

Reinforcing Factors Of Religious Tolerance In Parenting Within Gunungkidul's Religious Moderation Village: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Religious tolerance education within the family has become increasingly important amid the growing challenges of the digital era, in which children are exposed to diverse information, including intolerant and radical narratives. Although previous studies have explored factors influencing religious tolerance, limited attention has been given to how parents strengthen tolerance values through parenting practices, particularly in religiously plural communities. This study aimed to identify the reinforcing factors that enabled parents in Gunungkidul's Religious Moderation Village to consistently instill and practice religious tolerance values in parenting. This research employed a qualitative approach with an interpretative phenomenological design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with six fathers from interfaith communities in Watusigar and Hargomulyo Villages, Gunungkidul Regency, who were selected using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to identify meaningful experiences and emerging themes. The findings revealed two major reinforcing factors: the pluralistic social environment as a natural learning space and the support of state legality and national philosophical values, including Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. These factors reduced parents' educational burdens by transforming tolerance from a conceptual lesson into an everyday lifestyle experienced by children. The study concludes that sustainable religious tolerance in parenting is strengthened through the synergy between supportive social ecosystems and formal state structures, providing important implications for inclusive family education and religious moderation practices.

INTRODUCTION

Considering that Indonesia is a large country with a high level of pluralism, the implementation of religious moderation is highly crucial (Arimatea & Sukarna, 2025; Danisworo et al., 2024; Husain, 2025; Intan, 2023; Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023; Ridwanulloh et al., 2025; Subchi et al., 2022). According to Muslih et al. (2023), this diversity is supported by data from the 2010 Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) Census, which recorded 1,340 ethnic groups, six officially recognized religions, and more than 781 regional languages across the country. In the study by Muslih et al. (2023), the religious moderation approach was described

as a means of promoting peaceful and harmonious national life, which can be realized through interfaith dialogue to strengthen social cohesion, prevent conflicts and violence in the name of religion, and foster tolerance among religious communities. At the family level, Wiguna and Sunariyadi (2021) emphasized that children's actions and behaviors largely reflect their parents' parenting patterns, as the family environment serves as the primary foundation for character development. This finding is consistent with Hutagalung and Ramadan (2022), who demonstrated that parents play a crucial role in introducing and instilling values of diversity in children from an early age.

In the current digital era, parenting challenges have become increasingly complex due to the widespread use of technology (Connolly et al., 2026; Junida, 2025; Lesková et al., 2023; Nudin et al., 2024). According to Afif and Dwijayanto (2021) and Dachlan (2020), unrestricted access to social media may create various challenges because children are vulnerable to exposure to negative information, including intolerant perspectives, extremist narratives, and radical ideologies. Susanto and Dwijayanto (2022) further emphasized that children's dependence on gadgets and social media represents a double-edged phenomenon. On one hand, technology can serve as a medium for strengthening religious moderation values; on the other hand, without adequate parental guidance, it may expose children to intolerance, violence, and religion-based extremist content.

Initial data collection for this study was conducted on April 27, 2025, in Watusigar through interviews with five parents consisting of four Muslims and one Hindu. The preliminary findings indicated that families in this region served as the primary foundation for instilling tolerance values among younger generations. The internalization of these values was achieved through parental role modeling and consistent character education. In practice, parents applied various approaches, ranging from teaching religious moral principles to utilizing everyday situations as opportunities for learning. Although the approaches varied, these efforts shared a common goal of promoting social harmony and developing a generation capable of appreciating diversity sustainably.

Previous studies have identified various factors that strengthen religious tolerance in Indonesia. Yusuf et al. (2020), for example, found that tolerant attitudes are influenced by personal factors, including income level, educational background, religiosity, and the socioeconomic conditions of the surrounding environment. Meanwhile, Ardi et al. (2021) identified additional factors, including individual religious perspectives, heterogeneous educational environments, exposure to dialogue, solidarity among minority groups, and official recognition from the state. Furthermore, Azizah and Rahmawati (2025) emphasized that tolerance development is also strongly influenced by the strategic roles of religious and community leaders, as well as individuals' social awareness. However, most previous studies have focused on general sociocultural factors and have not specifically examined the reinforcing factors of tolerance within parenting contexts, particularly in unique settings such as Gunungkidul's Religious Moderation Village. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the factors that strengthen parents' capacity to consistently teach and apply tolerance values in parenting practices within the region.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Data collection was conducted in two locations within the Religious Moderation Village of Gunungkidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, namely Watusigar Village and Hargomulyo Village. Informants were selected purposively to obtain relevant and in-depth information. The participant criteria included adults who served as primary caregivers, demonstrated a commitment to peaceful coexistence, and had direct experience with interfaith interactions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. The data were analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach developed by Smith et al. (2009), which involved stages of data familiarization, initial noting, identification of emerging themes, examination of relationships among themes, analysis of individual cases, and identification of patterns across cases. To ensure data credibility, member checking was conducted to verify the accuracy of interpretations with participants, while reflective notes were written prior to data collection as part of the bracketing process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profiles of Research Informants

a. Informant RS

Informant RS is a 31-year-old Muslim father who holds a bachelor's degree and works as a hamlet head. In the context of a pluralistic environment, he believes that exposure to other religious groups from an early age provides a concrete example that eases parents' cognitive burden in introducing the value of tolerance to children. Meanwhile, regarding state regulations, he uses the constitutional guarantee of religious rights as a strong argument to help children understand the legal obligation to respect differences.

b. Informant H

Informant H is a 45-year-old Hindu father and senior high school graduate who works as a private sector employee. He finds it easy to teach tolerance by physically involving his children, since they were toddlers, in various community activities in Tapan, allowing them to acclimate to a heterogeneous environment without feeling alienated. Furthermore, he feels greatly assisted by the government's official recognition of local belief systems (*aliran kepercayaan*), as it provides a logical explanation of local traditions and prevents confusion in children's minds.

c. Informant MY

Informant MY is a 33-year-old Muslim father and vocational high school graduate who works as a contract-based government employee. From his environmental perspective, the harmonious routines of adults serve as concrete social modeling that is automatically absorbed by children, making the parenting task lighter. He also utilizes the official motto of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as a powerful national guideline to simplify the meaning of differences and minimize the potential for prejudice in children.

d. Informant M

Informant M is a 42-year-old Muslim father with a vocational high school education who works as a hamlet head. He considers living in a pluralistic village highly advantageous because the daily dynamics among residents function as a hidden curriculum

that automatically educates children morally without coercion. To reinforce this acceptance, he relies on the government's official recognition status, which dispels children's doubts and relieves parents from the burden of complicated theological explanations.

e. Informant BS

Informant BS is a 66-year-old Christian father with a junior high school education who works as a farmer. He views the heterogeneous environment as an ideal social laboratory and a foundational knowledge source that trains children to form sincere friendships regardless of religious boundaries. His inner peace and ease in implementing tolerance education within the family are strongly supported by the state philosophy of Pancasila, which provides a clear sense of direction.

f. Informant DS

Informant DS is a 58-year-old Muslim father and senior high school graduate whose livelihood is farming. He experiences significant ease due to the surrounding pluralistic situation, as children have organically become accustomed to daily activities—such as studying and eating—with neighbors of different religions from an early age. To uphold these values, he integrates obedience to government laws as a moral obligation in his parenting, ensuring children realize that differences are legally protected.

Research Results

a. Pluralistic Environmental Conditions as Natural Learning Spaces

The condition of a village consisting of various religions serves as a supporting factor that lightens the parenting task, as children who grow up directly in this pluralistic environment can independently absorb the value of respecting others.

Introducing this supporting factor theme, Informant RS believes that the presence of other religious groups from an early age significantly determines a child's understanding, as the surrounding environment already provides a clear example of diversity.

"If that's the case, I am sure, Mas, it is easier to practice tolerance. So, if tolerance has been instilled since childhood... in the future, it will be easier to educate them." (RS)

For Informant RS, an environment that introduces diversity early on is interpreted as a facilitation of parenting, preventing future difficulties for parents in explaining the concept of tolerance.

The researcher interprets the existence of this pluralistic environment as a primary reinforcing factor that eases the parents' cognitive burden because children can learn directly and tangibly from the well-organized social reality surrounding them.

In line with this, Informant M also experiences the advantages of living in a pluralistic village, as children can extract moral lessons independently from daily dynamics without the need for excessive emphasis.

"It's easier, much easier. Because, as mentioned earlier, with the diversity... they also draw their own lessons from everyday life examples... we don't, so to speak, emphasize it too heavily." (M)

In Informant M's view, residing in a pluralistic village is perceived as an advantage because the daily examples of life among residents act as a natural learning medium, eliminating the need for parents to apply excessive pressure.

The researcher's interpretation highlights the environment's function as a hidden curriculum that automatically educates children through an ecosystem providing various examples of harmony, entirely devoid of coercion or doctrinal emphasis.

Reinforcing these findings, Informant MY stated that harmonious social interactions among residents are readily absorbed by children, prompting them to naturally imitate the lifestyle of the surrounding adults without being forced.

"...it's easy for us to instill that in our children... Since childhood, because of these parental habits, the children will certainly follow, so it is not that burdensome." (MY)

For MY, the peaceful routines of adults are interpreted as concrete examples automatically absorbed by children from their surrounding daily habits, thereby lightening the parents' educational duties.

The researcher interprets this statement as compelling evidence of the profound impact of social modeling, where the harmonious living habits of adults serve as a behavioral blueprint that eases parenting tasks, facilitated by a positive social ecology.

Meanwhile, Informant H emphasized the aspect of physical involvement, finding it easier because his child has been routinely brought to observe community activities in Tapan since they were a toddler.

"Yes, specifically, it is indeed easier for me to teach tolerance because since they were little, for example, from the age of one or two years, they have often been invited to activities in the Tapan community." (H)

In Informant H's meaning-making, the ease of teaching tolerance is interpreted as the result of the early habit of involving children in community events so they become accustomed to a diverse environment without feeling alienated.

The researcher's analysis reveals that the physical involvement of children from a toddler age is a key factor that eradicates the seeds of prejudice, where these repetitive visual experiences form a psychological foundation that strengthens children's acceptance in the future.

Similarly, Informant DS feels greater freedom in educating his child thanks to this environment, as the child has been accustomed to daily activities—such as studying and eating—with neighbors of different religions from an early age.

"Yes, it is indeed easier. Why? In fact, we never even mention the issue of tolerance; he already practices it himself. Even my child's friends are non-Muslims; they study together, eat together, yes, it's just normal." (DS)

For Informant DS, the child's diverse social environment is interpreted as an extraordinary convenience, to the point where the word "tolerance" no longer needs to be explicitly mentioned because the daily situation organically normalizes it.

The researcher interprets this statement as the pinnacle of successful natural education facilitated by a pluralistic environment, where tolerance has seamlessly integrated into the child's organic lifestyle without requiring formal parental instruction.

Concluding this theme, Informant BS assessed that a diverse environment is the foundation of experiential knowledge, allowing children to broaden their social circles without being hindered by religious barriers.

"The influence is very good in building upon those differences because that is the basis of our knowledge... so we have to practice friendship. Friendship means we do not discriminate against anyone." (BS)

In BS's view, the positive influence of a pluralistic environment is interpreted as a foundational source of knowledge to train children to overlook anyone's background when establishing sincere friendships.

The researcher perceives this view as confirmation that heterogeneous environments serve as the ultimate social laboratories, dismantling group boundaries to cultivate a generation that is open and resilient toward differences.

b. State Legal Recognition and the Role of National Philosophy

Written rules and regulations from the state serve as highly beneficial supporting factors for parents, as the fact that various religions and belief systems are protected by law can be used as a concrete reference point when providing explanations to children.

Introducing the discussion on state regulations, Informant RS utilizes the constitutional guarantee of religious rights—which binds all citizens—as a rationale to explain to his children why diversity must be respected.

"We base equal rights on the fact that they are guaranteed by national law... We explain to the children right there, that diversity already exists for us to respect." (RS)

For Informant RS, the existence of state laws is interpreted as the most rational foundation to provide an effective explanation of the rule of law, ensuring children understand their obligation to respect differences.

The researcher interprets this constitutional reference as a parental strategy to provide strong argumentative support and a rational basis whenever children question the necessity of being tolerant.

In line with this, Informant M views the government's official recognition as a validation that makes it easier for children to accept the reality that every citizen holds equal rights in the eyes of the law.

"Yes, it's easier because... with recognition from the government, it means it is legal, it is official... it makes it easier to explain to the children so they can accept the concept of local beliefs." (M)

For M, official government recognition is interpreted as a convenient way to present valid evidence of the existence of other belief systems, thereby reducing children's confusion when interacting with neighbors of different faiths.

The researcher observes that this state legality functions to eliminate children's doubts and frees parents from the burden of complex theological explanations by directing children to understand that differences are a legitimate reality protected by the state.

Emphasizing the function of this recognition, Informant DS positions state acknowledgment as a mandatory rule taught to children, representing the behavior of a good citizen in maintaining harmony.

"Yes, why? Because if it is indeed recognized by the government, it means there is a law for it. We live here, right... we must obey the laws implemented by the government." (DS)

In DS's meaning-making, obedience to state laws is interpreted as an absolute obligation in civic life, ensuring children realize that a harmonious attitude and differences are protected by the authorities' laws.

The researcher's analysis indicates that legal obedience is directly integrated as a moral obligation in parenting, instilling in children the understanding that rejecting diversity constitutes a violation of legitimate government decrees.

From a slightly different perspective, Informant H feels immensely helped by the government's official recognition of adherents to local belief systems (*aliran kepercayaan*), as it facilitates his ability to explain the logic of local ceremonies to his children.

"...but because the government has already acknowledged it, yes, it makes it easier to teach the children, to provide them with experiential knowledge... If it were not recognized by the government, we would certainly face difficulties." (H)

For Informant H, the government's recognition of local belief systems is interpreted as a significant aid in logically explaining local traditions, ensuring the younger generation is not confused when observing traditional village ceremonies.

The researcher interprets this state recognition as a protective umbrella that preserves local culture while simultaneously easing the parents' burden. It allows them to openly explain ancestral belief practices without fear of creating cognitive conflict in the child's mind.

While the previous informant was helped by the legal recognition of traditions, Informant MY utilizes the official national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), as an accessible tool to explain national insights to his children.

"Yes, I do consider that to be a clear path... the child won't object either... Here in Indonesia, we use what is called Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, so we explain that... surely the child will feel a distinct sense of unity." (MY)

In MY's view, employing the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is interpreted as a clear strategy to simplify the concept of differences for children without provoking objections, leading them to inherently realize the importance of unity.

The researcher's interpretation of the use of this slogan reveals a synergy between family education and national doctrine, where the grand narrative of the state is transformed into an effective parenting guideline to minimize the potential for prejudice or rejection in children.

Concluding this theme, Informant BS experiences a sense of security from the state philosophy of *Pancasila*, which provides parents with peace of mind when educating their children about mutual respect.

"We are calmer, it's easier to implement or provide education to children regarding tolerance... because our country is a Pancasila state. It is very clear." (BS)

For BS, the *Pancasila* philosophy is interpreted as a source of inner peace when raising children in a pluralistic environment, as it provides a clear direction for instilling mutual respect within the family.

The researcher interprets this sense of security as a positive psychological impact of the state ideology, acting as an antidote to radical views, so that the macro-structure functions resolutely to maintain the continuity of harmony at the micro-level.

1. Pluralistic Environmental Conditions as Natural Learning Spaces

The findings within this first theme reveal that the pluralistic community environment plays a major role as a natural learning space, effectively alleviating a significant portion of the educational burden on parents. This condition aligns closely with the Situated Learning Theory by Lave & Wenger (1991), which states that meaningful learning occurs when individuals participate directly in real-world communities. Interestingly, the social realities of this village act as a hidden curriculum that allows children to organically practice tolerance without the need for complex theological instruction. The experiences of Informants RS and H demonstrate that physical involvement and visual exposure to differences from toddlerhood lead children to view diversity as entirely natural. Regarding this phenomenon, Yusuf et al. (2020) confirmed that residential environmental factors significantly affect an individual's level of acceptance toward different groups. This field finding successfully expands the concept of exposure proposed by Ardi et al. (2021), as visual interaction from an early age functions as a psychological vaccine that protects children from prejudice. Through consistent visual habituation, the seeds of social hatred are proven to be prevented before they can take root in a child's cognitive memory.

Furthermore, Informants M and MY found it easier to educate their children because the children automatically absorbed and imitated adult behaviors without the need for verbal coercion. In examining this mimicking phenomenon, Vargas et al. (2026) explain that direct immersion into social reality is vastly more effective than simply imparting abstract advice. The process of instilling this value proceeds seamlessly because children directly emulate the kindness of the community figures around them, a point also emphasized by Azizah & Rahmawati (2025). The success of this natural education reached its pinnacle when Informant DS recounted his child's habit of studying and eating with friends of different faiths without ever being specifically taught the word 'tolerance'. Regarding this organic adaptation, Lave & Wenger (1991) view such adjustment processes without formal instruction as a form of authentic participation that generates profound social skills. This novelty proves that tolerance in this environment is no longer merely a cognitive subject to be memorized; rather, it has completely integrated into the children's daily lifestyles. Complementing this, Informant BS utilizes this authentic social setting to train children in forming sincere cross-identity friendships, thereby independently cultivating social empathy as formulated by Vargas et al. (2026).

2. State Legal Recognition and the Role of National Philosophy

The findings in this final theme demonstrate that official state recognition serves as an exceptionally strong supporting instrument for parents in instilling the value of tolerance within the family environment. This phenomenon strongly aligns with the Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1994), which positions state laws and ideologies as part of the macrosystem that systemically influences individual development. Interestingly, the presence of these formal rules provides parents with a rational basis to explain that respecting differences is not merely a moral encouragement but a legal obligation as a citizen. In practice, Informants RS and M utilize constitutional guarantees and government recognition as logical arguments to explain the equal right of every citizen to embrace their respective faiths. This legal affirmation resonates with the findings of Ardi et al. (2021), which noted that official state recognition through a legal framework

has been proven to make diversity more acceptable to the broader community. The novelty in this context lies in the utilization of legal status to bypass potentially complex theological debates at the family level. Through this strategy, children are simply directed to accept the validity of differences as a legitimate reality that is fully protected by prevailing laws.

Moreover, Informants DS and H integrate legal compliance as part of their moral responsibility to maintain harmony among residents. State policies at the macrosystem layer indirectly shape safer patterns of social interaction at the child's micro-environmental level. A theoretical expansion is evident in Informant H's experience, where state recognition of local belief systems (*aliran kepercayaan*) serves as a logical validation that protects local cultural heritage from the risk of discrimination. Concurrently, Informant MY's use of the national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) has proven to be an effective explanatory tool for simplifying the concept of pluralism for children. This official motto ultimately transforms into a practical parenting guideline capable of suppressing the potential seeds of prejudice in children from an early age. In closing, Informant BS experienced a guaranteed sense of psychological security in educating his children, thanks to the *Pancasila* philosophy which ensures justice within diversity. This synergy between legal protection and national philosophy ensures that parents' efforts are grounded in a solid ideological foundation, effectively warding off the influence of radical views in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the strengthening of religious tolerance in parenting within Gunungkidul's Religious Moderation Village is comprehensively supported by two main factors: the utilization of a pluralistic social environment as a natural learning space and the support of formal state recognition and national philosophical values. The findings demonstrate that cultivating tolerance in children is not merely a rigid theological process, but rather the result of organic habituation shaped by the interaction between the micro-level social environment and broader state structures. The heterogeneous village environment functioned as an effective hidden curriculum, through which children observed, experienced, and internalized harmonious behaviors among adults via daily interactions. Meanwhile, state recognition and the internalization of national values, such as *Pancasila* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, provided rational foundations for parents in implementing tolerance-based parenting practices. This structural synergy reduced the complexity of introducing tolerance values within families, allowing these principles to become naturally integrated into the daily lives of younger generations.

In terms of scientific contribution, this study enriches the literature on family psychology and religious moderation by offering a conceptual mapping of how tolerance-based parenting at the domestic level is systemically supported by the convergence of environmental ecology and state regulations. Nevertheless, the findings of this study have limitations in the form of homogeneous perspective bias, as the data were solely extracted from father figures, alongside conditional field constraints such as late-night data collection and third-party interruptions at the interview locations. Based on these limitations and the focus of the findings, future researchers are recommended to include mothers' perspectives to explore potential differences

in utilizing pluralistic public spaces and state legality narratives, in addition to controlling the interview setting to minimize external distortions. For family psychology practitioners and community counselors, it is recommended to develop positive parenting psychoeducation modules that integrate techniques for utilizing heterogeneous social laboratories alongside inclusive national doctrines. Finally, parents are encouraged to consistently involve their children physically in surrounding interfaith activities and actively utilize the pillars of state ideology as a simple yet robust reference for tolerance education within the home.

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