

## Reinforcing Factors of Religious Tolerance in Parenting Within Gunungkidul's Religious Moderation Village: Aan 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 child upbringing. 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 concluded that sustainable religious tolerance in parenting was strengthened through the synergy between supportive social ecosystems and formal state structures, providing important implications for inclusive family education and religious moderation practices.

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### 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 Statistics Agency (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, childcare challenges have become increasingly complex due to the widespread use of technology (Abiri et al., 2023; 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 areas within the Religious Moderation Village area in 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 maintained throughout the research process as part of the bracketing process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Description of Research Informant**

#### **a. Informan RS**

The informant of the hospital is a 31-year-old Muslim father with a bachelor's last education background who works as a hamlet head. In the context of a pluralistic environment, he believes that the existence of other religious groups from an early age provides a real example that can ease the cognitive burden of parents in introducing the value of tolerance to children. Meanwhile, regarding state regulations, he made the guarantee of religious rights in the constitution as a strong argument so that children understand the legal obligation to respect differences.

#### **b. H reported**

Informant H is a 45-year-old Hindu father who graduated from Upper High School who works as a private employee every day. She feels the ease of educating tolerance by physically involving her children since toddlers in various activities of residents in the Tapan community to get used to the heterogeneous environment without feeling strange. In addition, he felt greatly helped by the government's official recognition of the school of faith because it provided a logical explanation of local traditions in order to avoid confusion in the minds of children.

#### **c. Informan MY**

The MY informant is a 33-year-old Muslim father who graduated from a Vocational High School who works as a government employee with a work agreement. In his view of the environment, the routine of adults who get along well becomes a concrete social modeling that is automatically absorbed by children so that the task of parenting becomes less heavy. He also uses the official motto of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as a powerful state guideline to simplify the meaning of difference and suppress the potential for rejection in children.

#### **d. M reported**

Informant M was identified as a 42-year-old Muslim father with a Vocational High School education who worked as a hamlet head. He considers living in a pluralistic village to provide great advantages because the daily dynamics between residents function as a hidden curriculum that educates children's morals automatically without coercion. To strengthen this acceptance, he relied on the official recognition status of the government that removed the child's doubts and relieved parents of the burden of complicated theological explanations.

e. BS reported

Informant BS is a 66-year-old Christian father with a last level of Junior High School education who works as a farmer. He sees heterogeneous environments as the best social laboratory and a source of basic knowledge that trains children to be able to form sincere friendships regardless of religious barriers. His inner peace and ease in carrying out tolerance education in the family is firmly supported by the state philosophy of Pancasila which provides clarity of direction.

f. DS reported

Informant DS is a 58-year-old Muslim father who graduated from a Senior High School whose livelihood is farming. He feels the extraordinary ease of the plural situation around him because children have organically become accustomed to doing daily activities such as studying and eating with neighbors of different religions from an early age. In order to uphold these values, he integrates obedience to government laws as a moral obligation in parenting so that children realize that differences are protected by law.

## Research Results

a. Compound Environmental Conditions as Natural Learning Spaces

The condition of the village consisting of various religions is a supporting factor that eases the duties of parents because children who grow up directly in the pluralistic environment can absorb the value of respecting others independently.

As an opening to the theme of this supporting factor, the hospital informant believes that the existence of other religious groups from an early age greatly determines children's understanding because the surrounding environment has provided a clear example of diversity.

*"If that's the case, I am sure, Mas, it is easier to tolerate. So, if you have been instilled with tolerance since childhood... In the future, it will be easier to educate him."*  
(RS)

For hospital informants, an environment that introduces diversity from an early age is interpreted as ease of parenting so that parents do not have difficulty providing an understanding of tolerance in the future.

The researcher interprets the existence of this pluralistic environment as the main reinforcing factor that eases the cognitive burden of parents because children can directly learn in real terms from the social reality that has been well organized around them.

In line with that, informant M also felt the advantage of living in a pluralistic village because children can learn moral lessons on their own from daily dynamics without the need for excessive emphasis.

*"It's easier, it's a lot easier. Because yes, that was earlier, with the variety... They also take their own lessons with examples from everyday life... We don't really emphasize the term." (M)*

In the view of informant M, living in a pluralistic village is interpreted as an advantage because the example of daily life between residents is a natural means of learning that makes parents no longer need to put excessive pressure.

The researcher's interpretation shows the function of the environment as a hidden curriculum that educates children automatically through an ecosystem that provides a variety of examples of harmony without any element of coercion or doctrinal emphasis.

Reinforcing these findings, the MY informant stated that the harmonious association of residents is immediately absorbed by children so that they naturally imitate the lifestyle of the adults around them without having to be forced.

*"... It's easy for us to instill that in our children... From a young age, because of the habits of parents like this, children must also follow, so it is not so hard." (MY)*

For MY, the routine of an adult who gets along well is interpreted as a concrete example that is automatically absorbed by children from their daily habits around them so that the task of educating parents becomes less heavy.

The researcher interprets this statement as strong evidence of the strong influence of social modeling in which the habit of living in harmony with adults becomes a behavioral blueprint that alleviates parenting tasks thanks to the support of positive social ecology.

Meanwhile, informant H highlighted the aspect of physical involvement where he got convenience because his son had been routinely invited to see the activities of residents in the Tapan community since he was a toddler.

*"Yes, in particular, it is easier for me to teach tolerance because since I was a child, for example, from the age of one year or two years, I have often been invited to activities in the Tapan community." (H)*

In the interpretation of informant H, the ease of educating tolerance is interpreted as the result of the early habit of inviting children to community activities so that they are used to a diverse environment without feeling strange.

The researcher's analysis revealed that the physical involvement of children since toddlers is a key factor that kills the seeds of prejudice, where the repetitive visual experience becomes a psychological foundation that strengthens children's acceptance in the future.

Almost equally, DS informants feel more free to educate thanks to this environment because their children are used to doing daily activities such as studying and eating with neighbors of different religions from an early age.

*"Yes, it is easier. Because of what? In fact, we never mentioned the issue of tolerance, he himself has tolerated it. Even my son's friends are non-Muslim, studying together, eating together, yes, it's normal." (DS)*

For DS informants, the diverse environment of children is interpreted as extraordinary convenience so that the word tolerance no longer needs to be said thanks to the daily situation that runs normally.

The researcher interprets this statement as the culmination of the success of natural education facilitated by a plural environment, where tolerance has melted into the organic lifestyle of the child without the need for formal instruction from parents.

As the ultimate in this theme, BS informants assessed that a diverse environment is the foundation of real knowledge that allows children to expand the scope of association without being hindered by religious barriers.

*"The influence is very good in building that difference because that's the basis of our knowledge... So we have to practice friendship. Friendship means we don't look at anyone." (BS)*

In BS's view, the good influence of the pluralistic environment is interpreted as a source of basic knowledge to train children not to look at anyone's background when establishing sincere friendships.

Researchers see this view as confirmation that heterogeneous environments are the best social laboratories that break down group boundaries to form a generation that is open and resilient to differences.

b. Recognition of the Legality of the State and the Role of the Nation's Philosophy

Written rules and regulations from the state are a supporting factor that is very helpful for parents because the fact that various religions and beliefs are protected by law can be used as a concrete reference when giving explanations to children.

As an opening to the discussion of state regulations, the hospital informant used the guarantee of religious rights in the state constitution which binds all citizens as a reason to children why diversity should be respected.

*"We base the same rights on being guaranteed by law at the national level... We explain to the children and there, that there is already diversity for us to respect." (RS)*

For the hospital informant, the existence of state law is interpreted as the most rational reason to provide an effective explanation of the rule of law so that children understand the obligation to respect differences.

The researcher interprets the reference to this constitution as a parent's strategy to provide a strong argument and a rational foundation when children question the reasons behind the need to be tolerant.

In line with that, informant M views the status of official recognition from the government as an endorsement that makes it easier for children to accept the fact that every citizen has the same rights in the eyes of the law.

*"Yes, it's easier because... With the recognition from the government, the term is legal, it is official... Explaining to children is easier for them to accept the term belief." (M)*

For M, official recognition from the government is interpreted as an ease to show valid evidence of the existence of other beliefs to reduce children's confusion when dealing with neighbors of different religions.

Researchers see that the legality of this government serves to remove children's doubts and free parents from the burden of complicated theological explanations by directing children that differences are legitimate and protected by the state.

Emphasizing the function of recognition, DS informants positioned state recognition as a mandatory rule taught to children as a form of good citizen behavior in maintaining harmony.

*"Yes, because of what? Because if it has been recognized by the government, it means that there is a law. We are alive, right... obey the laws of what the government runs." (DS)*

In the meaning of DS, obedience to government laws is interpreted as an absolute obligation in the life of the state so that children realize that the attitude of living in harmony and differences is protected by the law of the ruler.

The researcher's analysis shows that legal obedience is directly integrated as a moral obligation in parenting, which instills the doctrine of children that rejecting diversity is a violation of legitimate government decrees.

From a slightly different point of view, informant H felt very helped by the government's official recognition of believers because it made it easier for him to explain the logic of local ceremonies to his children.

*"... But because already, the government has acknowledged that, yes it will be easier to teach children, give knowledge experiences to children... If it is not recognized by the government, of course we will have difficulties." (H)*

For informant H, the government's recognition of the school of beliefs is interpreted as a great help to provide a logical explanation of local traditions so that the younger generation is not confused when they see traditional ceremonies in the village.

The researcher interprets the recognition of this country as a protective umbrella that saves local culture while easing the burden on parents to explain the practice of ancestral heritage beliefs openly without fear of conflict in the child's mind.

If the informant was previously helped by traditional legal rules, the MY informant used the official motto of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as a tool to explain state insights that are easy for children to understand.

*"Yes, I do think that will be a bright spot... that the child will not mind either... Here in Indonesia we use what is called Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, so we explain that... Surely the child will feel alone." (MY)*

In MY's view, the use of the motto Bhinneka Tunggal Ika is interpreted as a bright spot to simplify differences to children without causing objections so that they themselves realize the importance of unity.

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

As a conclusion to this theme, BS informants felt a sense of security from the state philosophy of Pancasila which makes parents calmer in educating their children to respect each other.

*"We are calmer, easier in carrying out or providing education to children about tolerance... because our country is a Pancasila country. It's very clear." (BS)*

For BS, the Pancasila philosophy is interpreted as a source of inner peace in carrying out parenting in a pluralistic environment because it provides clarity of direction to instill mutual respect in the family.

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

### **1. Compound Environmental Conditions as Natural Learning Spaces**

The findings in the first theme reveal that the pluralistic community environment plays a major role as a natural learning space that effectively takes over some of the educational burden from parents. This condition is very much in line with the situational learning theory of Lave & Wenger (1991) which states that meaningful learning occurs when individuals participate directly in real communities. Interestingly, the social realities of this village act as a hidden curriculum that allows children to practice tolerance organically without the need for complicated theological instruction. The experience of RS and H informants shows that physical involvement and visual recognition of differences from the age of toddlers make children view diversity as a natural thing. Regarding this phenomenon, Yusuf et al. (2020) confirmed that environmental factors in residence significantly affect a person's level of acceptance of different groups. This field finding then succeeded in expanding the concept of exposure from Ardi et al. (2021) because visual interaction from an early age functions as a psychological vaccine that protects children from prejudice. Through constant visual habituation, the seeds of social hatred have been proven to be prevented before they have time to grow in the child's cognitive memory.

Furthermore, informants M and MY felt the ease of educating because children automatically absorbed and imitated the behavior of adults without the need for verbal coercion. In examining this mimicking phenomenon, Vargas et al. (2026) explain that direct experience into social reality is much more effective than simply giving abstract advice. The process of instilling this value runs very smoothly because children directly emulate the kindness of the community leaders around them as emphasized by Azizah & Rahmawati (2025). The success of this natural education reached its peak when the DS informant told about his child's habit of studying and eating with friends of different faiths without ever being taught the word tolerance specifically. Regarding this organic adaptation, Lave & Wenger (1991) view this process of adjustment without formal instruction as a form of real participation in producing deep social skills. This novelty proves that tolerance in the environment is no longer just a cognitive subject that must be memorized, but has been completely merged into children's daily lifestyles. As a complement, this authentic social facility is used by BS informants to train sincere friendships across identities in order to score social empathy independently as formulated by Vargas et al. (2026).

### **2. Recognition of the Legality of the State and the Role of the Nation's Philosophy**

The findings on this last theme show that the existence of official recognition from the state is a very strong supporting instrument for parents in instilling the value of tolerance in the family environment. This phenomenon is very much in line with the ecological systems theory from Bronfenbrenner (1994) which places the laws and

ideologies of the state as part of the macrosystem that systemically affects the development of the individual. Interestingly, the presence of these formal rules provides a rational basis for parents to understand that respecting differences is not just a moral encouragement, but a legal obligation as a citizen. In practice, RS and M informants use constitutional guarantees and government recognition as logical arguments to explain the right of every citizen to embrace faith equally. This legal affirmation is in line with the findings of Ardi et al. (2021) that official recognition of the state through a legal umbrella has been proven to make diversity more acceptable to the wider community. Novelty in this context is the use of legal status to break up 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 the ruling law.

Furthermore, informants DS and H integrate compliance with the law as part of their moral responsibility in maintaining harmony between citizens. State policies at the macroecosystem layer indirectly form a pattern of safer social interaction at the child's smallest environmental level. The expansion of the theory is seen in the experience of informant H, where state recognition of a school of beliefs serves as a logical stamp that saves local cultural heritage from the risk of discrimination. On the other hand, the use of the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* by MY informants has also proven to be an effective explanatory tool to simplify the concept of pluralism for children. This official motto has finally transformed into a practical parenting guideline that is able to suppress the potential seeds of rejection in children from an early age. In closing, BS informants felt a guarantee of psychological security in educating children thanks to the Pancasila philosophy that guarantees justice in diversity. This synergy between the protection of the law and the nation's philosophy ensures that parents' efforts have a solid ideological foundation to ward off the influence of radical views in the future.

## CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the strengthening of religious tolerance in child upbringing within Gunungkidul's Religious Moderation Village was 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 demonstrated that cultivating tolerance in children was 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 through 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.

From a scientific perspective, this study contributed to the fields of family psychology and religious moderation studies by providing a conceptual understanding of how tolerance-based parenting practices at the family level were strengthened through the interaction between

social environments and state-supported values. However, this study had limitations, including the reliance on perspectives from father figures only, which may have resulted in a limited representation of family experiences, as well as practical constraints during field data collection, such as limited interview time and external interruptions at interview locations. Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to incorporate mothers' perspectives to explore potential differences in how parents utilize pluralistic social environments and national values in parenting practices. Future studies should also ensure more controlled interview settings to minimize external influences. For family psychology practitioners and community counselors, the development of positive parenting psychoeducation modules that integrate inclusive social interaction practices and national values is recommended. Furthermore, parents are encouraged to continue involving children in positive interfaith interactions within their communities and to utilize national values as a foundation for simple yet meaningful tolerance education within the family.

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