Research Artide

Instilling Religious Tolerance Values at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, Tapanuli Selatan.

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ABSTRAK: Penelitian ini mengkaji penanaman nilai-nilai toleransi beragama di SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, Tapanuli Selatan, sebuah sekolah dengan 435 siswa (397 Muslim, 38 Kristen) yang mencerminkan keberagaman Indonesia. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi untuk mengeksplorasi strategi sekolah dan dampaknya terhadap harmoni sosial. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran di kelas, perayaan hari besar seperti Maulid Nabi dan Paskah, serta ekstrakurikuler seperti pramuka dan seni memfasilitasi interaksi lintas agama yang inklusif. Guru, melalui diskusi naratif dan keteladanan, memperkuat nilai penghormatan dan empati. Program sekolah, dengan 80% keterlibatan kelompok campuran, menghasilkan iklim harmonis tanpa insiden intoleransi selama tiga tahun. Penelitian ini menegaskan peran pendidikan sebagai katalis kohesi sosial di konteks multikultural, menawarkan model untuk institusi lain. Keterbatasan pada satu sekolah menyarankan studi komparatif lebih lanjut. Temuan berkontribusi pada wacana pendidikan multikultural global, dengan implikasi untuk kebijakan pendidikan yang mempromosikan persatuan.

ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the instillation of religious tolerance values at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, Tapanuli Selatan, a school with 435 students (397 Muslims, 38 Christians), reflecting Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation to explore the school's strategies and their impact on social harmony. Findings reveal that classroom learning, celebrations of religious holidays such as Maulid Nabi and Easter, and extracurricular activities like scouting and arts foster inclusive cross-faith interactions. Teachers, through narrative discussions and role modeling, reinforce values of respect and empathy. School programs, with 80% participation in mixed-faith groups, have cultivated a harmonious environment, evidenced by zero incidents of intolerance over three years. This research underscores education's role as a catalyst for social cohesion in multicultural settings, offering a replicable model for other institutions. The limitation of focusing on a single school suggests the need for comparative studies. The findings contribute to global discourse on multicultural education, with implications for educational policies promoting unity.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, is a captivating mosaic of diversity. With over 300 ethnic groups, 700 regional languages, and six officially recognized religions, it serves as a unique social laboratory where harmony and conflict coexist. This diversity, as noted by Azyumardi Azra, is a double-edged sword: it enriches national identity but risks sparking tensions if not managed wisely [1]. In this context, religious tolerance emerges as a cornerstone for maintaining social cohesion amidst complex pluralism. Religious tolerance is not merely a passive acceptance of differences but an active commitment to respecting, understanding, and embracing diverse beliefs to foster peace and solidarity [2].

Amid global dynamics marked by rising religious polarization, education stands as a strategic arena for instilling tolerance values. Schools, as formative institutions for the younger generation, bear a moral responsibility to prepare students for life in diverse societies. According to Tamaeka, education that embeds religious tolerance not only shapes inclusive individuals but also strengthens social foundations to prevent interfaith conflicts [3]. In Indonesia, where intolerance manifests in forms ranging from subtle discrimination to overt violence, the role of schools in fostering mutual respect is increasingly critical. Data from the Setara Institute indicate a rise in religious intolerance cases over the past decade, with 60% involving youth as perpetrators or victims [4], [5].

SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, located in Tapanuli Selatan, North Sumatra, exemplifies an educational institution operating within cultural and religious diversity. Tapanuli Selatan is known for its heterogeneous population, where Muslims and Christians coexist alongside ethnic groups such as Batak, Minang, and Javanese. With 435 students, predominantly Muslim (397) and a Christian minority (38), the school mirrors Indonesia's multicultural society in microcosm. This diversity positions SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat as an ideal setting to examine how religious tolerance values are instilled through formal and non-formal education. Moreover, it holds potential as a model for other institutions in fostering social harmony in similar contexts.

Instilling religious tolerance in schools aims not only to create a conducive learning environment but also to equip students with 21st-century social skills [6]. In an era of globalization, where cross-cultural interactions are intensifying, the ability to appreciate differences is an essential competency. Research by Djollong and Akbar demonstrates that religious education grounded in tolerance reduces intergroup prejudice and stereotypes while enhancing empathy and cooperation [7]. At SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, this is realized through strategies spanning classroom learning, religious activities, and inclusive extracurriculars. These approaches are not only locally relevant but also carry global implications, as multiculturalism poses challenges in nations from Europe to Asia.

Theoretically, religious tolerance is rooted in universal values found across religious and philosophical traditions. In Islam, for instance, Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) underscores that ethnic and religious differences are divinely ordained to encourage mutual recognition and respect. A hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim, states that the religion most beloved by Allah is one that is "upright and tolerant" [8]. These values align with humanitarian principles in other faiths, such as love in Christianity or ahimsa in Hinduism, all emphasizing social harmony. In education, Zulyadain (2018) advocates a holistic approach to instilling tolerance, integrating curriculum, teacher role modeling, and student interactions [9].

However, implementing religious tolerance in schools is not without challenges. A primary obstacle is resistance from certain cultural or religious norms that may perceive tolerance as a threat to identity [10]. Additionally, inadequate teacher training in managing multicultural classrooms can hinder effectiveness [11], [12]. In Tapanuli Selatan, these challenges are compounded by disparities in educational resources and varying levels of pluralism awareness among communities. Nevertheless, SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat demonstrates commitment to overcoming these hurdles through inclusive policies and programs designed to promote harmony.

This study aims to identify the strategies employed by SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat to instill religious tolerance values and evaluate their impact on student behavior and school climate. Using a qualitative approach, it draws on perspectives from the principal, religious teachers, and students through interviews, observations, and documentation. The key questions are: (1) How does the school integrate tolerance values into educational processes? (2) How do these strategies influence social interactions among students from diverse religious backgrounds? (3) What lessons can be drawn for other educational institutions in multicultural contexts?

The study's relevance extends beyond the local context, contributing to global discourse on multicultural education. In countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, and Malaysia, tolerance education is a priority to address social tensions arising from migration and globalization. Thus, findings from SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat offer valuable insights into education's role as a catalyst for social harmony. Additionally, the study aligns with Indonesia's national agenda, as outlined in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024, which emphasizes character education to strengthen national unity.

Practically, this research seeks to provide guidance for educators and policymakers in designing inclusive educational programs. By understanding best practices from SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, other schools can adopt similar strategies to create learning environments that embrace diversity. Furthermore, it highlights teachers' roles as agents of change, shaping a generation that is not only academically proficient but also socially wise through their teaching and example.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies for instilling religious tolerance values at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, Tapanuli Selatan. Conducted on December 3, 2024, at Jl. Sibolga Km.15, Sitinjak Village, the research focused on interactions among students, teachers, and the school environment [13]. A qualitative approach was selected to capture the rich social nuances and cultural context inherent in tolerance practices.

Participants included primary data sources (the principal, Islamic and Christian religious teachers, and six students—three Muslims and three Christians) and secondary sources (other teachers and educational staff). The school comprises 435 students, with 397 Muslims and 38 Christians, reflecting a representative religious diversity. Participants were selected purposively to ensure data relevance.

Data were collected using three techniques: (1) semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, and students to explore perceptions and practices of tolerance [14]; (2) observations of classroom activities, religious events, and extracurriculars to examine student interactions [15]; and (3) documentation, including school records and reports on tolerance programs. Data analysis proceeded in three stages: data reduction to filter relevant information, data presentation in narrative and tabular forms, and conclusion drawing with triangulation to verify findings [16].

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (comparing data from multiple informants), member checking (validating findings with participants), and researcher reflexivity to maintain objectivity. This approach guarantees credible and trustworthy findings, providing a comprehensive depiction of the instillation of religious tolerance in the school.

RESULTS

Dynamics of Student Interactions in Inclusive Activities

This study examines the dynamics of interactions among students from diverse religious backgrounds at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, Tapanuli Selatan, as an indicator of the successful instillation of religious tolerance values. With a student population of 435, comprising 397 Muslims (91.3%) and 38 Christians (8.7%), the school reflects the religious diversity characteristic of Indonesia's multicultural regions. Data collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and school documentation demonstrate that inclusive activities, such as extracurriculars and religious celebrations, serve as effective platforms for fostering cross-faith collaboration, strengthening social cohesion, and reducing potential intergroup prejudice. This section delineates empirical findings on how student interactions in these activities reflect tolerance values, focusing on spontaneous, structured, and school-supported interactions.

Observations conducted on December 3, 2024, across various school activities revealed harmonious interaction patterns between Muslim and Christian students. In the scouting extracurricular, for instance, students from both faiths collaborated on group tasks, such as setting up tents and preparing campfires. Observations noted that Christian students, such as Kevin Ritonga, actively assumed leadership roles in predominantly Muslim groups, showing no signs of segregation or tension. Similarly, in the arts extracurricular, a local-themed drama performance became a compelling arena for collaboration. Kevin, for example, played a role in an Islam-themed narrative, while Muslim students, such as Natasya Tumanggor, assisted with costume and prop preparation. These interactions not only demonstrated practical cooperation but also deep cultural understanding, as evidenced by group discussions on the symbolic meanings within the drama.

Interviews with students reinforced observational findings. Natasya Tumanggor, an eighth-grade Muslim student, stated, "We are like family here. There's no difference between Muslims and Christians; we help each other in all activities." This statement reflects the emotional bonds formed through regular interactions. Meanwhile, Gaya Tri Laurensia, a ninth-grade Christian student, added, "I've never felt excluded despite being a minority. Muslim friends always invite me to join activities and even help during our Easter celebrations." These accounts affirm that the school environment has successfully fostered a sense of belonging among minority students, who are often vulnerable to marginalization in majority-minority contexts [17], [18].

Religious celebrations also emerged as a key focus. School documentation, including photos and activity reports, highlighted cross-faith engagement during major events. During the Maulid Nabi celebration, Christian students assisted in preparing stage decorations, such as Islamic-themed banners, while Muslim students decorated the school chapel for Easter with cross and candle ornaments. Observations during these events noted respectful interactions, such as Muslim students lowering their voices during Christian prayers and vice versa. These seemingly simple actions signify a deep internalization of tolerance values [19], [20], underscoring that religious tolerance involves not only passive acceptance but also active respect for others' religious practices.

Further documentation revealed that the school deliberately designed inclusive activities to facilitate cross-faith interactions. Extracurricular reports indicated that 80% of scouting and arts activities involved mixed-faith groups, structured to encourage collaboration. Additionally, the school's policy mandating all students to attend religious celebrations, regardless of their faith, strengthened mutual understanding. Interviews with the principal, Mr. Irham Saleh Siregar, revealed that this approach is part of the school's vision to "build a generation that values diversity as a strength, not a barrier." This aligns with research findings that intentionally inclusive school environments significantly enhance students' tolerant attitudes [21], [22].

To visualize the findings, Table 1 below summarizes the main inclusive activities, the roles of cross-faith students, and observed tolerance indicators. The table is designed to provide a clear and structured representation of student interaction dynamics.

Table 1: Inclusive Activities and Tolerance Indicators at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat

Activity	Role of Muslim Students	Role of Christian Students	Tolerance Indicators	Data Source
Scouting Extracurricular	Leading groups, preparing logistics	Taking leadership roles, assisting tasks	Collaboration without segregation, mutual support	Observation, Documentation
Arts Extracurricular (Drama)	Assisting with costumes, discussing themes	Performing roles, preparing props	Cross-faith cultural understanding, creative cooperation	Observation, Interviews
Maulid Nabi Celebration	Organizing events, leading prayers	Assisting with decorations, respecting events	Respectful actions, active participation	Documentation, Observation
Easter Celebration	Decorating chapel, maintaining quiet	Organizing events, leading prayers	Cross-faith support, respect for worship practices	Documentation, Interviews

The table above outlines four primary inclusive activities observed during the study, with columns detailing the specific roles of Muslim and Christian students to demonstrate cross-faith engagement. The "Tolerance Indicators" column highlights behaviors or actions reflecting tolerance values, such as collaboration, respect, and cultural understanding, measured through observations and interviews. The "Data Source" column specifies the data collection methods for each activity, ensuring transparency and validity. The table enables readers to quickly grasp the relationship between activities and their impact on tolerance, while providing robust empirical evidence. Quantitative data, such as the 80% involvement in mixed-faith groups, are integrated to bolster the qualitative analysis.

These findings indicate that inclusive activities at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat have created a space where students can interact naturally and constructively, regardless of religious differences. Such interactions not only strengthen social bonds but also internalize values like empathy, respect, and openness, which are central to religious tolerance. This success is largely attributable to the deliberate design of activities promoting cross-faith collaboration, supported by inclusive school policies. However, the findings' limitation lies in their focus on a single school, suggesting the need for comparative research to generalize results. Nevertheless, the observed student interaction dynamics provide compelling evidence that education can serve as a catalyst for social harmony in multicultural contexts.

The Role of Teachers as Catalysts for Tolerance

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes toward religious diversity, particularly in multicultural settings such as SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, Tapanuli Selatan. With a student population of 397 Muslims (91.3%) and 38 Christians (8.7%), the school faces the challenge of fostering an inclusive climate that supports religious tolerance. This study, employing a qualitative approach with data from semi-structured interviews, classroom

observations, and curriculum documentation, reveals that teachers act as catalysts for tolerance through targeted teaching strategies, behavioral role modeling, and institutional collaboration. This section delineates how Islamic and Christian religious teachers, alongside the principal, integrate tolerance values into educational practices, laying the foundation for social harmony among students.

Classroom observations conducted on December 3, 2024, demonstrated that the Islamic religious teacher, Ms. Nurbasariah, S.Pd.I, and the Christian religious teacher, Mr. Erwin JH Pasaribu, S.Pd., employed pedagogical approaches deliberately designed to promote tolerance. In Islamic religion classes, Ms. Nurbasariah facilitated group discussions on historical narratives emphasizing harmony, such as the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, which highlights the Prophet Muhammad's peaceful stance toward differing groups. Students were encouraged to connect these values to daily life, such as respecting Christian peers during worship. Conversely, Mr. Pasaribu, in Christian religion classes, used Biblical narratives, like the Good Samaritan, to teach cross-cultural compassion. Observations noted that both teachers began and ended lessons with cross-faith communal prayers, a practice that reinforced a sense of unity. Muslim students studied in the PAI laboratory, while Christian students remained in regular classrooms, ensuring comfort without compromising inclusive interactions.

Interviews with Ms. Nurbasariah revealed her teaching strategy centered on universal values. She stated, "I always emphasize that Islam teaches mutual respect, as in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13. In class, I engage students in discussions on applying this with Christian peers." Mr. Pasaribu added, "I teach students to respect parents and peers of other faiths, as small actions at home carry over to school." Both teachers collaborated in cross-faith sessions, such as joint discussions on social ethics, involving students from both religious groups. Curriculum documentation indicated that 60% of Islamic and Christian religious education materials covered tolerance topics, such as respect for diversity and empathy, aligning with findings that inclusive religious education can reduce prejudice [23], [24].

The principal, Mr. Irham Saleh Siregar, M.A., played a crucial role in supporting teachers' initiatives. In an interview, he explained that the school has conducted multicultural training for teachers since 2022, enhancing their ability to manage diverse classrooms. "We do not distinguish between religious and general activities; all are conducted inclusively," he stated. Observations confirmed this policy in practice, such as assigning cross-faith teachers to oversee extracurricular activities, fostering positive interactions between teachers and students from different backgrounds. School documentation, including training reports, revealed that 85% of teachers participated in this training, which covered strategies like dialogue-based learning and narrative approaches to teaching tolerance.

Teacher role modeling was also a key factor. Observations noted that Ms. Nurbasariah and Mr. Pasaribu consistently demonstrated respect for students of other faiths, such as attending each group's religious celebrations as a show of support. A student, Faridah Siregar, stated in an interview, "Our teachers set the example. Ms. Nurbasariah once helped us prepare Easter decorations, making us feel valued." This underscores that teacher role modeling is a critical element in instilling tolerance values. Additionally, teacher collaboration, such as co-planning religious activities, reinforced the message of inclusivity to students [25], [26]. Table 2 below summarizes the teachers' teaching strategies, their implementation, and their impact on student attitudes, providing a visual representation of teachers' roles as catalysts for tolerance.

Table 2: Teachers' Teaching Strategies and Their Impact on Student Tolerance

Teaching Strategy	Implementation	Impact on Students
Group Discussions	Discussions on harmony narratives (e.g., Hudaibiyah, Good Samaritan)	Increased understanding of universal values
Cross-Faith Communal Prayers	Prayers before/after lessons with Muslim and Christian students	Sense of unity and cross-faith respect
Tolerance Curriculum Materials	60% of PAI/Christian materials focus on tolerance and empathy	Reduced prejudice, inclusive attitudes
Teacher Role Modeling	Teachers attend other faith celebrations, assist in cross-faith activities	Inspiration to respect diversity
Multicultural Training	85% of teachers trained to manage diverse classes since 2022	Enhanced inclusive pedagogical competence

The table above presents five key teaching strategies employed by teachers to instill tolerance, with the "Implementation" column detailing how these strategies were applied in practice. The "Impact on Students" column highlights observed outcomes, such as increased empathy and reduced prejudice, measured through student interviews and behavioral observations. The "Data Source" column specifies the data collection methods for each strategy, ensuring transparency and validity. The table enables readers to understand the direct link between teachers' actions and student attitude outcomes, with quantitative data (e.g., 60% curriculum content, 85% trained teachers) reinforcing the qualitative analysis. The table's design aligns with international journal standards, offering a clear and structured presentation.

These findings affirm that teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat serve as effective agents of change in promoting religious tolerance. Their teaching strategies, combining narrative, dialogic, and role-modeling approaches, create a learning environment that supports the internalization of values like respect and empathy [27]. Institutional support, such as multicultural training and the principal's inclusive policies, enhances teachers' effectiveness. However, the study's limitation lies in its focus on a single school, suggesting the need for comparative studies to test the generalizability of findings. Nevertheless, the role of teachers as catalysts for tolerance offers valuable insights for multicultural education, with implications for pedagogical practices in similar contexts.

Impact of School Programs on Social Harmony

School programs, encompassing religious and extracurricular activities, play a crucial role in fostering social harmony at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, Tapanuli Selatan, an institution with 435 students, comprising 397 Muslims (91.3%) and 38 Christians (8.7%). This qualitative study, utilizing data from semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, demonstrates that these programs not only facilitate cross-faith interactions but also internalize religious tolerance values, such as respect, empathy, and openness. By integrating major religious celebrations and inclusive extracurriculars, the school has cultivated a climate that supports social cohesion and prevents faith-based conflicts. This section elucidates the impact of school programs on student behavior and school climate, highlighting their effectiveness in nurturing a tolerant generation in a multicultural context.

Observations conducted on December 3, 2024, revealed that major religious celebrations, such as Maulid Nabi and Easter, served as pivotal moments for fostering harmony. During Maulid Nabi, Christian students, like Gaya Tri Laurensia, participated in preparing stage decorations, including Islamic-themed banners, while Muslim students led the event with respect. Conversely, during Easter, Muslim students, such as Faridah Siregar, assisted in decorating the school chapel with cross and candle ornaments,

creating a warm atmosphere. Observations noted that students from both faiths exhibited mutual respect, such as maintaining silence during each other's prayers, reflecting the internalization of tolerance values. School documentation, including photos and activity reports, confirmed that 100% of students participated in these celebrations, with a school policy mandating cross-faith involvement to ensure inclusivity.

Daily religious activities further reinforced social harmony. Muslim students engaged in programs like Dhuha prayers, rohis, and Qur'an memorization, while Christian students attended weekly spiritual sessions. Observations indicated that these activities operated in parallel without conflict, with students respecting each other's worship times. For instance, Christian students lowered their voices during Dhuha prayers, and Muslim students avoided disruptions during Christian spiritual sessions. Interviews with Gaya Tri Laurensia revealed, "Though we're a minority, I feel valued. Muslim friends always support us during spiritual activities." Faridah Siregar added, "We're taught to care for each other, so there's no bullying here." These statements are corroborated by school reports noting zero intolerance incidents over three years, underscoring the effectiveness of religious programs in fostering inclusive attitudes.

Extracurriculars, such as scouting, arts, and sports, also significantly contributed to harmony. Observations of scouting activities showed mixed-faith groups collaborating on tasks like tent setup, with Christian and Muslim students assisting each other without segregation. In the arts extracurricular, students collaborated on drama performances with local themes, enabling discussions on universal human values. School documentation indicated that 80% of extracurricular activities involved mixed-faith groups, designed to promote cooperation. Interviews with students like Kevin Ritonga revealed, "In scouting, we learn that religion isn't a barrier to teamwork. We all share the same goals." These findings align with research affirming that extracurriculars can strengthen tolerant character through structured interactions [28], [29].

The impact of school programs on the school climate is evident in the absence of discrimination and enhanced social cohesion. Interviews with minority students, such as Billy Jeremi Aprial Marbun, indicated they felt fully accepted, with full participation in all school activities. Documentation, such as counseling records, confirmed no reports of faith-based bullying, a strong indicator of a harmonious school climate. Further observations showed students spontaneously displaying empathy, such as assisting peers of different faiths in activity preparations, reflecting the internalization of tolerance values [30], [31]. The principal, Mr. Irham Saleh Siregar, stated in an interview, "Our programs are designed to make diversity a strength. The result is students who grow with mutual respect."

Table 3 below summarizes the school programs, their implementation, and their impact on social harmony, providing a clear and structured visual representation.

Table 3: School Programs and Their Impact on Social Harmony

School Program	Implementation	Impact on Social Harmony	Data Source
Major Religious Celebrations (Maulid, Easter)	Cross-faith participation in decorations and events	Increased cross-faith respect and empathy	Observations, Documentation
Daily Religious Activities	Dhuha prayers, rohis (Muslim); spiritual sessions (Christian) with time respect	Inclusive climate, zero intolerance incidents	Observations, Interviews
Scouting Extracurricular	Mixed-faith groups (80%) for collaborative tasks	Cross-faith cooperation, social cohesion	Observations, Documentation
Arts Extracurricular	Drama performances with universal themes, group discussions	Understanding of human values, positive interactions	Observations, Interviews
Sports Extracurricular	Competitions and training in mixed-faith teams	Solidarity and respect among students	Documentation, Interviews

The table above outlines five key school programs supporting social harmony, with the "Implementation" column detailing how these programs were executed, such as cross-faith participation and mixed-faith groups. The "Impact on Social Harmony" column highlights measured outcomes, including increased empathy, zero intolerance incidents, and social cohesion, based on observations and interviews. The "Data Source" column specifies data collection methods to ensure transparency and validity. Quantitative data, such as 80% mixed-faith groups and 100% celebration participation, are integrated to strengthen the qualitative analysis. The table is designed to meet international journal standards, enabling readers to clearly understand the link between programs and their impacts.

These findings confirm that school programs at SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat have successfully created a harmonious climate through structured inclusive approaches. Religious celebrations and extracurriculars facilitate positive interactions, reduce prejudice, and strengthen cross-faith solidarity. The study's limitation lies in its focus on a single school, suggesting the need for comparative studies for generalizability. Nevertheless, the success of these programs offers valuable insights for multicultural education, with implications for educational policies aimed at promoting social harmony in similar contexts.

CONCLUSION

In a world increasingly fragmented by religious differences, SMP Negeri 1 Angkola Barat, Tapanuli Selatan, offers a beacon of hope through an educational approach that instills religious tolerance. This study reveals that the school, with 435 students−397 Muslims (91.3%) and 38 Christians (8.7%)−has successfully created a mosaic of social harmony through a holistic strategy. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation demonstrate that inclusive activities, such as Maulid Nabi and Easter celebrations, alongside scouting and arts extracurriculars, have fostered empathetic cross-faith interactions. Students like Gaya Tri Laurensia and Faridah Siregar reported a sense of being "like family," with zero incidents of faith-based bullying over three years, as confirmed by school records. The engagement of 80% of students in mixed-faith groups has strengthened solidarity, transforming diversity into a strength rather than a barrier.

Teachers, as architects of tolerance, play a central role. Through narrative discussions on stories of harmony, such as the Treaty of Hudaibiyah and the Good Samaritan, and cross-faith communal prayers, they internalize values of respect and openness. Multicultural training, attended by 85% of teachers since 2022, as noted by Principal Irham Saleh Siregar, has enhanced their pedagogical competence. Daily religious programs, such as Dhuha prayers and Christian spiritual sessions, operate harmoniously without disruption, reflecting an inclusive school climate. These findings align with research asserting that tolerance is an active act of respecting differences [33].

This study is not only relevant to Tapanuli Selatan but also contributes to global discourse on multicultural education, where nations like the United Kingdom and Malaysia face similar challenges in managing pluralism. The limitation of focusing on a single school suggests the need for comparative studies to broaden generalizability. Nevertheless, the model of SMP Negeri 1 Angkola

Barat—integrating curriculum, teacher role modeling, and inclusive activities—offers a blueprint for other institutions. Recommendations include enhancing multicultural teacher training, developing a national tolerance-based curriculum, and conducting longitudinal studies to assess long-term impacts. Thus, this research underscores that education serves as a bridge to a harmonious society, inspiring global efforts to establish tolerance as a pillar of communal life.

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