



Fostering Religious Tolerance in Students through Children's Spirituality (CSE) Education

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the Islam-based Children's Spirituality Education (CSE) model in forming students' religious tolerance. This research employs qualitative research incorporating literature study and interviews with numerous teachers teaching religion subject. The research results show that there are four principles of the Islamic CSE model that play a crucial role in strengthening students' religious tolerance, including; 1) respect for other people's beliefs, 2) building a logical, rational and inclusive way of thinking, 3) a spirit of seeking the truth and respecting different truths, and 4) building a spirit of religious moderation and living peacefully side by side with religious beliefs. The advantage of this model lies in its holistic and diverse approach to shaping students' spirituality and recognizing spiritual, emotional, social and cognitive dimensions as an integral part of individual development. The positive implications for Islamic Religious Education include actualizing children's potential according to the principles of Islamic spirituality, supporting the goals of spiritual and moral education, and stimulating understanding of the levels of spirituality in Islam. This model is an effective means of implementing an attitude of tolerance towards non-Muslims through an inclusive and respectful approach towards other beliefs.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengekspos model Children's Spirituality Education (CSE) berbasis Islam dalam membentuk toleransi beragama siswa. Penelitian ini berupa penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan metode library research dan wawancara terhadap guru sekolah multiagama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat empat prinsip model CSE Islami yang berperan dalam memperkuat toleransi beragama siswa meliputi; 1) penghormatan terhadap keyakinan orang lain, 2) membangun corak berpikir logis, rasional, dan inklusif, 3) semangat mencari kebenaran dan menghormati kebenaran yang berbeda, dan 4) membangun jiwa moderasi beragama dan hidup damai berdampingan dengan beragama keyakinan. Keunggulan model ini terletak pada pendekatan holistik dan beragamnya dalam membentuk spiritual siswa, dan mengakui dimensi spiritual, emosional, sosial, dan kognitif sebagai bagian integral dari perkembangan individu. Implikasi positifnya terhadap Pendidikan Agama Islam mencakup pengaktualisasian potensi anak sesuai prinsip-prinsip spiritualitas Islam, mendukung tujuan pendidikan spiritual dan moral, serta merangsang pemahaman tingkatan spiritualitas dalam Islam. Model ini menjadi sarana efektif untuk menerapkan sikap toleransi terhadap non-Muslim melalui pendekatan inklusif dan hormat terhadap keyakinan lain.

OPEN ACCESS

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:

27-12-2023

Accepted:

30-04-2024

KEYWORDS:

Children's spirituality, spiritual development, Interfaith understanding, Islamic Education, Religious Tolerance.

KATA KUNCI:

Spiritualitas anak, Perkembangan spiritual, pemahaman lintas agama, Pendidikan Islam, Toleransi Beragama

Introduction

Indonesia, as a country inhabited by a society rich in cultural and religious diversity, demands a strong spirit of tolerance in the face of differences. Tolerance is considered an important prerequisite in realizing positive social change and in implementing sustainable human rights principles (Salmon-Letelier & Russell, 2022). Although surveys conducted between 2004 and 2013 show a positive view of democracy and tolerance, there is limited study to support this view (Künkler & Lerner, 2016). In recent years, Indonesia has faced challenges in the form of increased conservatism and religious intolerance, as suggested by recent study (Wijaya Mulya & Aditomo, 2019).

According to a 2016 survey by the Wahid Foundation and the Indonesian Survey Institute, nearly 60% of 1,520 adult respondents expressed hatred towards non-Muslims, Chinese and communist groups, among others. More than 90% reject these minority groups from holding government positions. 82.4% did not want them as neighbors. Even 7.7% were willing to commit violent acts against them (Hakim, 2016). In another survey toward 1,626 high school students, 60% of them were ready to take part in a religious war (*jihad*), 10% supported the bombings in Jakarta in 2016, and 6% supported ISIS. This acts of intolerance poses a serious challenge to religious freedom in Indonesia (Fajriati, 2017). Between 2019 and 2023 there were dozens of cases of intolerance, and 30 cases occurred in 2023 (Ridwansyah, 2023). SETARA Institute noted that during the beginning of 2023 alone there were rampant violations of religious freedom in various regions (Aji, 2023; Saputra, 2023).

The practice of intolerance also involves school students. SETARA Institute noted that the number of intolerant students increased from 2.4% in 2016 to 5.0% in 2023. Meanwhile, those exposed to extremism increased from 0.3% in 2016 to 0.6% in 2023 (Saputra, 2023). Of course, this case of intolerance is a serious threat for the diverse Indonesia and needs to be resolved immediately (Muhaemin et al., 2023; Supriyanto & Wahyudi, 2017). Another concern is intra- and inter-religious intolerance due to the mono-religious education model in schools (Fitriani, 2023). The adverse consequences are that students who experience religious discrimination will feel marginalized, find it difficult to focus on learning, and inhibit a friendly learning environment for all students (Hanif et al., 2020). Student intolerance is thought to be influenced by their socio-religious environment (Alabdulhadi, 2019; Laksana & Wood, 2019). Also the factor of promoting intolerance at the global level (Ciftci et al., 2016; Haynes, 2002; Hoon, 2016). Haryani (Haryani, 2020) pointed out the cause of religious intolerance due to reading factors from the internet.

The existence of religious education for students at schools has a strategic position and role (Firmansyah et al., 2023). Schools must strengthen human rights education and religious tolerance as is the case in many countries (Adman & Gschwind, 2023; Alabdulhadi, 2019; Fitriani, 2023; Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Naim et al., 2022; Salmon-Letelier & Russell, 2022; Suprpto, 2020; Vertelyte & Staunæs, 2021). Schools also need to promote inclusive religious education, interfaith dialogue, collaboration and understanding of differences (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Suprpto, 2020). This includes understanding the psychology and spirituality of the students themselves (Ganjvar, 2019; Marzuki & Fikri, 2022), which is closely related to religion and faith traditions, or the notion of religiosity (Bellous, 2019; Eaude, 2019; Robinson, 1969; Rossiter, 2011). As for Muslim students, it is necessary to provide spiritual education from an early age through Islamic values (Umar et al., 2021), which are sourced from the Qur'an and hadith (Ganjvar, 2019). Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (2018) showed that religious practices and habits can bring better well-being and health to adolescents.

The discovery of spiritual intelligence brought to public attention the importance of Children's Spiritual Education (CSE) (Ganjvar, 2019). Spiritual education is fundamental to students' cognitive, moral, and emotional development (Vaughan, 2002). Teachers should not be overburdened with tasks that can reduce their interaction or care with students (Adams, 2017). Spiritual education is rich in the search for meaning, transcendence, wholeness and life purpose (Bosacki & Ota, 2000; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2003; Watson, 2017; Wong, 2006). In addition, the *Spiritual Educational Programme* (SEP) has been recognized as a social-emotional learning model for gifted children (Pandya, 2021), which is then reinforced by the influence of the strong relationship between spiritual well-being and emotional intelligence on tolerance attitudes, namely the higher the level of spiritual well-being and emotional intelligence of an adolescent, the better his tolerance attitude (Beauvais et al., 2014; Tumanggor & Mularsih, 2020). The implementation of religious moderation education for students is in the form of strengthening faith, morals, and which is integrated with the value of tolerance through the learning and habit-making process (Umar et al., 2021). The theory of equality-oriented interfaith learning and development in education is the development of pluralistic attitudes and appreciative knowledge of religious and non-religious traditions (Mayhew & Rockenbach, 2021; Salim, 2022).

For Indonesia, the implementation of spiritual education is easier as it has successfully integrated the secular curriculum into religious schools (Künkler & Lerner, 2016) and compared to the internalization of multicultural values to students such as democracy, mutual respect, togetherness, cooperation, helping, justice, equality and other positive character values (Pransiska, 2020). The government itself has protected the rights of religious minority students to receive religious education from teachers who are of the same religion as they are (Hayadin, 2020; Marzuki & Fikri, 2022). For further development, diverse approaches and collaboration between researchers and practitioners are required (Adams, 2017; Adams et al., 2016).

Apart from the findings above, the author believes that one of the most essential functions of CSE is that teachers can teach and present models of religious tolerance behavior for students from childhood to adolescence. Religious teachers from Cikal School Bandung, Cikal Serpong School, and Bodhi Sinar Terang School Bandung elementary schools, have implemented spiritual education for their students in the teaching and coaching process. These schools are whose students have a level of heterogeneity in terms of religion, such as Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. Therefore, it is hoped that the data from interviews with the three teachers from these schools will show the actualization of the CSE model in elementary school education in Indonesia. On the other hand, increasing tolerance among students is an important but understudied aspect of human rights education (Salmon-Letelier & Russell, 2022). Therefore, this research aims to explain a CSE model taken from Islamic teachings which is considered capable of strengthening students' religious tolerance behavior from an Islamic perspective.

Methods

This research aims to develop the concept of an Islamic-based CSE model and its influence on students' religious tolerance. This research is qualitative study, with a library research approach. The main source of data is the verses of the Qur'an translated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the latest revision edition (2019). Also the book of tafseer *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī Fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* (al-Alusi, 2010), the hadith books *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* (Bukhārī, 1997e, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c), *Iḥyā' 'Ulūmu al-Ddīn* (al-Ghazālī, 1898), *Nahju al-*

Balāghah (ar-Razi, 2003), and *Guraru al-Hikam wa Duraru al-Kalim* (al-Amudi, 2012). Secondary data sources are several psychology and Islamic books, namely *The Spirit of the Child* (Hay & Nye, 2006), *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations* (Nasr, 1987), *Children as Philosophers: Learning through Enquiry and Dialogue in the Primary Classroom* (Haynes, 2002), *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (Gardner, 2000), plus several scopus and google scholar indexed journal articles on spiritual intelligence and religious spirituality (Beauvais et al., 2014; Hay et al., 2006; Vaughan, 2002), spiritual education (Adams, 2009; Bellous, 2019; Bolandhematan, 2019; Noaparast, 2013; Pandya, 2021; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2003; Wong, 2006), CSE (Adams, 2017; Adams et al., 2016; Benson et al., 2003; Bosacki & Ota, 2000; Boyatzis, 2009; Ganjvar, 2019; Garbarino & Bedard, 1996; Pandya, 2021; Robinson, 1969; Rossiter, 2011; Watson, 2017), and religiosity and religious tolerance (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Muhaemin et al., 2023; Rahmat et al., 2019; Supriyanto & Wahyudi, 2017; Yahya & Rahmat, 2021).

Data analysis employed content analysis method (Muhadjir, 2000) by firstly collecting information on CSE models from primary sources. The data collection strategy included entering keywords according to the specified indicators contained in the points of CSE model ideas reviewed through searching for the main meaning contained in one or more verses of the Qur'an, Bukhari hadith books, books of scholars, books of Islamic education thinkers, and previous research articles related to spiritual education and religious tolerance. Secondly, grouping the above data logically based on smaller themes under the rubric of research focus, namely the definition and origin of CSE, Islamic spiritual models, and the influence of CSE on tolerance attitudes which include respect for other people's beliefs, building logical, rational, and inclusive thinking patterns, the spirit of seeking truth and respecting different truths, and building a spirit of religious moderation and peaceful coexistence with religious beliefs. Third, analyzing the meaning contained in the entire literature from primary and secondary sources. In this case, the author chooses to use inductive and comparative thinking methods. Fourth, conducting a comparative analysis to dialogue the main ideas contained in Islamic teaching sources with the concept of spiritual education that intersects with certain themes. The concept will be interpreted into a CSE model so that an Islamic-based CSE model can be found that focuses on its influence on students' religious tolerance.

Field data was obtained through interviews with religious teachers from three multi-religious schools. The five questions asked were to explore the principles of the CSE model that had been implemented by teachers and schools. First, what concrete steps are being taken to ensure that all children feel valued and accepted, regardless of their religion or beliefs? Second, are there any special methods or strategies that teachers apply to shape children's thinking patterns by the values of logical, rational, and inclusive thinking? Third, how do teachers integrate these values in learning so that children can seek their truth and also respect the truth of others who may be different from them? Fourth, are there special programs or school activities that support the formation of children's attitudes of tolerance and respect for differences in beliefs? Fifth, are there any special adjustments made so that religious learning remains relevant and in line with the values of inclusiveness and respect for differences in beliefs? The data obtained was then analyzed in depth and elaborated together with the results of the literature findings.

Results and Discussion

The Origins of CSE and Its Definition

Spirituality refers to the inner life of children and adolescents as the cradle of meaning construction (Garbarino & Bedard, 1996). In other words, spiritual development and experiences in the age group of children and adolescents are the focus of the study. This definition highlights spirituality as the place where the meaning of life is built or constructed. The use of the word "construction" emphasizes that spiritual meaning is not static, but is constructed and evolves. This definition is considered acceptable as it has a specific focus on children and adolescents and emphasizes the developmental aspects and construction process in their spiritual experiences. (Noaparast, 2013).

Initially, the discussion on children's spirituality began in the UK and is currently a topic that has received widespread attention in various countries around the world (Hay & Nye, 2006). This discussion appeared officially in the 1994 UK Education Act, which specifically refers to Christian spirituality (Adams, 2009). This legislation stipulates that the development of spirituality should be an integral part of children's formal education.

Although in the law the term spiritual is more comprehensive than religion, in practice spiritual development is often associated with religion, especially Christianity (Adams, 2009). In the late 1980s, the UK government passed the Education Reform Act 1988 which required schools to provide spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development for children. In response to this objective, in 1992, *The Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills* (Ofsted) was established. Its main task is to evaluate the spiritual development of students in schools (Adams, 2009; White, 1994).

In the domain of education, according to Ofsted, spiritual development encompasses the non-physical aspects/elements of human beings that continue to exist after death such as identity, self-esteem, personal insight, usefulness, and ideas. In the context of students, spiritual development is also associated with the development of the spirit or soul and is even identified as personality or character development (Adams, 2009; White, 1994). Conceptually, spirituality is not limited to the realm of religion alone but touches a different and broader realm than religion. Therefore, opportunities for children's spiritual development should be accessed in the curriculum, not just limited to religious subjects or worship activities in general (Ganjvar, 2019). Spiritual development is thus universal and open to all individuals, independent of religious preference or choice of faith.

Delving deeper, Search Institute Scholars define spiritual development as growth in intrinsic capacities aimed at realizing self-transcendence, i.e. the transformation of the self from all forms of dependence, craving, and enslavement to irrational passions, to a productive self-orientation shaped either through religious or other practices (Benson et al., 2003). This definition recognizes spirituality as a natural inclination, in keeping with the so-called biological argument (Hay et al., 2006). In addition, this definition views spirituality as something that is socialized and shaped by various experiences both from within and outside the religious context.

While the above definitions provide a broader view of spirituality, a review of the literature shows that there is no comprehensive and specialized definition of the concept of CSE. The author assumes that the divergent views on the concept of spirituality and its relationship with religion may be one of the main factors in the gap in understanding spiritual and ethical development. These diverse views reflect the complexity and diversity of notions of spirituality in society (Ganjvar, 2019).

Islamic Spiritual Model and CSE

Human nature can understand and feel the existence of God naturally (Rassool, 2023). Likewise, Islamic spirituality can be defined as an effort to know, love and obey God through the ways revealed in the Qur'an and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Nasr, 1987). Islamic spirituality emphasizes the need to maintain the integrity of the fitrah so that humans can get closer to God without barriers caused by sin and negligence. By understanding and nurturing this purely innate nature, Muslim individual is expected to achieve spiritual closeness to God and live by the teachings of Islam.

Islamic spirituality is not homogeneous but has various levels (al-Alusi, 2010). The highest level is a direct relationship with God, which involves increased awareness, love, and obedience to Him. On the other hand, the lowest level of spirituality includes morals towards others, such as respect for humanity. This lowest level can also be found in some people who do not have religious beliefs (atheists), which are related to human values and philanthropy (Ganjvar, 2019). Thus, it is important to respect fellow human beings, including those with different beliefs or worldviews (Suprpto, 2020).

The Qur'an places special emphasis on the need to respect non-Muslims and the prohibition of cruelty towards kafir zimmi, i.e. non-Muslims who live in Islamic countries and are protected by law. So in principle, despite not adhering to religious beliefs, humans still have the potential to experience spirituality through aspects of humanity and care for others.

"Allah does not forbid you to do good and to be just to those who do not fight you in matters of religion and do not expel you from your homes. Indeed, Allah loves those who are just" (Q.S. Al-Mumtahanah [60]: 8).

Shia Muslims also believe in a similar principle. It refers to the contents of a letter from Imam Ali related to the rule of law delivered to the Governor of Egypt, Mālik al-Aṣṭār, saying: "You should treat the people with care and compassion based on these two things: first, they are brothers in faith; second, they are human beings created by the same God." (ar-Razi, 2003, p. 247).

In spiritual education, teachers must pay attention to the portion of the transmission and the age construct of students in building character, so that they can choose the right learning models and strategies (Firmansyah et al., 2023). The Islamic spiritual education model emphasizes the importance of developing the primordial and spiritual aspects of the child, called CSE (Ganjvar, 2019). CSE highlights the central role of an educator who is functional, competent, and morally committed, as well as experienced in the field of spirituality (Marzuki & Fikri, 2022). This spirituality of the teacher or *Mu'allim* is a factor that significantly and directly affects the performance of the teacher himself or herself (Imron & Warsah, 2019). Even Al-Ghazali called the teacher a role model, guide, and instructor of morality for his students (Bolandhematan, 2019). The most important action to take about a child's spiritual education is to keep the child's nature on the right path of development (Khomeini, 2006).

A *Mu'allim* is not limited to teaching religious knowledge in schools alone, but also includes mastery of the spiritual, intellectual, personal, and social dimensions, thus making the status of *Mu'allim* prophetically, like the role of the Prophet Muhammad who was not only a family and school educator, but also a community transformer (Riyadi H.S, 2019). The Qur'an describes a model of spiritual perfection in the Prophet that reflects the moral and spiritual values desired in Islamic education. As Allah says in the following two verses.

"Surely you (Muhammad) are of excellent character" (Q.S. Al-Qalam [68]: 4).

"It is He who sent a Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) to an illiterate people from among themselves, who recited to them His verses, purified them, and taught them the Book (Qur'an) and Wisdom (Sunnah), though before that they were in manifest error" (Q.S. Al-Jumu'ah [62]:2).

Therefore, in spiritual upbringing children are required to create this characteristic in themselves by taking the prophets and spiritually perfect human beings as their models.

Principles of the Islamic CSE Model on Students' Religious Tolerance Attitudes

The analysis of these principles is carried out using the potential of knowledge (epistemic) and practical (applied) approaches contained in a framework or concept called CSE. This section will discuss concrete-applicative tips related to moral principles in strengthening students' religious tolerance through the CSE concept used as the basis for analysis.

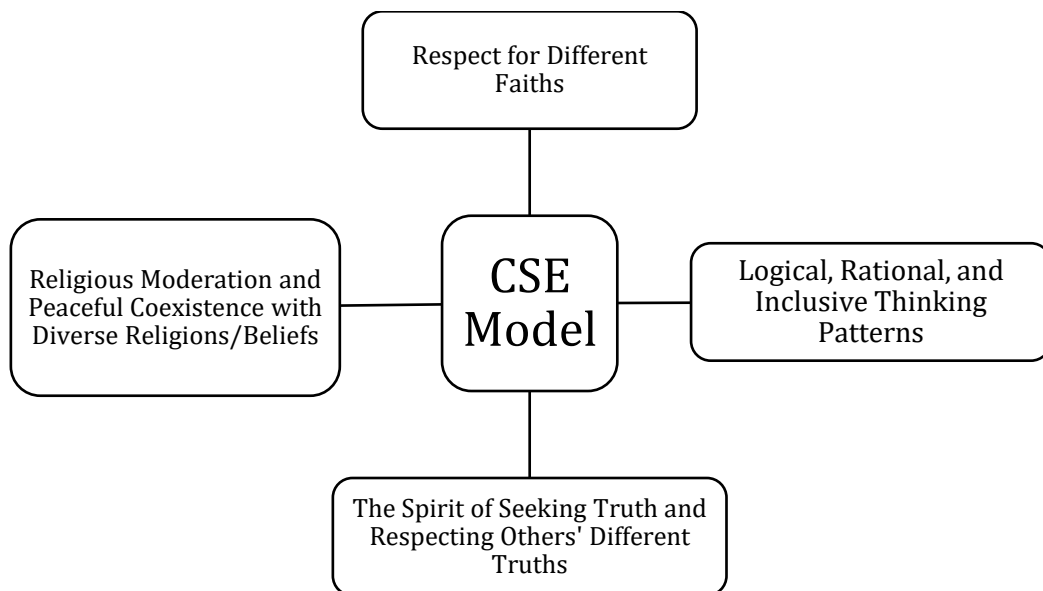


Figure 1. CSE Model in Building Tolerance Attitude

CSE Emphasizes Respect for Different Beliefs

Interviewee 1 emphasized the introduction of universal values such as compassion, empathy, and respect for differences in spiritual education. The inclusive approach used is to introduce various spiritual and religious traditions without advocating one particular belief. This approach is by the concept of religious pluralism which respects diversity of beliefs and cultures. By introducing inspiring stories from various cultures and having open discussions, children can understand and appreciate differences in beliefs. He mentioned:

"In spiritual education, I focus on values that are universal such as compassion, empathy, and appreciation of diversity. Employing an inclusive approach, which involves introducing various spiritual and religious traditions without advocating for any particular belief, such as introducing inspirational stories from different cultures, engaging in open

discussions, and learning together about differences in beliefs". (Interviewee 1, Wednesday, April 24, 2024)

Meanwhile, interviewee 2 explained that at Cikal School, every religious program is presented according to each student's beliefs, but with a contextual approach. This allows students to discuss religious understanding and relate it to real-life situations around them. This approach allows children to understand religion in the context of everyday life, thereby enriching their learning experience. He said:

"The learning process at Cikal School, which includes every religious program according to the students' beliefs, be it Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, or Catholicism, is conducted with a contextual approach. In this regard, students are encouraged to discuss religious understanding and relate it to various real-life conditions around them. In the daily practice at Sekolah Cikal, the atmosphere of learning and worship is well-created to represent real-life Indonesia: a multicultural country of diverse cultures, races, and religions. Cikal does not categorize itself as a religious school because it aims for life at Cikal, including its teaching-learning process and the interactions built within it, to resemble real life as much as possible. In real life, we all live together, despite different religions, opinions, or beliefs. At Cikal, children from an early age learn to live in this diversity." (Interviewee 2, Tuesday, April 23, 2024)

Interviewee 3 highlighted the importance of tolerance between teachers as role models for children. Through open discussions in the home room, children are given the understanding that inclusive and tolerant attitudes are very important in multicultural life. Learning materials that emphasize the value of tolerance are also included in the curriculum, and evaluations are carried out through collaborative events across religions. This approach emphasizes the importance of real practice in fostering attitudes of tolerance and inclusiveness.

"Concrete steps might involve examining whether the teachers respect and tolerate each other before even reaching the children. Alhamdulillah, in this school, the Religious Team, despite their different religions, collaborate well both in meetings and in conducting activities. This serves as a great example for the children. Secondly, in class, aside from Religious studies, there's usually a homeroom session, typically at the beginning before school starts. For 40 minutes, children are made aware that inclusivity is crucial; we undoubtedly differ from those around us, be it in character, appearance, body, family background, or religion, so we must learn to respect each other. If any children violate agreements, we always mediate, for instance, in homeroom or directly through discussions with their religion teacher, seeking solutions together. Fourthly, this is supported by learning objectives that encompass tolerance towards fellow humans. Usually, the summative or final exams are not multiple choice or essays, but we hold events like the White Festival, which combines all religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Alhamdulillah, in ensuring these steps, the religion teachers also align with the school's values, which include 14 principles such as being skillful and effective thinkers, principle-intelligent, caring, and open-minded. So, before delving into the material, children cannot immediately be presented with dictates, like the obligation to pray five times a day, let alone memorization. They must first understand the reasons behind it, with questions like 'Why do I pray? What benefit does it bring to my life?' So, we must first address the children's questions before moving on to religious texts and prayer procedures; hence, the method is inquiry-based." (Interviewee 3, Wednesday, April 24, 2024)

An understanding of the rights of peers can be socialized to children from the start of learning. This principle is enshrined in *The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* (1989) particularly Article 12, which emphasizes the need to prepare children to develop

a sense of responsibility in a society that embraces values of understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship across ethnic groups, nations, religions and cultures. Likewise, CSE recognizes the rights of fellow human beings and respects different beliefs. This principle is a factor that influences the improvement of children's skills, especially in religious tolerance.

According to the 1945 Constitution Article 29 Paragraphs 1 and 2 on the right to freedom of religion for every citizen (UUD, 1945). Every person, regardless of his or her religious orientation, has the right to question his or her faith and the faith of others. Likewise, Islam encourages individuals to ask questions to those with knowledge.

"So, if you do not know, ask those who know (i.e., those who know the prophets and the books)." (Q.S. An-Nahl [16]: 43; Q.S. Al-Anbiya [21]: 7).

Thus, CSE focuses not only on verbal expression of emotions, ideas, and beliefs but also on forming the basis of talking about experiences and assessing the opinions of their peers. They can learn to express emotions according to their religious point of view confidently so that others can understand their beliefs and ask questions. Moreover, in a controlled forum, children are taught to evaluate and doubt their thoughts and beliefs, while respecting the right of their interlocutors to do the same. To enhance children's ability to interact with people of other faiths, they are encouraged to be actively involved in any conversations that involve other people's beliefs. This can play an important role in the development of one's religious values, spirituality, and worldview (Mayhew & Rockenbach, 2021).

Children need to understand how to respond to the ideas and beliefs of their peers, especially those from religious minorities while maintaining respect and politeness (Marzuki & Fikri, 2022). At the very least, they should learn not to denigrate and insult different faiths, but to appreciate and tolerate each other's religious traditions and narratives, even non-religious ones (Mayhew & Rockenbach, 2021; Suprpto, 2020). The aim is that children need to feel that their ideas, experiences, and beliefs are valued. This is urgent because children need acceptance from their surrounding environment (Haynes, 2002).

Giving respect to oneself and others is one of the student attitudes expected from CSE. Although there is ambiguity regarding the purpose of education in society, the majority of thinkers and scholars in the field of education indicate that respect is a value that is considered important and is expected to be formed through a good educational process. Sir Mark Oliphant, a nuclear physicist, argues that the meaningfulness of one's knowledge lies in its ability to increase respect and consideration for others (Jackson, 1999). Likewise, Howard Gardner, in the context of children's education in the 21st century, mentions "humility" as an important value (Gardner, 2000).

While solidarity and respect are common teachings found in many religions and some international treaties, it can be claimed that Islam shows stronger support for religious freedom for religious minorities and recognizes social and individual dignity and rights (Ganjvar, 2019). Islam recognizes the natural right to life for religious minorities, including followers of other religions and denominations within Islamic societies. Such a principle is in line with Quranic teachings and prophetic traditions, as long as there is no threat or trouble posed/created by them against Islam and Muslims, and no conspiracy or war is planned against them.

"Allah does not forbid you to do good and to be just to those who do not fight you in matters of religion nor drive you from your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who are just. Allah only forbids you to be friends with those who fight you in religion, expel you from

your homeland, and assist (others) in expelling you. Whoever takes them as friends, they are the wrongdoers." (Q.S. Al-Mumtahanah [60]: 8-9)

CSE Builds Logical, Rational, and Inclusive Thinking Patterns

Interviewee 1 emphasized the importance of combining spirituality learning with the development of critical and rational thinking skills. The strategy is to use case studies that challenge critical thinking and engage students in activities that encourage logical and rational thinking. Through activities such as religious activities of other religions or commemorating religious days of other religions, students are invited to think critically about spiritual values that emerge in the context of everyday life. This approach allows students to develop critical thinking skills while still deepening their understanding of spirituality. He said:

"That is by combining spiritual learning with the development of critical and rational thinking skills. The strategy used involves presenting challenging case studies that stimulate critical thinking and engaging students in activities that encourage logical and rational thought. Such activities may include observing the practices of other religions or commemorating the religious holidays of other faiths." (Interviewee 1, Wednesday, April 24, 2024)

Interviewee 2 highlighted the importance of a deep reflection process in learning. In this process, students not only understand the theory but also carry out in-depth reflection, which helps them understand the essence and open their minds to receiving information. This approach emphasizes developing a deeper and more inclusive understanding of spirituality through personal reflection that allows students to relate theoretical concepts to their personal experiences and values. He mentioned:

"In the learning process, students not only grasp theories but also engage in deep reflection, leading them to understand the essence and maintain an open mind in receiving information." (Interviewee 2, Tuesday, April 23, 2024)

Interviewee 3 emphasized developing critical thinking skills through school values which include full and effective thinking skills, intelligent principles, and open-minded caring. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the benefits of worship through an inquiry process, where students are invited to ask questions, look for answers, and reflect on the meaning of worship without being directly given arguments. Teachers also listen to students' concerns before providing arguments, so that students feel heard and appreciated in the learning process. This approach prioritizes the development of critical and inclusive thinking through open dialogue and discussion.

"To deal with multicultural, inclusive, and logical children, we need several activities within 80 minutes, such as discussions, games, grouping, and creating various puzzles. Then, children are provided with a platform to express their opinions through technology or manually, like on paper. Finally, it concludes with reflection." (Interviewee 3, Wednesday, April 24, 2024)

The main aspect of CSE is to optimize students' intellect in understanding a belief. Another aspect is to keep students within the scope of probability and uncertainty. Thus, CSE functions to foster children to recognize freedom of thought and action, as stated, "The child shall have the right to freedom of expression" (CRC, 1989, p. 4 Article 13. Paragraph 1). Conversely, a child is considered to have committed social deviance when he or she behaves in a manner that does not take into consideration the judgment and general existence of others around him or her (Government Regulation No. 78 of 2021 concerning Special Protection for Children, 2021 Article 1 paragraph 23).

Not only is freedom of thought and expression allowed, it is sometimes required from a Qur'anic perspective. Mortazza Motahari (cited by Ganjvar, 2019) said that this indicator is the distinguishing factor of Islam compared to other religions. Islam has guided everyone towards the truth through a logical, rational, and open approach to its opponents.

"They (Jews and Christians) say, "No one will enter Paradise except a Jew or a Christian." That is (only) their wishful thinking. Say (Prophet Muhammad), "Show me proof of your righteousness if you are the true ones." (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 111).

In the CSE Model, educators need to create situations where religious issues that play a role in children's spiritual development can be addressed efficiently. This approach encourages children to express and evaluate their emotions and feelings, listen to the beliefs of others, and seek solutions without fear or restriction. The teacher's task is not limited to imparting knowledge but involves a sense of responsibility for the child's full development, including personality, character, decision-making ability, and positive behavior (Alavi, 2008). In addition, children are also encouraged to think logically and critically to freely express their thoughts and beliefs with reasons and evidence. The application of methods that focus on a primordial sense of truth-seeking is expected to pave the way for the creation of a spirit of neutrality in children. Children are encouraged to discuss a question from multiple perspectives to collaborate and think interactively to make the question clear, not to reach an agreement with each other.

However, the demand for truth-seeking does not mean seeking resolution and unification of opinion; disagreement and dissent are natural and expected in these sessions (Haynes, 2002). This is reflected in Surah Al-Kafirun [109] verses 1-6.

"Say (Prophet Muhammad), "O disbelievers. I will not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor have I ever been a worshipper of what you worship. Neither have you ever been a worshipper of what I worship. For you your religion and for me my religion" (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019).

Some scholars of childhood education believe that teachers should not only teach children to think critically and logically but also instill a spirit of tolerance and harmonization. This is so that they can analyze other people's beliefs with an open mind, giving a fair assessment of adherents of other religions, while remaining realistic. Jonathan Glover (2000) asserts that moral education for children aims to give them the ability to think critically and rationally, foster a spirit of neutrality and tolerance, and increase their sensitivity to unclear and false ideologies. In his research on human atrocities in the twentieth century, Glover states that the rise of despotism, torture, and crimes against humanity arose largely from a fanatical group of people (Glover, 2000).

In addition, freedom of belief and expression, which is recognized by all citizens, should not be exercised arbitrarily but must be followed by clear procedures as has been clearly explained in the Qur'an. For example, the prohibition of insulting the sanctity of others (ar-Razi, 2003; Q.S. Al-An'am [6]: 108), the prohibition of slandering someone (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 191 & 217), the prohibition of revealing other people's disgrace and backbiting (Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]: 12; Q.S. An-Nisa [4]: 83), and the prohibition of conspiracy and backbiting, and the prohibition of conspiracy and treachery (Q.S. Al-Maidah [5]: 2; Q.S. Al-Anfal [8]: 27). These verses are some of the limits and rules of freedom that must be observed in CSE.

CSE Emphasises the Spirit of Seeking the Truth and Respecting the Different Truths of Others

The approaches of the three speakers in emphasizing the spirit of seeking the truth and respecting the truths of other people who are different vary greatly. Interviewee 1 emphasized the importance of providing space for students to explore big questions about the meaning of life and universal values through open discussions about various perspectives, with the understanding that truth is relative. He stated:

"I encourage the spirit of seeking truth by urging students to explore big questions about the meaning of life and universal values. I provide space for students and open discussions about various perspectives. It's important for teachers to teach students that truth is relative and can be accessed through various paths." (Interviewee 1, Wednesday, April 24, 2024)

Interviewee 2 highlighted the importance of building tolerance through experiencing diversity in the community, which trains sensitivity to understand, respect, and agree on ethical values in a broader context. He noted:

"At Cikal, in every learning process, each student will choose challenges and attempt the most suitable solutions. If one approach is deemed inadequate, there is always an opportunity to try another problem-solving method. Additionally, at Cikal, to build tolerance without losing one's identity, there is no other way but to ensure diversity within a community. This diversity will continually train the sensitivity of community members, including parents, students, teachers, and the Cikal team, to understand, respect, and agree on what is right or wrong in the context of ethics and its broader implications." (Interviewee 2, Tuesday, April 23, 2024)

Meanwhile, interviewee 3 provided a concrete example of a learning process that involved students' understanding of differences in beliefs, with the teacher as a mediator who facilitated understanding and tolerance through discussion and reflection on various variations in students' responses to complex situations. From these three approaches, it can be seen that spirituality education not only teaches universal values but also develops students' abilities to explore, understand, and appreciate different truths in various life contexts. He mentioned:

"Then, in integrating values into learning children are willing to seek truth on their own and also able to respect the truth of others. Based on my experiences, last year I provided a worksheet about halal food and there was a question 'What is my attitude if my Christian friend or someone of a different religion brings non-halal food?' For example, like pork to school, 'What should I do?' Alhamdulillah, most students, maybe out of 25 students, 23 said: 'I will respect it, what is forbidden for me is not necessarily forbidden for him,' 'I will invite him to eat together but I will not taste it.' However, there was 1 out of 25 students who couldn't tolerate it and said, 'I will get angry because it's forbidden meat.' A few students were confused about why they should pray and always felt lazy. The teacher had to handle them personally and use English. Some students were also not serious about religion; a student even wanted to convert to religion. The teacher provided an understanding that before you are sure you want to convert, the requirement is that you must fully understand your current religion, if you still want to convert, it is only then allowed. This is to ensure that students find stability in their religious beliefs. Some students also tried to test the teacher's understanding, by questioning the existence of God. Here, the teacher must be firm in faith that God exists." (Interviewee 3, Wednesday, April 24, 2024)

Another constituent of the Islamic CSE Model that plays an important role in improving students' religious tolerance is the understanding that religiosity is not absolute as "having the truth", but rather as a "constant search for the truth". In other

words, truth is not exclusive to religious individuals but is a desire for those who are non-religious as well. A true believer is likened to a person who thirsts for knowledge and continues to explore the truth, with the determination to get closer to the Truth.

Some examples of Islamic teachings on the principle of "truth-seeking" include what Imam Ali said in the book *Guraru al-Hikām wa Duraru al-Kalim* (al-Amudi, 2012). First, a learner must have persistence in seeking truth and knowledge, never give up, and try to be objective in assessing what he has found as truth. Second, believing in the results of the search for truth as a gift from Allah which then brings blessings in life in this world and the hereafter. Third, believing that true wisdom lies with those who have high determination and enthusiasm to seek truth and knowledge.

According to the Quran, individuals who achieve spiritual enlightenment are those who do not claim to have the absolute truth remain open to the views of others, and follow the teachings that best serve their minds.

"... then, convey the glad tidings to My servants. (Those who listen to words and follow what is best among them. They are the ones whom Allah has guided and they are the *ululalbab* (people of sound mind)." (Q.S. Az-Zumar [39]: 17-18).

This epistemological principle needs to be considered so that students do not consider themselves as the exclusive owners of truth based on a particular religion. In essence, this principle aims to prevent students from patronizing adherents of other religions but to consider them as truth-seekers like themselves. In instilling this principle, students need guidance and assistance from someone more mature and experienced. This is also similar to generating significant inter-religious understanding, which requires combining an understanding of interpersonal relationships with a deeper analysis of the theological and philosophical aspects of the religions (Salim, 2022).

Looking deeper, in CSE, students also learn to adhere to the principle of equality in interacting with people who are not of the same religion. In addition, students are also trained to avoid acts of superiority, humiliation, and violence under the pretext that they are the owners of the truth to the exclusion of others. Education is therefore a spiritual journey through which we learn to be open to the Truth, regardless of its essence and purpose.

CSE Building Religious Moderation and Peaceful Coexistence with Diverse Religions/Beliefs

Discussions about developing religious moderation and living peacefully side by side with various religions or beliefs showed diverse approaches from the three speakers. Interviewee 1 emphasized that respect for differences in religion or belief has been built since students entered school, both from family influence and special programs at school that promote religious moderation and tolerance. They undertake visits to different places of worship and collaborative projects to encourage cooperation between students from diverse religious backgrounds. He reported:

"Actually, the aspect of respecting beliefs or religious differences in my school is shaped by the students themselves before they enter the school, through their respective families, because on average students at the school have different religions or beliefs in their homes. Then at school, I provide learning about respecting other beliefs or faiths, and the school also has a dedicated program to promote religious moderation and tolerance, such as visits to different places of worship and collaborative projects that encourage cooperation among students from diverse religious backgrounds. We also integrate values of tolerance and

appreciation for differences into the curriculum and daily activities." (Interviewee 1, Wednesday, April 24, 2024)

Interviewee 2 explained the approach through the application of the "Cikal 5 stars competencies" which emphasizes personal development and holistically includes spiritual, emotional, and moral aspects. He said:

"By implementing the 5-star competencies, namely: Self-regulated learner emotionally, spiritually, morally, rich, Skillful, and effective thinker." (Interviewee 2, Tuesday, April 23, 2024)

Meanwhile, interviewee 3 gave examples of concrete activities such as festivals, concerts, and religious rituals that involve all students, regardless of their religion or beliefs. From these three approaches, it appears that the development of religious moderation and peaceful coexistence with various religions or beliefs involves a combination of family influence, special programs in schools, and activities that involve the active participation of all students in an inclusive and supportive environment. He noted:

"The activities together include the White Festival of all religions, which involves collaboration in music band performances, bazaars, exhibitions, and others. Secondly, organizing a White Concert for all religions as a concert to welcome Ramadan. Then, exchanging greetings on each religion's respective holidays. And there's always the Friday prayer activity." (Interviewee 3, Wednesday, April 24, 2024)

Teaching moderation is another centerpiece of the CSE model as spirituality has always been associated with the dangers of extremism and negligence in the domains of belief and morality (Ganjvar, 2019). Simply put, moderation means fairness, i.e. putting everything in its place (ar-Razi, 2003). This principle of moderation is part of the concept of virtue in the domain of Islamic ethics which refers to the term *Tawasut*, which is the middle between extremism and negligence and the balance between the internal aspects of the soul such as reason, imagination, passion, and anger (al-Ghazali, 1995).

To provide a foundation for the flourishing of children's primordial potentials, Islam teaches the need to pay sufficient attention to the preservation of moderation and avoid extremism and negligence. If too much attention is paid to some of the child's potentials and talents, while neglecting others, it may cause the educational mechanism to slip from the path of moderation, trapping the child in extremism and negligence.

Al-Amudi (2012) mentioned several examples of Islamic teachings taught by Imam Ali regarding the principle of moderation or justice that plays an effective role in CSE. Firstly, treating others as we would like to be treated by them. Second, treating those who have oppressed us with the spirit of justice and honesty. Third, responding to differences with the principles of justice and honesty and trying to understand each other. Fourth, whoever treats others in the spirit of justice will be treated fairly as well.

CSE's encouragement of these teachings not only creates moderation in students' beliefs and perspectives but can also be effective in improving students' relationships with others, especially with non-Muslims. This attitude of moderation is a solution to the serious problem of thinking that it is enough for a Muslim to relate peacefully and respectfully with fellow Muslims only. This is a grave mistake and goes against divine justice, social justice, and humanity. In many cases, children and even adults do not choose their own beliefs, but they inherit these beliefs from their parents and ancestors, which means they are indoctrinated by specific beliefs.

Therefore, even though a person believes in certain religious beliefs with full awareness and sincerity regardless of whether these beliefs conflict with the beliefs of the majority of people or not, divine justice requires us to respect and treat other religious adherents with a spirit of tolerance to make their religious image maintained in the eyes of other religious adherents (Syahrul, 2020). Thus, in CSE educators should emphasize that God is not concerned with the diversity of our religious feelings and actions, but He is more concerned with our deepest intentions, not the appearance of our words and actions.

Islam has established that: "indeed an action is based on intention" (Bukhārī, 1997a No. 1). This implies that the process of spiritual education of children should lead to respect for the religious beliefs, rituals, and actions of others and recognize the diversity of religious beliefs in both inter-personal and social relationships by divine and social justice. Furthermore, the emphasis of the Islamic CSE model lies on fair and moral behavior away from violence, oppression, and hostility towards interlocutors and peers. In this model, educators lead children to recognize moral concepts such as peace, justice, honesty, and love for the principle of "no means necessary".

To direct them to coexist harmoniously with others, whether of the same religion or not, Islam does not allow its adherents to use bigotry and violence to achieve noble goals, even including the invitation to religion and God. For example, in the Qur'an Allah says:

"Invite (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching and debate them in a better way" (Q.S. An-Nahl [16]: 125).

"There is no compulsion in (embracing) the religion (Islam) ..." (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 256).

Moreover, in general, Islam prescribes its adherents to interact with fellow human beings peacefully and humanely, regardless of whether they are Muslims or not. The Qur'an has made many references to this.

"... then, We made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another ..." (Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13),

"... besides, speak kindly to people ..." (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 83),

"... Do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you and do not cause corruption in the earth ..." (Q.S. Al-Qasas [28]: 77),

"If you do good, you have done good for yourself. If you do evil, (the loss from evil) returns to yourself..." (Q.S. Al-Isra [17]: 7),

"If they (your parents) force you to associate partners with Me for something of which you do not know, do not obey them, (but) associate with them in the world well and follow the path of those who return to Me ..." (Q.S. Luqman [31]: 15).

The Prophet himself did not treat the polytheists, disbelievers, and people of the book with a spirit of hostility, but treated them with a spirit of love and respect. Some examples of the philanthropic behavior of the Prophet and his companions that can be used in the CSE program include; The Prophet visited a sick Jew (Bukhārī, 1997b No. 1290), Umar bin Khattab gave a gift of clothes to his brother who had not yet converted to Islam (Bukhārī, 1997c No. 2619), The Messenger of Allah forbade the killing of Mu'ahad kafirs, i.e. kafirs who had agreed not to fight with the threat that the perpetrator would not smell heaven (Bukhārī, 1997d No. 3166).

The above quotations from the Qur'an and some ṣaḥīḥ traditions are some examples of moral doctrines in Islam regarding the relationship of its adherents with non-Muslims.

Educators' attention and encouragement of these doctrines in CSE can pave the way for strengthening the spirit of tolerance in students, i.e. peaceful coexistence. In addition, one-sided religious lectures, hate speech, and cyber-terrorism also need to be intervened by the government through appropriate policies and supervision (Haryana, 2020). Cooperation between local governments that have a majority of religious minority students also determines the establishment of a tolerant educational atmosphere (Marzuki & Fikri, 2022). After all, teaching a culture of harmony, peace, tolerance, and avoiding all violence against others is one of the essential goals of CSE.

In teaching this morality to children, it is not enough just to remind them of the benefits of peace and the consequences of violence but must encourage students to fully commit to realizing an attitude of tolerance starting with themselves. This means that it is not enough for children to blindly imitate what educators tell them. That is because teaching a culture of tolerance and moral and social values is not possible just by training and asking students to imagine it in life.

Conclusion

This study suggests that CSE model can lead to the strengthening of a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. As a result, this is followed by a reduction in prejudice, violence, and other inappropriate actions and attitudes of children towards those who do not share their religion and those of other faiths. CSE model with its four principle pillars offers a holistic and diverse approach to shaping students' spirituality.

CSE model has several advantages. Firstly, CSE highlights a holistic approach to shaping children's personalities as it recognizes the spiritual, emotional, social and cognitive dimensions as an integral part of individual development. Secondly, CSE understands the uniqueness of each child as it seeks to encourage a personalized approach that takes into account the specific spiritual and developmental needs of each individual. In other words, children are encouraged to be actively involved in the learning process, such as engaging in hands-on activities, contemplative reflection, and social interaction. Thirdly, CSE successfully integrates spiritual values into the education curriculum, providing an additional dimension to academic learning with relevance to moral and spiritual values.

Based on the exposure to the principles of spirituality in Islam, CSE has positive implications in the context of learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI). First, CSE can be a means to actualize children's primordial potential by the principles of Islamic spirituality. Islamic Education in the primary school itself has a connection between the material aspects of Islamic Education and the competency domain and contributes to building the strength of students' character that is religious and full of spiritual values (Firmansyah et al., 2023). Second, CSE supports the goals of spiritual and moral education in Islamic teachings and helps children understand and internalize religious values. Thirdly, CSE can stimulate children's understanding of the levels of spirituality in Islam and guide children to reach the highest level of relationship with Allah and practice religious values in daily life. Fourthly, CSE focuses on the teachings of Islam and can be a tool to implement tolerance towards non-Muslims through an inclusive approach and respect for other faiths.

This study recommends policymakers, educators, and community leaders to include integrating the CSE Model into the education curriculum by strengthening training for teachers and school staff in effectively implementing this holistic approach. Furthermore, it is also advisable for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to support

collaborative initiatives among educational institutions, families, and communities in implementing the CSE Model. This ensures comprehensive and sustainable support in shaping students' spirituality.

This study has limitations as it is based on library study. Future researchers are expected to empirically test the effectiveness of the CSE Model in the context of Islamic education learning. Further research with practical implementation can provide a deeper understanding of the potential and sustainability of this model in achieving the goals of Islamic education.

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