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The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Instilling the Values of Religious Tolerance in Schools: Case Study at SMPN 1 Tempilang

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in instilling religious tolerance values at SMPN 1 Tempilang, a multicultural school in Bangka Belitung. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 25 participants, participant observation of classroom and extracurricular activities, and comprehensive document analysis. The findings reveal six integrated dimensions of the PAI teacher's role, conceptualized as the IPETAB model (Internalization of Six Role Types for Actualization of Religious Tolerance): Educator, Role Model, Counselor, Facilitator, Motivator, and Evaluator. Furthermore, five effective pedagogical methods were identified, with the innovative Encounter-Based Learning (EBL) proving highly effective in dismantling prejudices through authentic interfaith interactions. While challenges such as exclusive social media narratives and home-school value inconsistencies persist, the supportive school ecosystem and visionary leadership have successfully transformed student diversity into a productive learning environment. Empirical School Self-Evaluation (EDS) data corroborates this success, demonstrating a significant increase in student tolerance scores from 72.4 to 87.3 over three years, alongside zero recorded interreligious conflicts.

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Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; Religious Tolerance; IPETAB Model

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation characterized by profound diversity in religion, ethnicity, and culture, which serves as both a valuable national asset and a significant challenge for maintaining social cohesion. When this pluralism is not managed effectively, it holds the potential to escalate into social conflicts, particularly those rooted in differing religious beliefs and theological understandings. In recent years, the preservation of religious harmony has become increasingly critical to safeguarding national unity amidst a rapidly changing and complex global landscape (Kholish & Faqih, 2025; Tobroni et al., 2025).

Despite national efforts to promote interfaith harmony, religious intolerance and faith-based social conflicts remain pressing issues in Indonesia. Recent reports indicate that violations of religious freedom persist annually, with hundreds of documented incidents across the archipelago (Institute, 2022). Furthermore, contemporary educational surveys reveal a concerning trend among students, who increasingly exhibit exclusive religious attitudes and a potential propensity for intolerance if not guided by appropriate, inclusive educational interventions (Güleç, 2026; Suryani & Muslim, 2024).

Education serves as a primary strategic avenue for mitigating these issues and instilling values of religious tolerance. Within this framework, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers bear a profound responsibility to cultivate moderate, inclusive, and tolerant religious values among students. Beyond merely transmitting doctrinal knowledge, PAI teachers are expected to function as multifaceted agents of character building, actively serving as role models, counselors, motivators, and facilitators in shaping students' moral and social behaviors (Alfiyanto et al., 2023; Alfiyanto, Hidayati, et al., 2022; Alfiyanto, Ibrahim, et al., 2022; Ikhwan et al., 2023; Nugraha, 2022).

However, a critical research gap remains in the existing literature regarding the systematic, in-depth, and contextual examination of PAI teachers' roles in fostering religious tolerance within specific multicultural school settings. Previous studies have predominantly been partial or fragmented, often isolating pedagogical strategies, teaching methods, and teacher roles rather than analyzing them as an integrated, holistic system (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2023). Consequently, there is a pressing need for comprehensive research that bridges this theoretical and practical divide to provide actionable insights for educators.

To address this gap, the present study conducts a comprehensive qualitative case study to

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examine the role of PAI teachers in instilling religious tolerance values at SMPN 1 Tempilang, a notably multicultural school in Bangka Belitung. By exploring the integrated dimensions of the teachers' roles and the innovative pedagogical methods they employ, this research aims to provide a contextualized, evidence-based model for enhancing religious tolerance education in diverse Indonesian school environments (Fauyan et al., 2026; Ikhsan et al., 2026; Masduki et al., 2026).

This study employed a qualitative case study approach conducted at SMPN 1 Tempilang, a highly diverse school in Bangka Belitung with students from four distinct religious backgrounds (Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism). Data were collected through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews with 25 key informants (including teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community leaders), participant observation of 12 classroom sessions and 8 extracurricular activities, and comprehensive document analysis of 24 lesson plans, school programs, and the 2024/2025 School Self-Evaluation Report (EDS). The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification. To ensure trustworthiness, data validity was rigorously maintained through method and source triangulation, member checking, and prolonged observation conducted between February and March 2026.

RESULTS

Integrated Dimensions of the PAI Teacher's Role: The IPETAB Model

The research findings reveal six deeply integrated dimensions of the Islamic Religious Education teacher's role in instilling religious tolerance. These dimensions are conceptualized as the IPETAB model, representing the internalization of six role types for the actualization of religious tolerance. Rather than operating in isolation, these roles function as a cohesive, mutually reinforcing systemic framework. This holistic approach ensures that the educational process addresses the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains simultaneously. Consequently, the teacher's influence permeates every aspect of the students' moral and social development within the school environment.

As educators and role models, teachers intentionally infuse tolerance values into every learning session without altering the core subject matter. They successfully balance theological understanding with genuine empathy and practical tolerant behaviors in daily life. Students consistently identify the teacher's personal behavior as the most influential factor in shaping their tolerant attitudes, surpassing formal curriculum materials. This profound impact stems from a

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strong theological foundation, where teachers act out of sincere religious conviction rather than mere professional obligation. Such authentic consistency between belief and action establishes a powerful, credible example for adolescents to emulate.

Furthermore, teachers act as counselors, facilitators, motivators, and evaluators to sustain this tolerant environment. They employ diagnostic and Socratic questioning techniques to guide students toward self-discovery, avoiding direct confrontation when addressing intolerant behaviors. The classroom climate is deliberately cultivated to be safe, inclusive, and free from threats, transforming religious differences into productive learning assets. Intrinsic motivation is fostered through recognition, leadership opportunities, and connecting tolerance to authentic Islamic identity. Finally, holistic evaluation methods, including reflective journals and behavioral portfolios, ensure continuous improvement and comprehensive assessment of student character.

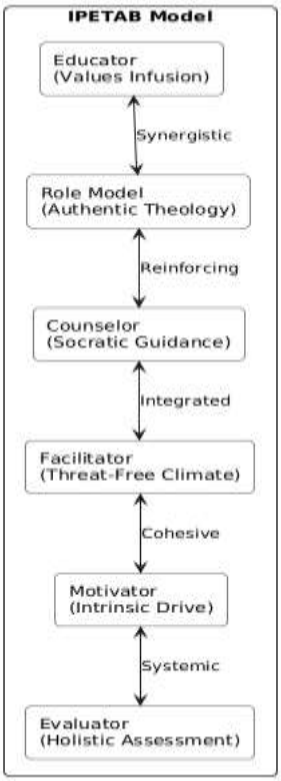


Figure 1. The Interconnected Structure of the IPETAB Model

The diagram above visually represents the IPETAB model, illustrating how the six distinct roles of the PAI teacher are interconnected. Instead of functioning as isolated duties, the roles of Educator, Role Model, Counselor, Facilitator, Motivator, and Evaluator are bound by synergistic

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and reinforcing relationships. This interconnectedness highlights that a deficiency in one area, such as a lack of authentic role modeling, would create a credibility gap that undermines the entire pedagogical effort. The visual structure emphasizes the systemic and holistic nature of the framework, demonstrating how each component actively supports the others to achieve the ultimate goal of actualizing religious tolerance among students.

Effective Pedagogical Methods for Fostering Religious Tolerance

The study identified five primary pedagogical methods that teachers employ in a highly flexible and combinatory manner. The dialogic method serves as the most consistent approach, positioning the teacher as a co-learner who facilitates honest and open discussions across different religious perspectives. This technique actively develops students' perspective-taking abilities through targeted, thought-provoking questioning. Complementing this is the modeling method, which manifests in concrete, daily actions such as warmly greeting students of all faiths and respectfully acknowledging their religious holidays. These foundational methods establish a baseline of mutual respect that permeates the entire school culture.

Contextual Teaching and Learning is vividly realized through the use of authentic local narratives from the Tempilang community regarding interfaith harmony. Teachers organize practical activities, including visits to various houses of worship and collaborative social projects across different religious communities. Alongside this, the habituation method is implemented through structured, routine programs that normalize tolerant behavior. These include monthly meetings of the Interreligious Student Harmony Forum and the consistent practice of exchanging holiday greetings. Such repetitive, positive actions gradually internalize tolerance as a natural character trait rather than a forced obligation.

The most innovative finding is the implementation of Encounter-Based Learning, which brings guest speakers from other religious communities directly into the classroom. This method creates authentic, face-to-face interactions that effectively dismantle prejudices and stereotypes in a controlled, educational setting. Furthermore, participatory-collaborative learning is utilized through cross-religious group projects, proving that cooperation toward a shared, supraordinate goal is a powerful mechanism for reducing intergroup bias. Together, these methods transform the classroom from a space of theoretical instruction into a dynamic laboratory for practical tolerance.

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Table 1. Core Pedagogical Methods and Their Implementation Strategies

Pedagogical Method	Key Implementation Strategy	Primary Objective
Dialogic Discussion	Perspective-based questioning and open dialogue	Develop perspective-taking and critical thinking
Modeling	Concrete daily actions and cross-religious greetings	Establish baseline mutual respect and emulation
Contextual Learning	Local harmony narratives and interfaith worship visits	Connect theoretical values to authentic local reality
Habituation	Monthly harmony forums and routine tolerant practices	Internalize tolerance as a natural, automatic character trait
Encounter-Based Learning	Inviting guest speakers from other faiths into class	Dismantle prejudices through authentic, face-to-face interaction

The table above summarizes the five core pedagogical methods identified in the research, detailing their specific implementation strategies and primary educational objectives. It demonstrates a clear progression from foundational respect-building techniques, such as modeling and dialogic discussion, to more advanced, experiential approaches like habituation and Encounter-Based Learning. Each method is deliberately designed to address different facets of student development, ensuring that tolerance is not merely taught as an abstract concept but is actively practiced and internalized. This structured variety allows teachers to adapt their instructional strategies to the specific needs and dynamics of their diverse classrooms.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Tolerance Education

The successful implementation of tolerance education is heavily reliant on several critical supporting factors within the school ecosystem. Foremost among these is the visionary and highly supportive leadership of the school principal, who provides not only verbal encouragement but also tangible structural support. This includes allocating specific budgets for interfaith student programs and integrating tolerance indicators into formal teacher performance evaluations. Additionally, the historically tolerant local culture of Tempilang, characterized by centuries of peaceful coexistence between distinct communities, provides an incredibly rich and authentic pedagogical context.

The high professional competence and deep personal commitment of the Islamic Religious

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Education teachers further amplify these supportive conditions. These educators possess a robust blend of pedagogical, theological, social, and emotional competencies necessary to navigate complex interfaith dynamics. Furthermore, the inherent religious diversity of the student body itself serves as an invaluable, living laboratory for experiential learning. The presence of students from four distinct religious backgrounds creates organic opportunities for meaningful interaction that cannot be artificially replicated in a homogenous environment.

Conversely, several significant inhibiting factors pose ongoing challenges to the internalization of tolerant values. The pervasive influence of social media, often saturated with attractively packaged exclusive religious content, forces teachers to compete with highly influential digital narratives. Value inconsistencies between the school environment and certain family backgrounds frequently cause internal conflicts for students, weakening the educational process. Moreover, the strictly limited weekly instructional time for religious education is insufficient for deeply addressing affective and psychomotor domains, while the involvement of non-religious teachers in promoting tolerance remains suboptimal.

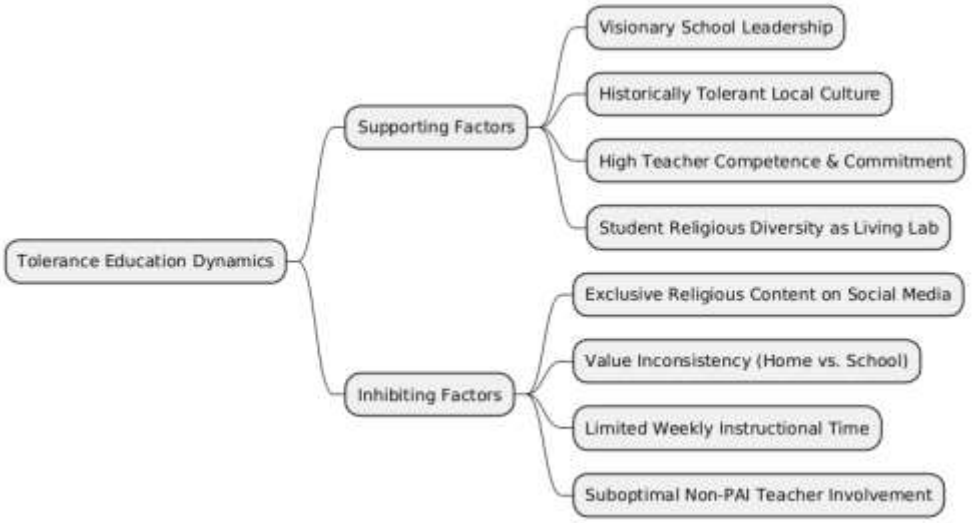


Figure 2. Ecological Dynamics of Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The mind map above provides a clear, visual dichotomy of the dynamic forces that shape the landscape of tolerance education at the school. On one side, it highlights the robust supporting factors, such as visionary leadership and the rich, diverse student body, which act as catalysts for positive character development. On the other side, it outlines the persistent inhibiting factors, including digital misinformation and systemic constraints like limited instructional time. This visual

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representation underscores the complex ecological system in which teachers operate, emphasizing that successful tolerance education requires actively leveraging supportive elements while strategically mitigating the identified barriers.

The Novelty and Empirical Effectiveness of the IPETAB Model

The IPETAB model represents the primary scientific novelty of this research, offering a distinct advancement over previous theoretical frameworks. Unlike earlier models that primarily focus on cognitive roles or are designed for homogenous religious school settings, this framework is comprehensively tailored to multicultural environments. Its first major advantage is its integrative nature, ensuring that all six roles function as a unified system to prevent any credibility gaps in the teacher's approach. Secondly, it is deeply contextual, having been developed inductively from the empirical realities of Indonesian multicultural schools rather than being deductively imposed from foreign theories.

The third distinct advantage of the model lies in its high applicability, as every role component is accompanied by concrete, actionable strategies and techniques. This practical orientation allows educators to immediately implement the framework without requiring extensive theoretical translation. The success of this model hinges entirely on three core principles: consistency across all contexts, authenticity rooted in sincere belief rather than external demands, and adaptability to the unique characteristics of the students. When these principles are maintained, the model effectively bridges the gap between abstract educational theory and daily classroom practice.

The empirical effectiveness of the IPETAB model is strongly corroborated by longitudinal institutional data. School Self-Evaluation Reports indicate a remarkable and steady increase in average student tolerance attitude scores, rising significantly from 72.4 in the 2022/2023 academic year to 87.3 in the 2024/2025 academic year. This represents a substantial improvement of 14.9 points over a three-year period, reflecting deep internalization of tolerant values among the student body. Most notably, this upward trajectory in positive attitudes has been accompanied by a complete absence of serious interreligious conflicts within the school throughout the entire observation period.

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Table 2. Longitudinal Student Tolerance Attitude Scores (EDS Data)

Academic Year	Average Student Tolerance Score	Year-over-Year Change	Interreligious Conflict Incidents	Academic Year
2022/2023	72.4	Baseline	0	2022/2023
2023/2024	81.6	+9.2 points	0	2023/2024
2024/2025	87.3	+5.7 points	0	2024/2025

The table above presents compelling empirical evidence demonstrating the tangible impact of the implemented tolerance education strategies over a three-year period. It clearly illustrates a consistent, positive trajectory in student tolerance scores, validating the effectiveness of the integrated pedagogical approaches. Crucially, the data also highlights a perfect record of zero interreligious conflict incidents, indicating that the improved scores reflect genuine behavioral harmony rather than mere theoretical understanding. This quantitative progression serves as a robust validation of the IPETAB model's capacity to foster a stable, inclusive, and peaceful school environment.

DISCUSSION

The formulation of the IPETAB model in this study represents a significant advancement over previous, more fragmented conceptualizations of the teacher's role in religious education. While earlier frameworks often isolated cognitive instruction from affective mentoring, the current findings demonstrate that the six roles (Educator, Role Model, Counselor, Facilitator, Motivator, and Evaluator) function as a synergistic, non-negotiable system. This aligns with recent research by Bahri et al (2025), Fadlilah et al (2026), and Syabani et al (2025) who found that in multicultural Indonesian schools, the efficacy of religious moderation programs relies heavily on the seamless integration of pedagogical and pastoral roles. However, this study extends their work by providing concrete, actionable strategies for each role, proving that a deficit in one area, such as authentic role modeling, creates a credibility gap that actively undermines the entire educational effort.

The identification of Encounter-Based Learning (EBL) as a highly effective pedagogical method strongly corroborates contemporary shifts toward experiential interfaith education. By bringing guest speakers from diverse religious communities directly into the PAI classroom, this method operationalizes Allport's Contact Hypothesis within a formal educational setting. This finding is strongly supported by R'boul & Yazidi (2026) and Tondok et al (2022) whose recent study

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demonstrated that structured, face-to-face interfaith encounters significantly reduce implicit bias among adolescents more effectively than theoretical textbook instruction. Furthermore, the consistent use of dialogic, perspective-based questioning observed in this study mirrors the findings of Lestari (2021), who emphasized that shifting the teacher's position from an authoritarian figure to a "co-learner" is critical for fostering genuine perspective-taking and active appreciation of diversity.

A critical finding of this research is that the teacher's role modeling is most impactful when rooted in sincere theological conviction rather than mere professional compliance. Students in this study identified the teacher's authentic behavior as the primary catalyst for their own tolerant attitudes. This resonates with the work of Ananda (2022), who argued that character education in Islamic schools is most successful when teachers embody "walking the talk" based on intrinsic religious values. However, this study also reveals a nuanced tension highlighted by Henry (2021) and Yampap (2025): while the teacher's authentic modeling is powerful, its influence is increasingly contested by the pervasive reach of exclusive religious content on social media. Thus, while role modeling remains foundational, it must now be actively paired with digital literacy to counteract competing online narratives.

The success of the IPETAB model at SMPN 1 Tempilang cannot be divorced from its supportive ecological context, particularly the historically tolerant local culture and visionary school leadership. The study found that the principal's structural support (e.g., budget allocation for interfaith forums) and the community's centuries-old tradition of harmony provided a fertile ground for tolerance education. This finding strongly supports Fathurrochman et al (2025) and Nurdin et al (2025), who posited that the integration of local cultural capital (*kearifan lokal*) into the school curriculum significantly amplifies the internalization of moderate values. Unlike studies conducted in highly polarized urban settings where tolerance education faces active resistance (Muhtar et al., 2022; Waller, 2025), the Tempilang context demonstrates that leveraging existing community harmony transforms the school's diversity from a mere demographic fact into a dynamic, living laboratory for experiential learning.

Despite these successes, the study identified persistent inhibiting factors that challenge the sustainability of tolerance education, most notably the value inconsistency between the school and certain family environments. This ecological mismatch, where students receive inclusive messages at school but exclusive narratives at home, significantly weakens the internalization process. This aligns with the recent findings of Kibtiyah et al (2025) and Pratiwi et al (2025), who reported that parental influence often overrides school-based character education

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when familial religious views are rigid. Furthermore, the finding that non-PAI teachers view tolerance as an exclusive PAI responsibility highlights a systemic fragmentation. This contradicts the holistic "whole-school approach" advocated, suggesting that without mandatory, cross-curricular integration and increased instructional time, the burden on PAI teachers remains disproportionately high and potentially unsustainable in the long term.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the instillation of religious tolerance values at SMPN 1 Tempilang is successfully achieved through the holistic implementation of the IPETAB model, which synergistically integrates six PAI teacher roles: Educator, Role Model, Counselor, Facilitator, Motivator, and Evaluator. This success is significantly reinforced by the application of varied and contextual pedagogical methods, most notably the innovative Encounter-Based Learning (EBL) that effectively dismantles prejudices through authentic interfaith interactions within the formal classroom setting. Although the educational process faces persistent ecological challenges—such as exposure to exclusive religious narratives on social media, value inconsistencies between home and school environments, limited instructional time, and the suboptimal involvement of non-PAI teachers—the highly supportive school ecosystem, characterized by visionary leadership, historically tolerant local cultural capital, and strong professional teacher commitment, has effectively transformed student diversity into a productive living laboratory. This outcome is empirically validated by School Self-Evaluation (EDS) data, which demonstrates a significant and steady increase in student tolerance attitude scores from 72.4 in the 2022/2023 academic year to 87.3 in 2024/2025, accompanied by zero recorded interreligious conflict incidents over a three-year period, thereby confirming that tolerance is not merely taught as a cognitive concept but is genuinely internalized and practiced as an inherent character trait.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research should expand upon these findings by pursuing several critical avenues to deepen the understanding and application of religious tolerance education. First, comparative studies are needed to evaluate the implementation and adaptability of the IPETAB model across diverse educational contexts and school types beyond the specific multicultural setting of this case study. Second, longitudinal research designs should be employed to trace the long-term trajectory of students' tolerance values, assessing how these internalized behaviors persist and evolve over time. Third, there is a pressing need for the development and rigorous validation of standardized

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assessment instruments specifically tailored to quantitatively and qualitatively measure the six integrated dimensions of the IPETAB framework. Finally, future inquiries must urgently address the digital dimension of character education by investigating effective digital literacy strategies rooted in *wasathiyyah* (moderate) Islamic values, thereby equipping students to critically navigate, evaluate, and counteract the pervasive influence of exclusive and intolerant religious narratives on social media.

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