

STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE Comparing Muslim Students at Public Schools and *Pesantren*

Sulaiman Mappiasse | IAIN Manado, Indonesia

Hayadin | National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Indonesia

Corresponding author: sulaiman.mappiasse@iain-manado.ac.id

Abstract: Due to modernization and globalization, Indonesian Muslims today face complicated difficulties related to cultural diversity. The moderation allows Muslims to learn the religion from a variety of sources both inside and outside of school. Religious education is typically taught in public schools, boarding schools, and *madrasas*. This article aims to identify the religious tolerance among students at public schools and *Pesantren*. The study also examines the causes of the tolerable inequalities among students in three different school categories by putting the phenomenon in a social and policy context. The Data were collected by distributing survey to 926 students in 2021 in North Sulawesi. According to the findings, Muslim students in public schools and public madrasas are significantly more tolerant than those at *Pesantren*, and both groups of students are equally tolerant. Our understanding of how educational policies affect Muslim students' religious tolerance outside of Java has been expanded by this surprising finding.

Keywords: Madrasa, *pesantren*, religious diversity, religious tolerance.

Introduction

The holy book of Islam and other religions teaches harmony and the value of coexistence¹. No religion promotes hatred and enmity². Therefore, every faith adherent should make their noble mission to uphold harmony. Indonesia, a country with the largest proportion of

¹ A Omer, "Religion and the Study of Peace: Practice without Reflection," *Religions* 12, 12 (2021).

² C Schliesser, "Religion and Peace-Anatomy of a Love-Hate Relationship," *Religions* 11, 5 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11050219>.

Muslim in the world³ should be an example of religious tolerance⁴. Science, technology, creativity and innovation have encouraged the birth of various cultures, including religious beliefs. To prevent harmful excesses, such diversity necessitates careful consideration. One important area to address this is Education⁵. Furthermore, various countries pay attention to religious education with various patterns and systems. Many nations realized the urgency to educate citizens about other religions and identities through education. They, however, adopted distinguished approaches. Some states, such as the United States of America, do not allow religion as a subject to be taught at public schools.⁶ Others, like the United Kingdom, Finland, and Iceland, teach students about religions through a specific subject.⁷ Those states incorporate the teaching of religion in public schools through an independent subject following two main paradigms: cultural or phenomenological design and confessional design. Indonesia today applies a confessional and doctrinal approach to teaching religions.⁸ Each student should learn about and commit to a particular religion. Some argued that this approach would make students less tolerant of others because they are not exposed to other faiths well.⁹ In contrast, many argued that this approach would make

³ Robert W. Hefner, "The Study of Religious Freedom in Indonesia," *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 11, 2 (2013): pp. 18–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274-2013.808038>.

⁴ R W Hefner, "Islamic Tolerance: The Struggle for a Pluralist Ethics in Contemporary Indonesia," *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict and Mediation in Pluralist Societies* (Taylor and Francis, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429496325>.

⁵ A Cabezudo and M Haavelsrud, "The Urgency of Linking Peace and Citizenship Education," *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 14, 4 (2022): pp. 363–77, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-02-2022-0694>.

⁶ Florian Pohl, *Islamic Education and the Public Sphere: Today's Pesantren in Indonesia* (Münster, Germany: Waxmann, 2009).

⁷ Hanna Ragnarsdóttir et al., "Diversity, Religion, and Tolerance: Young Adults' Views on Cultural and Religious Diversity in a Multicultural Society in Iceland," *Religion and Education* 47, 4 (2020): pp. 3–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2020.1828233>; Nurwanto and Carole M. Cusack, "Addressing Multicultural Societies: Lessons from Religious Education Curriculum Policy in Indonesia and England," *Journal of Religious Education* 64, 3 (2017): pp. 157–78, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-017-0040-x>.

⁸ Charlene Tan, *Islamic Education and Introduction: The Case in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

⁹ Dicky Sofjan, "Learning about Religions: An Indonesian Religious Literacy Program as a Multifaith Site for Mutual Learning," *Religions* 11, 9 (2020), p. 433.

the students more religious and tolerant. They would have opportunities to learn about their religions in classrooms and other religions from social subjects or daily lived diversity,¹⁰ including from within-school experiences.¹¹

Against this debate, many have studied religious tolerance from within and without the education system in Indonesia. The last several years have seen the rise of religious intolerance and the call for better religious tolerance among school students,¹² college students,¹³ teachers, and lecturers.¹⁴ Yet, despite the growing literature on Muslim students' religious tolerance, most studies focused on the description and guidance of learning religious tolerance at schools, madrasas, or *pesantren*.¹⁵ In addition, they tended to be situated in the Western part of Indonesia with a different development phase and history. This study located in North Sulawesi, one of the most tolerant regions in the Eastern Indonesia, but less developed than Java in terms of education, especially private Islamic education, or *madrasa*. The study compared the level of religious tolerance among Muslim students attending public schools, public *madrasas* with both religious diversity and homogeneity. Regarding the school status in this study, the general, vocational high schools and senior high madrasas refer to

¹⁰ Ben K. C. Laksana and Bronwyn E. Wood, "Navigating Religious Diversity: Exploring Young People's Lived Religious Citizenship in Indonesia," *Journal of Youth Studies* (2018).

¹¹ Raihani, "A Whole-School Approach: A Proposal for Education for Tolerance in Indonesia," *Theory and Research in Education* 9, 1 (2011): pp. 23–39.

¹² Suhadi et al., "The Politics of Religious Education: The 2013 Curriculum, and the Public Space of the School" (Yogyakarta, 2015), <http://crcs.ugm.ac.id/news/3586/-the-politics-of-religious-education-the-2013-curriculum-and-the-public-space-of-the-school.html>.

¹³ Mun'im Sirry, "Muslim Student Radicalism and Self-Deradicalization in Indonesia," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (2020).

¹⁴ Convey Report, "Planting Seeds in a Barren Land: A Portrait of the System for Producing Islam Religion Teachers in Indonesia," *Center for the Study of Islam and Social Transformation Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga*, 20 (Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41583-019-0129-1>.

¹⁵ Hairon Salleh, "Creating Multicultural Citizens: A Portrayal of Contemporary Indonesian Education (Book Re)," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 35, 1 (2015): pp. 142–44; Raihani, "Creating a Culture of Religious Tolerance in an Indonesian School," *South East Asia Research* (2014); Florian Pohl, "Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia," *Comparative Education Review* 50, 3 (2006): pp. 389–409.

public schools, and private Islamic schools are *pesantren madrasas*. *Pesantren madrasas* and public high madrasas represent religiously homogenous schools whereas public general and vocational high schools are examples of religiously plural schools.

According to this study, Muslim students at public schools are more tolerant of other religions than Muslim students in *pesantren madrasas*. Similar to this, Muslim students who attend religiously heterogeneous schools exhibit greater religious tolerance than those who attend *pesantren madrasas*, which are predominantly Muslim institutions. It is interesting to note that despite public madrasas having a single religion, the students there are just as accepting of other religions as those at public schools that secular. This surprising conclusion has helped us better understand the religious tolerance of Muslim students by using a comparative approach outside of Java. Unexpectedly, Muslim students who attend public madrasas, which are often religiously diverse, exhibit the same level of religious tolerance as their peers who attend general and vocational public schools. They are also more tolerant than students who attend *pesantren madrasas*. This article contextualizes the issue in terms of social and policy to explain the causes of these differences. Public, private, and Islamic schools are part of the national education system that serves one national agenda. Nonetheless, each type of school has distinguished educational practices, policies, and social conditions that can shape students' values, attitudes, and behaviors.

Religious Tolerance, Diversity, and Education

Religious tolerance has become an essential issue in Muslim countries such as Indonesia, Turkey, Malaysia, and Egypt.¹⁶ Similarly, in non-Muslim countries, in Europe and America, religious tolerance has become an essential element in education to accommodate increasing diversity in everyday life.¹⁷ Differences in language, race, skin color, religion, and belief can become raw materials for building a peaceful civilization, but they can also cause conflicts. Therefore, the

¹⁶ Recep Kaymakcan and Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Teaching for Tolerance in Muslim Majority Societies* (Istanbul: DEM, 2007), <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12389/19887>.

¹⁷ Jan Dobbernack and Tariq Modood, "Curriculum, Educational Culture, and Teaching Tolerance," in *Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Schools Comparative Report*, ed. Marcel Maussen and Veit Bader (Amsterdam: European University Institute; Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2012): pp. 39–48.

differences must be respected and recognized through tolerant attitudes and behavior.¹⁸

Tolerance is one of the essential attitudes and behaviors prerequisites for living in harmony in a diverse and heterogeneous world. Everyone is supposed to accept and respect differences in a pluralistic society. If a person violates the principle of tolerance, they are most likely to disrupt social life. Intolerance, therefore, is the main contributor to social conflicts and violence.¹⁹ Tolerance is nearly vital to daily human life as food and sleep.²⁰ Tolerance functions as a guardian, safeguard, peacemaker, and unifier to realize good relations between community members.²¹ The need for such tolerance has dramatically increased because of an epidemic of hate crimes.²²

In the Global Social Tolerance Index, religious tolerance became one of the dimensions.²³ In Indonesia, religious tolerance is one of the indicators to measure the index of religious harmony. Over several years, the religious tolerance index has been poorer in areas with a Muslim majority with a strong Islamic culture than in the national average or Christian or Hindu majority areas.²⁴ This trend aligns with

¹⁸ Gunter Grass, "Not Love, But Tolerance," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 17, 2 (2008); Natalia Yu. Beregovaya and Olga A. Karlova, "Ideological Phantoms of Civilisation and Culture: Identity and Tolerance," *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences* (2019): pp. 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.17516/1997-1370-0533>.

¹⁹ Adam J Fenton, "Faith, Intolerance, Violence, and Bigotry: Legal and Constitutional Issues of Freedom of Religion in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, 2 (2016): pp. 181–212, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2016.10.2.181-212>.

²⁰ Wendy Brown et al., "What Is Important in Theorizing Tolerance Today?," *Contemporary Political Theory* 14, 2 (2015): pp. 159–64, <https://doi.org/10.1057/cpt.2014.44>.

²¹ Ahmad Suradi, John Kenedi, and Buyung Surahman, "Religious Tolerance in Multicultural Communities: Towards a Comprehensive Approach in Handling Social Conflict," *Udayana Journal of Law and Culture* 4, 2 (2020), p. 229, <https://doi.org/10.24843/ujlc.2020.v04.i02.p06>.

²² Ferdinand J. Potgieter, Johannes L. Van der Walt, and Charste C. Wolluter, "Towards Understanding (Religious) (in)Tolerance in Education," *HTS Theological Studies/Theological Studies* 70, 3 (2014): pp. 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i3.1977>.

²³ Stelios H. Zanakis, William Newburry, and Vasyl Taras, "Global Social Tolerance Index and Multi-Method Country Rankings Sensitivity," *Journal of International Business Studies* 47, 4 (2016): pp. 480–97, <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2016.5>.

²⁴ Muhammad Adlin Sila and Fakhruddin, *Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama 2019*, ed. Nurhata, *Balai Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Agama Makassar* 19 (Jakarta: Litbang Diklat Press, 2020).

the comparative study conducted in 23 Muslim and Western countries.²⁵ Different studies show difficulties in strengthening religious freedom and belief in Indonesia due to existing intolerance, violence, and religious bigotry.²⁶ The research found that school type plays a vital role in differentiating students' tolerance within the school setting. For instance, in Pakistan, students attending madrasas were less tolerant to other religion than public and private schools.²⁷ Therefore, many Muslim scholars realized the need for Muslim-majority countries to review their religious and social education curriculum to ensure that it will help the youth grow with the recognition and respect for other religions.²⁸

Over the last several years, the government of Indonesia has stepped in to encounter the increasing spread of radicalism and religious intolerance by promoting religious moderation programs.²⁹ Recently, this program has reached a new phase. The government has incorporated it into nation-building. Different projects have been proceeding to enlighten the public, such as religious moderation training for religious teachers, faculty, religious practitioners, and government officials.³⁰ There has been significant reform in the religious education curriculum to ensure its contents free from radical

²⁵ Scott Milligan, Robert Andersen, and Robert Brym, "Assessing Variation in Tolerance in 23 Muslim-Majority and Western Countries," *Canadian Review of Sociology* 51, 3 (2014): pp. 239–61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12046>.

²⁶ Nicola Colbran, "Realities and Challenges in Realising Freedom of Religion or Belief in Indonesia," *International Journal of Human Rights* 14, 5 (2010): pp. 678–704; Fenton, "Faith, Intolerance, Violence, and Bigotry: Legal and Constitutional Issues of Freedom of Religion in Indonesia."

²⁷ Saba Hanif, Majid Hassan Ali, and Janelle Carlson, "What Predicts Religious Tolerance? Education or Religiosity in Pakistan's Multi-Religious Society," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 27, 3 (2020): pp. 530–54.

²⁸ Kaymakcan and Leirvik, *Teaching for Tolerance in Muslim Majority Societies*.

²⁹ Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2020); Ismatu Ropi, "Whither Religious Moderation? The State and Management of Religious Affairs in Contemporary Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 26, 3 (2019): pp. 597–601.

³⁰ Dicky Sofjan et al., "Modul Pengayaan Wacana Keagamaan Bagi Penyuluh Agama" (Jakarta, 2019); MORA, "Perkuat Moderasi, Kemenag Bekali Guru Madrasah Literasi Agama Lintas Budaya," Indonesia Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2021, <https://kemenag.go.id/read/perkuat-moderasi-kemenag-bekali-guru-madrasah-literasi-agama-lintas-budaya-ze8xy>.

ideas.³¹ Some research implies that changing the curriculum contents may not guarantee that students will change accordingly. The social and cultural environment and school system where the curriculum operates will be essential in determining success.³²

Islam as a Tolerant Religion

Tolerance is one of Islam's religious values, based on the Al-Quran, the holy book of Islam,³³ and the prophetic teaching³⁴. Islam itself means safety and peace³⁵. All teachings and rules in Islam aim to build and realize peace and prosperity, not enacted to become a problematic and fanatical religion³⁶. The prophet Muhammad did not come with extremism and bigotry³⁷. The purpose of the revelation of the Al-Quran to the Prophet Muhammad is to make human life more comfortable, straightforward, and manageable³⁸. Islam always want humans to live in peace, order, morality, and security³⁹.

³¹ Fuji F. Permana, "Kemenag Luncurkan Empat Model Moderasi Beragama," *Republika Online*, 2021, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/qzvpwu366/kemenag-luncurkan-empat-modul-moderasi-beragama>.

³² Julia Martínez-Ariño and Sara Teinturier, "Faith-Based Schools in Contexts of Religious Diversity: An Introduction," *Religion and Education* 46, 2 (2019): pp. 147–58; Louise Pirouet, "Religious Education for a Multi-Racial Society," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 12, 2 (1982): pp. 122–29; John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, ed. Faculty Editor Jim Manis, *A Penn State Electronic Classics Publication* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001).

³³ M Irfan, "Peace and the Quran in the Twenty-First Century," *International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 8, 4 (2018): pp. 23–28.

³⁴ Ida Zilio-Grandi, "The Virtue of Tolerance: Notes on the Root *Sm-h* in the Islamic Tradition," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, 4 (2019): pp. 429–37.

³⁵ Amitabh Pal, "*Islam*" Means Peace: Understanding the Muslim Principle of Nonviolence Today (ABC-CLIO, 2011).

³⁶ Ibrahim Canan, "Islam as the Religion of Peace and Tolerance," *Terror and Suicide Attacks: An Islamic Perspective* (The Light New Jersey, 2004).

³⁷ Rawaa Mahmoud Hussain, *A Monograph on Islamic Toleration*, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publication* (IJSRP Inc., 2020).

³⁸ Naseem Akhter and Abdul Qadoos, "Islam Is the Religion of Peace: Analytical Review from the Life of Holy Prophet (PBUH)," *Bannu University Research Journal in Islamic Studies* 4, 2 (2017).

³⁹ Ibrahim Kalin, "Islam and Peace: A Survey of the Sources of Peace in the Islamic Tradition," *Islamic Studies* 44, 3 (2005): pp. 327–62.

Although there are cases of intolerance and violence involving Muslims^{40,41}, this anomalous behavior is mainly caused by the influence of the social, economic, cultural, and political aspects⁴². In Indonesia, since the end of the Suharto regime, a more intolerant form of Islam has grown, whose adherents have carried out terrorist attacks, waged sectarian wars, and voiced outspoken anti-Western rhetoric⁴³. Responding to cases of violence and intolerance by Muslims, the moderate view is, as stated by Waghid, that there is no relationship between violence and monotheistic religions, including Islam⁴⁴. Therefore, the important thing is maintaining peace and a culture of tolerance, which could be performed through peace education⁴⁵.

Comparing Tolerance Between Muslim Students

In order to find clear information on student religious tolerance, the research is conducted based on a survey in 2021 in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, in five cities and regencies: Manado, Bitung and Kotamobagu, Bolaang Mongondow, and North Bolaang Mongondow. North Sulawesi comprises eleven regencies and four independent cities. It is renowned as a religiously pluralistic area, where 63 percent are Christians compared to 31 percent of Muslims. The respondents were partly drawn from general and vocational public senior high schools, so-called SMAN and SMKN. Both types of schooling accommodate students from all religious backgrounds. Others were selected from public and private *madrasas*, whether public or private *madrasas*, only accommodate Muslim students. The respondents were 926 students: 503 from religiously heterogeneous schools and 423 from religiously homogenous schools. In terms of *madrasas*, 686 students fall in the public *madrasa* category, and the rest of the 240

⁴⁰ P Buresi, "Violence and Warfare in Medieval Western Islam," *History and Anthropology* (2022).

⁴¹ B Milton-Edwards, *Islam and Violence in the Modern Era, Islam and Violence in the Modern Era* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁴² J F Fletcher and B Sergeyev, "Islam and Intolerance in Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan," *Europe - Asia Studies* 54, 2 (2002): pp. 251–75.

⁴³ Z Abuza, *Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia, Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia* (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006).

⁴⁴ Y Waghid, "Islam, Democracy, and Education for Non-Violence," *Ethics and Education* 9, 1 (2014): pp. 69–78.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

students fall in the category of the private *madrasas* under the *pesantren* system.

As shown in Table 1, several schools were conveniently selected to represent school types in each city and regency area the study conducted. Students were also selected conveniently to have enough students in each category of school types across grades.

Table 1. Description of Schools and Respondents Based on School Types

School Type	School (n)	Student (n)	%	Characteristics	
SMAN	10	312	33.7	Public	Heterogeneous
SMKN	5	191	20.6	Public	Heterogeneous
MAN	4	183	19.8	Public	Homogenous
PM	10	240	25.9	Private	Homogenous
Total	29	926	100		

Note: 1. SMAN: General Public Senior High School; 2. SMKN: Vocational Public Senior High School; MAN: Public High Madrasa; PM: *Pesantren* Madrasa

Respondents consisting of 28.5 percent male and 71.5 percent female students are distributed across three grades, each occupying 32.8, 36.7, and 30.4 percent, respectively. Most students are 16 years old, with only 1.9 percent over 18 years and 19.4 percent under 16 years old. Their parents are mostly senior high school graduates: more than 43 percent of fathers and 46 percent of mothers. Only around 15 percent of their parents hold university degrees: almost 16 percent for fathers and 15 percent for mothers.

Religious tolerance is often expressed in attitudes and behaviors that allow everyone to present and practice their beliefs and views in the public sphere without risk.⁴⁶ It is based on mutual recognition of everybody's right to enjoy the freedom to be expected and respected in multicultural societies.⁴⁷ It requires everyone's humiliation of one another in social relations.⁴⁸ When someone is willing to humiliate themselves towards one another, hospitality resulting from such humiliation will treat everyone as a respected guest regardless of their religious identities. A hospitable Muslim or a Christian will treat each

⁴⁶ Joshua N. Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Religious Tolerance," *Journal of Positive Psychology* 12, 1 (2017): pp. 29–35.

⁴⁷ Ragnarsdóttir et al., "Diversity, Religion, and Tolerance: Young Adults' Views on Cultural and Religious Diversity in a Multicultural Society in Iceland."

⁴⁸ Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Religious Tolerance."

other warningly. We define *religious tolerance* in this study as the willingness of everybody to accept other religion in daily life. Such willingness is the key to express openness and hospitality towards others.⁴⁹ In measuring tolerance in that sense, we introduced both interreligious and intra-religious acceptance in our questionnaire. We developed four questions to operationalize this concept using the five Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = not sure; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree).

The patterns of responses that we received for the four questions are as follows:

Tolerance 1: Making religion a determining factor in building collaboration or friendship. Of 926 students, 317 (34.2%) students agreed, and 182 (19.7) strongly agreed to make religion a determining factor in developing collaboration or friendship with others, 239 (25.8%) students disagreed, and only 39 (4.1%) strongly disagreed to do so. So, most (53.9%) made religion a determining factor in collaborations and friendships. The rest of the 147 (16.1%) could not make up their minds on this question. Students' total average scores on this item were 2.61 on five scales.

Tolerance 2: Considering the sameness of religion when choosing a friend. On the contrary, most students (59.5%) did not consider the likeness of faith when choosing a friend. While 178 (19.2%) students agreed and only 39 (4.2) strongly agreed to consider the sameness of religion when choosing a friend, 438 (47.3%) students disagreed, and 113 (12.2%) strongly disagreed with doing so. The undecided on this question were 158 (17.1) students. The total average scores were 3.44.

Tolerance 3: Making the sameness of school of thought or denomination a determining factor in collaboration or friendship. In terms of sameness in the school of thought or denomination in one religion or belief, more students (39.5%) disagree with making it a determining factor in collaboration or friendship. While 226 (24.4%) and 46 (5%) students respectively agreed and strongly agreed to make the likeliness of denomination a determining factor in that, 328 (35.4%) and 40 (4.3%) students respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed to do so. There were 286 (30.9) students who could not decide their views on this question. The total average scores were 3.09.

⁴⁹ Catherine Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 2008).

Tolerance 4: Considering the sameness of school of thought or religious denomination when choosing a friend. Even more students (50.6%) disagree with considering the sameness of the school of thought or religious denomination when choosing a friend. While only 137 (14.8%) and 24 (2.6%) students agreed and strongly agreed, respectively, to consider it, 417 (45%) and 52 (5.6%) students disagreed and strongly disagreed with doing so. Like many, 296 (32%) students could not decide their options. The average scores were 3.36 for this item.

The total responses of the students, then, demonstrate that, on average Muslim students have higher intra-religious tolerances than inter-religious tolerance. They are more willing to accept their religious fellows from other schools of thought than those from different religions.

Table 2. Comparing Public Madrasas and *Pesantren* Madrasas

Item	Response		Mean Total
	MAN (n 183)	PM (n 240)	
I make religion a determining factor in building collaboration or friendship.	2.699	2.308	2.478
I consider the sameness of religion when choosing a friend.	3.459	3.025	3.213
I make the sameness of school of thought or denomination a determining factor in collaboration or friendship.	3.230	2.942	3.066
When choosing a friend, I consider the sameness of the school of thought or religious denomination.	3.421	3.233	3.314
Conclusion	There is a significant difference in tolerance scores for the two groups.		

Table 3. Comparing General and Vocational Public Schools

Item	Response		Mean Total
	SMAN (<i>n</i> 312)	SMKN (<i>n</i> 191)	
I make religion a determining factor in building collaboration or friendship.	2.683	2.770	2.716
I consider the sameness of religion when choosing a friend.	3.596	3.691	3.632
I make the sameness of school of thought or denomination a determining factor in collaboration or friendship.	3.115	3.136	3.123
When choosing a friend, I consider the sameness of the school of thought or religious denomination.	3.404	3.403	3.404
Conclusion	There is no significant difference in tolerance scores for the two groups.		

Table 4. Comparing General & Vocational Public Schools and Public Madrasas

Item	Response		Mean Total
	SMAN & SMKN (<i>n</i> 503)	MAN (<i>n</i> 183)	
I make religion a determining factor in building collaboration or friendship.	2.716	2.699	2.711
I consider the sameness of religion when choosing a friend.	3.632	3.459	3.586
I make the sameness of school of thought or denomination a determining factor in collaboration or friendship.	3.123	3.230	3.152
When choosing a friend, I consider the sameness of the school of thought or religious denomination.	3.404	3.421	3.408
Conclusion	There is no significant difference in religious tolerance scores for the two groups.		

Table 5. Comparing Public Schools and *Pesantren* Madrasas

Item	Response		Mean Total
	SMAN, SMKN & MAN (n 686)	PM (n 240)	
I make religion a determining factor in building collaboration or friendship.	2.711	2.308	2.607
I consider the sameness of religion when choosing a friend.	3.586	3.025	3.441
I make the sameness of school of thought or denomination a determining factor in collaboration or friendship.	3.152	2.942	3.097
When choosing a friend, I consider the sameness of the school of thought or religious denomination.	3.408	3.233	3.363
Conclusion	There is a significant difference in religious tolerance scores for the two groups.		

Table 6. Comparing Religiously Heterogeneous and Homogenous Schools

Item	Response		Mean Total
	SMAN & SMKN (n 503)	MAN & PM (n=423)	
I make religion a determining factor in building collaboration or friendship.	2.716	2.478	2.607
I consider the sameness of religion when choosing a friend.	3.632	3.213	3.441
I make the sameness of school of thought or denomination a determining factor in collaboration or friendship.	3.152	3.066	3.097
When choosing a friend, I consider the sameness of the school of thought or religious denomination.	3.408	3.314	3.363
Conclusion	There is a significant difference in religious tolerance scores for the two groups.		

As shown in the table 2, table 3, table 4, table 5, and table 6, there are significant differences in student scores in religious tolerance, except for scores between general public school and vocational public school students and scores between general and vocational public schools and public madrasas.

The Intersection of School Status and Diversity

It is not surprising that Muslim students from general and vocational public schools have an equal level of religious tolerance because they attend schools where the student body is religiously diverse. However, it is unexpected to learn that Muslim students who participate in public madrasas, typically not diverse religiously, have an equal level of religious tolerance with their counterparts from general and vocational public schools. At the same time, they also are significantly different in their religious tolerance from students at the *pesantren* madrasas.

This finding suggests that public madrasas in Indonesia are only partly different from those in other Muslim countries such as Pakistan, where madrasa students are least tolerant towards religious others.⁵⁰ Like in Pakistan, where madrasas are private, students at *pesantren* madrasas, which are private, in North Sulawesi were found to be significantly less tolerant compared to those at public schools and public madrasas.

Public Schools, Pesantren and Religious Tolerance: Supporting Policy and Social Characteristics

Public schools in Indonesia are generally better than private schools, excluding a few excellent private schools sponsored by wealthy organizations or persons. The same condition is in Islamic schools. This current study compared public and private education in North Sulawesi regarding curriculum, teachers, leadership, funding, and students. In doing so, we expect to clarify why students from *pesantren* madrasas are significantly less tolerant religiously than those at public schools and public madrasas.

All schools adopt the national curriculum and enjoy the right to develop local or institutional strength. However, private schools have higher chances to introduce contents or subjects that they believe can

⁵⁰ Hanif, Ali, and Carlson, "What Predicts Religious Tolerance? Education or Religiosity in Pakistan's Multi-Religious Society."

make them excel in certain areas, such as international languages or local excellence. Good private schools often have a better engagement with students' parents. So, their educational programs tend to cater their demands and needs. In addition, they can teach subjects that typically express their cultural identities. In other words, compared to public schools and madrasas, *pesantren* madrasas have more control over their curriculum design, content, and delivery. As a result, people in the foundation run the *pesantren* madrasas with exclusive vision of teaching Islam to the students. Such orientation will manifest itself in what they teach, how they teach, and who may teach. This exclusivist orientation will directly affect student attitudes and behaviors towards other religions. From our observation, we learned that most *pesantren* madrasas in North Sulawesi have exclusive exposure in their teaching. They have yet to emphasize religious diversity as an essential issue that students should discuss critically. Unlike *pesantren* madrasas, the government controls public schools and madrasas' curricula stricter. Therefore, students at these schools and madrasas are more likely to align with the vision of religious tolerance and national unity that the state supports. Social subjects such as national history, Bahasa Indonesia, and civic education have better resources at public schools and madrasas. Teachers who teach them receive direct supervision from public offices of education supervision.

In North Sulawesi, teachers at general and vocational public schools and madrasas teach social and human sciences, such as religions, languages, history, and ethics, the same way as their counterparts outside North Sulawesi do. However, teachers at public madrasas put a higher portion of teaching contents of Islamic studies than those at general and vocational public schools. Students at general and vocational public schools only study their specific religious education for two to three hours a week. In contrast, public madrasa students can study Islamic subjects for about ten hours per week. Time allocated for religious content for public madrasas is often expressed in a ratio of 30:70, meaning thirty percent for Islamic and seventy percent for general or secular content. In *pesantren* madrasas, the percentage for Islamic content becomes 70:30. In other words, on the continuum, religious content is offered from the least at general and vocational public schools to the most at *pesantren* madrasas. As a result, students at *pesantren* madrasas have higher exposure to normative religious teaching, which is primarily dogmatic. Overemphasis on such dogmatic

content without enough social and cultural perspectives will prevent students from developing critical thinking. They will miss the ability to incorporate social considerations in their religious understanding. Accordingly, they are more likely to have intolerant views towards religious others.

In addition, teachers at general and vocational public schools and public madrasas are primarily graduates from secular public universities, except for religious teachers. They are mainly graduates from Islamic public universities. Nevertheless, this is only sometimes the case in *pesantren* madrasas in North Sulawesi. As the curriculum contents are primarily Islamic subjects and the main emphasis is on Islamic knowledge, most teachers are religious teachers who are Islamic studies graduates. In some cases, these religious teachers should teach secular subjects, including natural sciences and math, where they still need adequate training. These *pesantren* madrasas are also very welcome to religious teachers who earn their Islamic degrees from other *pesantrens* or madrasas in Java or Arab-speaking countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Therefore, graduates from such *pesantren* or countries often affiliate with *pesantren* to build their careers as teachers and religious leaders. Few of them establish their *pesantren* in various areas in North Sulawesi. Despite their excellent knowledge of normative Islam, these teachers are more likely to have poor understanding of social issues that they should consider in teaching students to become good citizens in the era of globalization and diversity.

Furthermore, despite many *pesantren* and Arab-speaking country alumni chose to work as religious teachers and leaders, only a few religious teachers at *pesantren* madrasas in North Sulawesi had good Arabic language ability and mastered Islamic Arabic literature. Compared to *pesantren* madrasas in Java, finding suitable Arabic and Islamic literature classes in *pesantrens* across North Sulawesi is not easy. Students of the *pesantren* often study and live in the dormitory. However, they do not receive regular and suitable standard Arabic classes, which are fundamental to master any Islamic sciences beyond traditional Islamic schools. Therefore, *pesantren* culture is less intense than expected, as most *pesantren* madrasas in Java. Such limitations deter them from understanding Islam more comprehensively, leading to religious exclusivism.

While public schools and madrasas have more permanent teachers, private schools, including private madrasas, have fewer permanent teachers with stable salaries. The scarcity of permanent teachers at *pesantren* in North Sulawesi is evident. Most *pesantren* teachers are recruited by the foundation responsible for the *pesantren*. Recruiting quality teachers to teach at *pesantren* has become more difficult because it requires additional competence and responsibilities. *Pesantren* teachers must spend more time at schools to care for the students living in *pesantren* dorms for twenty-four hours. Also, *pesantren* teachers, so-called *ustadz* for a man or *ustadzah* for a woman, often receive lower payments. They, however, are well known for their dedication and commitment. They consider teachings as good services to the community with religiously sincere motives to gain the love of God, not only in worldly life but, more importantly, in the hereafter life.

In terms of leadership, a *pesantren* often entrusts their leadership to a charismatic figure, the so-called *kyai*.⁵¹ *Kyai* is a central figure⁵² that heavily influences activities within the *pesantren*, including contents to teach and knowledge to learn.⁵³ Such a closed and traditional leadership style may influence how students perceive other religions. However, we should remember that not all Islamic boarding schools with these characteristics have an intolerant tendency. Many Islamic boarding schools have transformed into modern, entrepreneurial, and community development-oriented institutions, such as the Al-Muayyad Windan Islamic boarding school⁵⁴ or the Alhikmah Islamic boarding school⁵⁵ and Gontor.⁵⁶ The historical roots of these *pesantrens* teach

⁵¹ Naufal Ahmad Rijalul Alam, "Religious Education Practices in Pesantren: Charismatic Kyai Leadership in Academic and Social Activities," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 8, 2 (2020): pp. 195–212.

⁵² Ferry Muhammadsyah Siregar, "Religious Leader and Charismatic Leadership in Indonesia: The Role of Kyai in Pesantren in Java," *Jurnal Kanistara* 3, 2 (2013).

⁵³ Mohammad Muchlis Solichin, "Interrelation Kiai Authorities, Curriculum and Learning Culture in Pesantren Indonesia," *Tarbiya: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 5, 1 (2018): pp. 86–100; Muhamad Agung Ali Fikri et al., "Leadership Model in Pesantren: Managing Knowledge Sharing through Psychological Climate," *International Journal of Social and Management Studies* 2, 3 (2021): pp. 149–60.

⁵⁴ Pohl, "Islamic Education and Civil Society: Reflections on the Pesantren Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia."

⁵⁵ Hayadin, "The Changing of Santri's Preferences Pertaining Studies and Professions at the Pesantren Alhikmah in Brebes, Central Java," *Al-Qalam* 23, 2 (2017): pp. 198–208.

pluralism, tolerance, progressive ideas, anti-radicalism, and anti-violence.⁵⁷

The funding scheme is another distinguished element in *pesantren*. Although the government allocates funding for all types of schooling, the financial sources for most *pesantren* madrasas are private. The economic sustainability of *pesantren* is highly dependent on the support of the community members, particularly students' parents. Therefore, how much financial and logistic resources a *pesantren* may gain from its constituents rely on the students' socio-economic status. If most students come from better family background, the *pesantren* will be more flexible and robust in financing its educational activities and facilities, and recruiting more qualified teachers. From our observations during the fieldwork, most *pesantren* madrasas in North Sulawesi experienced financial constraints. As a result, they cannot develop teaching resources, particularly teachers, and advanced techniques in content and design.

The final aspect to consider is the student body of the *pesantren* madrasas in North Sulawesi. It is different from general and vocational public schools and public madrasas. Students who attend general and vocational public schools and public madrasas primarily reside around the area where schools or madrasas exist. Conversely, students who attend *pesantren* madrasas mainly come from locations of other cities or regencies far from where the madrasas are. The same is true for their teachers. The *pesantren* foundations often recruit them from other *pesantrens* outside North Sulawesi, such as Central and South Sulawesi or Java, where Islamic education has been well established. Since most public schools and public madrasas are in religiously diverse neighborhoods in cities, their students mostly come from diverse communities. Conversely, *pesantren* students are more likely to originate

⁵⁶ Lance Castles, "Notes on the Islamic School at Gontor," *Indonesia*, 1 (1966): pp. 30–45.

⁵⁷ Ronald Lukens-Bull, "The Traditions of Pluralism, Accommodation, and Anti-Radicalism in the Pesantren Community," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 2, 1 (2008): pp. 1–15; Khoirul Umam, "Developing Management Standards Based on Islamic Values: Case Study of Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 1, 2 (2014); Jeanne Francoise, "Pesantren as the Source of Peace Education," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 25, 1 (2017), p. 41; Marzuki Marzuki, Miftahuddin Miftahuddin, and Mukhamad Murdiono, "Multicultural Education in Salaf Pesantren and Prevention of Religious Radicalism in Indonesia," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan* 39, 1 (2020): pp. 12–25.

from a religiously more uniform environment. As a result, students at public schools and public madrasas have higher exposure to lived religious diversity from their childhood.

Pesantren Madrasas and Religious Intolerance: Lived Religious Diversity

There is a significant difference in student scores on religious tolerance between those who attend religiously heterogeneous schools and those who attend religiously homogenous schools. As aforementioned, most students at *pesantren* come from cities or regencies outside the areas where the *pesantren* exists. Areas of their origins are often Muslim-majority places. When they come from Muslim minority districts, they are more likely from Islamically strong families. It is also important to note that many students at *pesantren* come from families living in rural areas. When they send their children to a *pesantren*, these families often prefer to send them to *pesantren* in other places outside their hometown or cities. Many of these families have economic constraints. Therefore, their children must live as modestly as possible during their educational training in *pesantren*. As a result, students at *pesantren* are more likely to have less exposure to religious diversity because they mainly have grown up in mono-religious neighborhoods. They live in a solitary compound in *pesantren*, making it challenging to have interreligious experiences.

In contrast, general, vocational, and public madrasa students are born in religious and culturally diverse environments, and religious diversity is naturally available to them daily. When they come to public schools, the national curriculum and teachers mainly trained within public universities reinforce the religious tolerance they naturally gain from their social reality.

Conclusion

This article extends our understanding of Muslim students' religious tolerance towards other religions in Indonesia's religious education system. In conclusion, differences in curriculum design, recruitment of teachers, the center of leadership, sources of funding, and social origins of students cause differences in religious tolerance among students at public schools, public madrasas, and *pesantren* madrasas. Although, the finding indicated that students at *pesantren* madrasas in North Sulawesi are much less tolerant in their perception

of religious tolerance than their counterparts at public schools, this result cannot be applied to *pesantren* outside North Sulawesi. This problem suggests that in order to enhance the level of religious tolerance in North Sulawesi, the government must give special consideration to *pesantren* madrasas. Nobody desires that *pesantren* madrasas foster intolerance towards Islam, as is the case in other Muslim countries.⁵⁸ The government and society must introduce and strengthen multicultural education and educational approach while also preserving the traditions and values of *pesantren*.⁵⁹ Students will develop their critical thinking that will help respect other religions as a result of this support for the *pesantren*.⁶⁰

The finding showed that general and vocational public schools and students from public madrasas, which are examples of religiously homogenous schools, both exhibit an identical degree of religious tolerance. The importance of exposing students to religious diversity is supported by this finding. They should be given direct exposure to religious diversity because it is fundamental for developing religious tolerance. Such action can be successful only if religious tolerance is consciously envisioned as a principle that the education embrace. They will develop a learning environment and strategies that fit the goal of tolerance.⁶¹ Such a need becomes apparent when we take into account the fact that students in Indonesia learn their religions in segregated classrooms and a confessional doctrinal manner.⁶²

Schools and madrasas must have preconceived notions about their students' attitudes and views about other religions and tolerance to counter the social pattern and arrangement that students have both

⁵⁸ Hanif, Ali, and Carlson, "What Predicts Religious Tolerance? Education or Religiosity in Pakistan's Multi-Religious Society."

⁵⁹ Tan, *Islamic Education and Introduction: The Case in Indonesia*; Raihani, "Creating a Culture of Religious Tolerance in an Indonesian School."

⁶⁰ Lynn Davies, "One Size Does Not Fit All: Complexity, Religion, Secularism, and Education," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 34, 2 (2014): pp. 184–99.

⁶¹ Nina. Burridge and Andrew. Chodkiewicz, *Representations of Cultural Diversity in School and Community Settings, Centre for Research in Learning and Change* (2008), <http://www.free-republic.com/focus/f-news/1538757/posts>. Photograph; Raihani, "Creating a Culture of Religious Tolerance in an Indonesian School."

⁶² Laksana and Wood, "Navigating Religious Diversity: Exploring Young People's Lived Religious Citizenship in Indonesia."

within and outside of schools and madrasas.⁶³ Therefore, they can develop educational content, programs, and activities that can help them to become more tolerant. To make students more approachable and welcoming towards different religions, it is crucial to train them to have intellectual humility.⁶⁴ Understanding that everyone is vulnerable to mistakes and should always be ready to listen to and learn from others, especially those with differing opinions, is a sign of intellectual humility. When someone feel intellectually humiliated, they will admit that they may not comprehend their religion correctly, and those of different beliefs may be able to point out these inaccuracies.[]

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⁶³ Lynn Revell, "Religious Education, Conflict and Diversity: An Exploration of Young Children's Perceptions of Islam," *Educational Studies* (2010).

⁶⁴ Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Religious Tolerance."

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