted in the intellectual tradition of Ibn Rushd, this perspective emphasizes that reason functions as an instrument for interpreting revelation and discovering the truth revealed by God (Ibn Rushd, 1996). Consequently, Islamic Religious Education is not merely directed toward transmitting religious doctrines but also toward cultivating reflective, critical, and contextual thinking that enables learners to respond wisely to contemporary social realities. Through such an approach, students are expected to internalize religious values while developing openness, tolerance, and intellectual responsibility in navigating religious diversity.

The emphasis on rationality in Islamic Religious Education is closely aligned with the educational philosophy of the Among System introduced by Ki Hajar Dewantara. The Among System places students' freedom, individuality, and moral development at the center of the educational process through the principles of *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*, *Ing Madya Mangun Karso*, and *Tut Wuri Handayani* (Dewantara, 1935). Rather than positioning teachers as authoritative transmitters of knowledge, this philosophy encourages educators to become facilitators, role models, and companions in students' intellectual and character development. Therefore, both rational Islamic Religious Education and the Among System share a common orientation toward developing independent, critical, and morally responsible learners, making them conceptually compatible as complementary educational approaches.

The relevance of integrating these two perspectives becomes increasingly significant in response to contemporary educational challenges. The rapid expansion of digital media has transformed the way students access religious knowledge, allowing them to encounter diverse interpretations that are not always accompanied by adequate critical understanding or reliable sources (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). As a consequence, religious learning that remains predominantly textual and teacher-centered may not sufficiently equip students to evaluate information critically or to appreciate religious diversity. This situation has reinforced the urgency of strengthening religious moderation as an educational orientation that promotes balance, dialogue, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

In this regard, Quraish Shihab (2019) argues that religious moderation is not a compromise of religious beliefs but rather an expression of mature religious understanding that balances commitment to faith with respect for diversity. Such moderation emerges through educational processes that encourage critical reflection, openness to dialogue, and responsible reasoning. From this perspective, the rationalism of Islamic Religious Education provides the epistemological foundation for nurturing reflective religious reasoning, while the Among System offers the pedagogical mechanism through which these values can be experienced and practiced in everyday learning. The interaction between these two approaches therefore has the potential to cultivate students who are intellectually mature, spiritually grounded, and socially inclusive.

This potential is particularly evident at Tamansiswa Junior High School Medan, one of the educational institutions that consistently preserves the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara while simultaneously implementing Islamic Religious Education within a multicultural school environment. Unlike many schools where the Among philosophy is primarily discussed as a historical educational legacy, SMP Tamansiswa Medan continues to incorporate its principles into classroom interactions, teacher–student relationships, and character education programs. Preliminary observations further indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers frequently employ dialogical discussions, reflective questioning, and value-based mentoring instead of relying exclusively on conventional lecturing. At the same time, the school accommodates students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, creating an authentic educational setting in which values of tolerance, dialogue, and mutual respect are continuously negotiated through everyday interactions. These empirical characteristics distinguish SMP Tamansiswa Medan from many previous research settings and make it an appropriate context for examining the relationship between rational Islamic Religious Education, the Among System, and religious moderation.

Although previous studies have examined rational approaches in Islamic Religious Education, the Among System, and religious moderation separately, only limited research has investigated how these three dimensions

interact simultaneously within actual educational practice. Existing studies generally emphasize either philosophical discussions on rationalism, pedagogical analyses of the Among System, or strategies for strengthening religious moderation, without constructing an integrated analytical framework that connects epistemological, pedagogical, and axiological dimensions. Consequently, there remains a significant research gap concerning how rational religious reasoning can be translated into humanistic educational practices that effectively foster religious moderation in schools.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in synthesizing the rationalism of Islamic Religious Education, the Among System, and religious moderation into a unified conceptual and empirical framework. Epistemologically, this study positions rationalism as a mode of religious reasoning that harmonizes revelation and intellect. Pedagogically, it revitalizes the Among System as a humanistic learning model that nurtures students' intellectual autonomy and moral responsibility. Axiologically, religious moderation is understood as the educational outcome emerging from the integration of these two dimensions. By focusing on educational practices at SMP Tamansiswa Medan, this study seeks to explain how rationality, humanistic pedagogy, and moderate religious values interact in shaping students who are tolerant, dialogical, and socially responsible within Indonesia's multicultural educational context.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore how the rationalism of Islamic Religious Education and the Among System are implemented in fostering religious moderation at Tamansiswa Junior High School Medan. A case study was selected because the research sought to examine educational practices within their natural setting, enabling an in-depth understanding of the interaction between educational philosophy, learning processes, and students' religious attitudes. SMP Tamansiswa Medan was purposively selected as the research site because it consistently implements the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara while simultaneously delivering Islamic Religious Education in a multicultural urban environment. This distinctive context provides an opportunity to examine how the values of the Among System are integrated into religious learning and contribute to the development of students' moderate religious character.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education and character education at the school. The informants consisted of the principal, who was responsible for school policy and the implementation of the Tamansiswa educational philosophy; two Islamic Religious Education teachers with more than five years of teaching experience; and twelve students from Grades VII to IX who were actively involved in religious and character education programs and represented diverse academic backgrounds and classroom experiences. In addition, institutional documents, including the school curriculum, lesson plans, character education programs, and school policy documents, were analyzed to complement the interview and observation data. The selection of these informants was intended to obtain comprehensive perspectives from policy makers, educators, and students regarding the implementation of the Among System and religious moderation in everyday educational practice.

Data collection was conducted over approximately three months through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and educational practices related to rational Islamic Religious Education, the implementation of the Among principles, and the cultivation of religious moderation. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Classroom observations focused on teacher–student interactions, dialogical learning activities, questioning strategies, value internalization, and students' responses during Islamic Religious Education lessons, as well as religious and character-building activities conducted outside the classroom. Documentary analysis included lesson plans, school regulations, educational guidelines, character education programs, and other institutional documents that reflected the implementation of the Tamansiswa philosophy within school practices.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Throughout the analysis, the researchers applied

thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to the implementation of rational Islamic Religious Education, the Among System, and the development of religious moderation. Emerging themes were continuously compared across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed, including source and method triangulation, member checking with key informants, prolonged engagement in the research setting, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail throughout the research process. These procedures ensured that the findings accurately represented participants' experiences and reflected the actual educational practices implemented at SMP Tamansiswa Medan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

This study found that the formation of religious moderation in Tamansiswa Junior High School Medan is supported by two main factors, namely the application of rationalism in Islamic religious education learning and the implementation of the Among System as the pedagogical foundation of the school. These two aspects interact with each other in forming a moderate mindset, attitude, and behavior of students in religious life.

In the learning aspect of Islamic religious education, teachers not only welcome Islamic religious education normatively, but also encourage students to understand the wisdom and rationality contained in Islamic teachings. Learning is carried out through discussion, question and answer, problem-solving, and case study methods that provide space for students to think critically and make arguments openly. Through this approach, students not only understand religious teachings as a set of doctrines, but also as values that can be understood logically and contextually.

In addition, learning Islamic religious education at Tamansiswa Junior High School Medan also contributes to the development of students' critical reasoning. Teachers provide opportunities for students to analyze various socio-religious issues that develop in society so that students are used to considering various points of view before drawing conclusions. This process encourages the growth of an open, tolerant, and not easily trapped in exclusive religious views.

On the other hand, the implementation of the Among System is a distinctive characteristic that strengthens the educational process in schools. The principles of Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso, and Tut Wuri Handayani are manifested in a humanist relationship between teachers and students. Teachers play the role of role models, motivators, and mentors who give students the freedom to develop according to their potential without losing moral and academic direction.

The implementation of the Among System also creates a democratic and dialogical learning atmosphere. Students are given a space to welcome Islamic religious education, opinions, discussions, and actively participate in the learning process. This freedom is still balanced with the cultivation of responsibility, discipline, and respect for social values. This condition supports the formation of mutual respect, tolerance, and respect for differences.

The findings of the study show that the combination of rationalism in Islamic religious education learning and the Among System in educational practice contributes to strengthening the religious moderation of students. This can be seen from the development of tolerance, respect for diversity, the ability to dialogue openly, and the tendency to resolve differences through deliberation and peaceful approaches.

Discussion

The results of the study show that rationalism in learning Islamic religious education has an important role in shaping students' attitudes of religious moderation. This finding is in line with Ibn Rushd's view that the intellect is an important instrument in understanding religious teachings. According to Ibn Rushd, reason and revelation are not in a position to contradict each other, but rather complement each other in an effort to obtain the truth. In the context of education, the integration between reason and revelation allows students to understand Islamic teachings in a more deep, critical, and contextual way.

The findings of the study also strengthen Harun Nasution's idea of the importance of rationality in Islamic education. Education that provides space for the optimal use of reason will produce individuals who are not only religious, but also open to differences and able to think objectively in dealing with various socio-religious problems. Therefore, a rational approach in learning Islamic religious education is one of the important foundations in the development of religious moderation attitudes.

On the other hand, the implementation of the Among System shows that the formation of religious moderation does not only depend on the cognitive aspect, but also on the pedagogical approach used in the educational process. The principles of the Among System developed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara place students as educational subjects who must be guided through example, mentoring, and the provision of responsible freedom. This approach creates a humanist and democratic learning environment so that students are accustomed to respecting differences and establishing harmonious social relationships.

The findings are in line with Paulo Freire's thinking about dialogical education that rejects authoritarian educational practices. Dialogical education allows students to be actively involved in the learning process, develop critical awareness, and build appreciation for diversity of views. In addition, these findings are also relevant to John Dewey's thoughts which emphasize the importance of students' experiences and active participation in the educational process.

Based on the results of the research, it can be understood that the rationalism of Islamic religious education and the among system have different but complementary functions. The rationalism of Islamic religious education serves as an epistemological foundation that forms a critical, reflective, and open mindset to diversity. Meanwhile, the Among System serves as a pedagogical foundation that creates an educational atmosphere that is humanistic, dialogical, and respects responsible freedom. The interaction of these two aspects resulted in an educational construction that was not only oriented towards the mastery of religious knowledge, but also on the formation of moderate character in social and religious life.

Thus, religious moderation in Tamansiswa Junior High School Medan can be understood as a result of the synthesis between a rational approach in Islamic religious education and the implementation of humanistic values in the Among System. The synthesis forms students who are able to integrate religious commitment with an attitude of tolerance, openness, and respect for diversity in community life.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of rationalism in Islamic Religious Education with the Among System forms a complementary educational framework for strengthening students' religious moderation at SMP Tamansiswa Medan. Rather than functioning as separate educational approaches, rational Islamic Religious Education provides an epistemological foundation that encourages students to understand religious teachings critically, reflectively, and contextually, while the Among System translates these values into humanistic educational practices through the principles of *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo*, *Ing Madyo Mangun Karso*, and *Tut Wuri Handayani*. The interaction between these two dimensions creates a learning environment that nurtures tolerance, openness to dialogue, respect for diversity, and the ability to resolve differences peacefully through deliberation.

These findings indicate that the synergy between rational Islamic Religious Education and the Among System represents an effective educational model for developing moderate, inclusive, and socially responsible religious character among students. Beyond its theoretical contribution, this study also offers practical implications for schools seeking to strengthen religious moderation through character education. Educational institutions may adopt dialogical learning strategies, reflective discussions, contextual problem-solving, and humanistic teacher-student interactions inspired by the Among philosophy to cultivate students who are intellectually critical while remaining committed to the values of tolerance and social harmony.

This study is limited to a single case study conducted at SMP Tamansiswa Medan; therefore, its findings should be understood within the specific institutional and cultural context of the school. Future research is recommended to investigate the implementation of similar educational models in different educational settings, educational levels, or

socio-cultural contexts. Comparative and mixed-method studies are also needed to examine the effectiveness of integrating rational Islamic Religious Education and the Among System in strengthening religious moderation and other character outcomes on a broader scale.

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