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Strengthening Islamic Religious Education for Muslim Minorities at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This research aims to find out the efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education as well as the problems and solutions to efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education for Muslim minorities carried out at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores.

Design/methods/approach – The research method used in this study is Qualitative Research, which is a series of activities related to the method of collecting information through observations, interviews, and documentation.

Findings – The study results revealed that efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education for minority Muslims at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur comprised 1) Spiritual Development; 2) Spiritual Strengthening; 3) Iftar Gathering; and 4) Halal bi Halal. The problems faced in the activities of strengthening Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur included internal factors, lack of support from the teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur, and inadequate school facilities for indoor activities.

Research implications/limitations – Despite the study's significant contribution to the religious strengthening program for minority Muslim students in schools, this research still has some limitations, such as the limitation of the research site that was only one school.

Originality/value – This research has an important meaning in providing discourse and discourse on religious strengthening activities or programs at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur. The findings of this study have emphasized that there is still a discriminatory attitude towards minority Muslim students in schools. Therefore, PAI teachers in Muslim minority schools are expected to pay more attention to these minority Muslim students.

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Introduction

The issue of majority and minority is a problem of the general public and a universal phenomenon that causes differences in race, language, religion, culture, country of origin, profession, income, customs, etc. According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, minorities are social groups where the members are much smaller than other groups in society, resulting in them being discriminated against by other groups.

The existence and life of minorities, as opposed to the dominant, is an approach to seeing minorities with all the restrictions, discrimination, and injustice of the dominant. The term discrimination is merely used to denote different adverse treatment resulting from various people of the dominant group. It includes the social group from which they belong, that is, an ethnic group that belongs to the racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious belief groups.

Indonesia has people of different religions. There are six religions acknowledged by the state, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and also Confucianism. Those six religions must coexist in society with the principle of tolerance between religious communities. Citing data on the number of Indonesia's population based on religion, the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim.

However, the case is different in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, East Flores Regency, where Muslim is the minority. Citing the Ministry of Religion of East Flores, the number of Catholic residents is 229,892, 60146 Muslims, 4085 Christians, and 94 Hindu residents. Of this number, the Muslim population falls under minority categories in the East Flores Regency area.

The same thing happened at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores. The number of students based on religion at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores showed Muslim students as a minority. Citing documentation from SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur, the total number of students in the 2021/2022 school year amounted to 1,035. Following the division based on religion at school, the number of Muslim students amounted to 340, compared to 700 non-Muslim students.

The phenomenon of the big gap between the number of non-Muslim and Muslim students will highly affect the learning environment since the school environment considerably influences the development of students. According to Beni Ahmad Saebani and Hendra Akhdiyat, the environment is space and time where human existence lies. The good or bad environment around the child is the main factor that affects the development of the child's soul (students). The environment is the school, family, and community. Building strong-religious students requires support from a strong environment as well.

In general, the problems faced in the process of Islamic Religious Education in Muslim minority areas are discriminatory policies by the government and local agency leaders that are, of course, not favorable to Islamic Religious Education in schools, inadequate PAI teachers, insufficient or even absence of infrastructure to support the Islamic Religious Education learning process, a less supportive school environment, and a lack of participation in the surrounding community that is less receptive to Islamic Religious Education (resistance). The challenges for PAI teachers in schools where non-Muslims are the majority can be seen in every PAI learning and starting religious activities at school. Religious Education learning in different public schools requires a particular room. Unfortunately, many schools do not provide a specific room for learning, so it is obviously difficult when starting PAI learning in particular. Students who are minorities have to find a room to study. Muslim students usually use rooms that are not suitable as classrooms to carry out learning.

Through pre-research interviews conducted with several teachers, the phenomenon of Muslim students who are exposed to and even drink liquors, as well as approaching other haram things, are often found in schools. It is especially true during Ramadan, where students openly break their fasts during the day because they follow their non-Muslim friends to have lunch together in the school canteen.

The varied phenomena above pose a challenge for educators and Islamic Religious Education in schools since they have a relatively important role in fostering children's religious knowledge and experience. The accuracy of learning management (especially religious lessons) will greatly affect children's religiosity or understanding of religion in the future. Of course, it must be through the policy support of school leaders.

The formulation of the research problems obtained from the description above are:

- (1) What are the efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education for minority Muslims in schools? and
- (2) What are the problems and solutions to efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education for minority Muslims in schools?

The purpose of this study is to figure out and reveal the efforts made by schools to strengthen Islamic Religious Education as well as problems and solutions in efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education.

Methods

The method in this paper is a qualitative research method. If viewed from the type, the writing carried out in this study is a qualitative type of field research. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research seeks to see entities as they are, based on their environment, and then try to interpret or make the entity more understood. In this case, the author explores information from schools that have a low number of Muslim students (minorities) to learn about the efforts made by schools to strengthen Islamic Religious Education as well as the problems and solutions found in efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education. A qualitative type is considered more relevant by researchers for it not only presents complete related data but also explores the meaning of existing data.

The data collection techniques carried out in this paper are by observation, interview, and documentation methods. Interviews were conducted with students, parents or guardians, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and the principal of SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur. The interviews contained questions from researchers about the efforts made by PAI teachers to strengthen Islamic Religious Education for their students,

problems in efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education, and solutions to overcome problems in efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education. Observations were performed by seeing firsthand the learning process and strengthening efforts at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores.

The documentation technique carried out by the author was collecting data on everything related to the research process in the form of text notes, photos, videos, and recordings of the research object that took place at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores. The purpose is to make it easier for researchers to research and analyze various types of documentation.

The data analysis technique in this study used qualitative descriptive data analysis of Miles and Huberman's theory. The data analysis procedures are

- (1) Data reduction
- (2) Data presentation, and
- (3) Conclusion Drawing/Verification.

Result and Discussion

1. Strengthening

The term strengthening is also called empowerment, which is commonly interpreted as reinforcement. It is in the sense of giving or increasing "power" to weak or unfortunate people. Rappaport defines empowerment as a way in which people, organizations, and communities are directed to be able to control their lives.

According to Ife in Suharto, helplessness refers to the concept of disadvantage, which is grouped into categories of 1) Structurally weak groups (class, gender, and ethnicity - which include the poor, unemployed. women, local communities, and minority groups); 2) Special weak groups (the elderly, children and adolescents, people with disabilities, gays, lesbians, and isolated communities); and 3) Personally weak groups (those who experience personal and family problems.

Furthermore, lfe argues "empowerment means providing people with the resourses, opportunities, knowledge and skill to increase their capacity to determine their own future and to participate in and affect the life of their community."

From several statements about the meaning of empowerment, it can be concluded that empowerment is an effort made by a person or group through various activities to provide skills, develop knowledge, strengthen abilities or potentials that support the creation of independence, and empowerment in the community, either in terms of economy, social, culture, and education to help solve various problems faced.

There are many processes to pass to make the empowerment program succeed in achieving its goals. The process is in the form of empowerment stages, namely 1) the stage of awareness and behavior development towards conscious and caring behavior so that they feel the need to increase their capacity, 2) the stage of ability transformation in the form of insight into knowledge, skills to improve insights and provide basic skills so that

they can take a role in development, and 3) the stage of improving intellectual ability-skills so that initiatives and innovative abilities are built to lead to independence. Accordingly, strengthening in this context is empowerment, an effort designed to change individuals and groups from the aspects of 'cognitive' knowledge, 'affective' attitude, and 'psychomotor' skills, so that they are developed based on the planned goals.

2. Islamic Religious Education

Islamic Religious Education, according to Zakiyah Daradjat, as quoted by Abdul Majid and Dian Andayani, is an effort to foster and nurture students so that they can always understand the teachings of Islam comprehensively and live the goal, which they ultimately can practice and make Islam a view of life. Islamic Religious Education is also referred to as a discipline that has different characteristics and goals from other disciplines. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a subject presented at the level of Elementary School (SD/MI), Junior High School (SMP/MTs), and Senior High School (SMA/MA).

Muhaimin argued that Islamic Religious Education means an effort to educate Islam or Islamic teachings and their values so that they become one's views and attitudes in life. The activity of educating the Islamic religion aims to help a person or a group of students in instilling and/or developing Islamic teachings and their values to be used as a view of life.

Therefore, Islamic Religious Education is a conscious effort made by teachers in order to prepare students to believe, understand, and practice Islamic teachings through predetermined guidance, teaching, or training activities to achieve the set goals.

Omar Muhammad al Thoumy al Syaibany formulated the foundation of Islamic Religious Education as the basis of Islamic goals which were rooted from the same sources, namely the holy Qur'an and Hadith. Following this notation, the thought of Islamic education was developed by referring to these two focal sources, with the help of various methods and approaches, such as *qiyās*, *ijmā'*, *ijtihād*, and *tafsī*r.

The main problem with the religious education curriculum in schools is the curriculum load that is disproportionate to class time (division). The content of the religious education curriculum includes the history of the Quran, hadith, creed, jurisprudence, morals, and Islamic civilization. The solution is to improve all types of curricula, including internal curriculum, joint curriculum, extracurricular, and secret curriculum. What cannot be pursued in one curriculum can be implemented in other curriculum formats.

The Islamic Religious Education Extracurricular Program is one of the supporting means of learning to achieve educational goals. The existence of religious extracurricular activities can support the achievement of religious education learning goals. Religious extracurricular activities have a positive impact on helping students live their religious values (Hanbali & Yulianti, 2018).

Islamic Religious Education extracurricular is an Islamic religious activity that takes place outside of class hours and is integrated into the value of Islamic religious education as a refinement and practice of the material studied. Therefore, extracurricular activities can be described as direct and indirect learning. Specifically, the implementation of PAI extracurricular activities in schools aims to:

- (1) Improve and strengthen the knowledge of Islamic religious education of students who participate in activities in the curriculum.
- (2) Improve the quality of experience and practice related to the value of Islamic teachings.
- (3) Develop talents, interests, abilities, and skills to improve students' personal religious lives to be more successful in their skills and abilities in PAI subjects.
- (4) Provide students with an understanding of the essence of PAI learning in other subjects and its relationship with society.

3. Minorities

The definition of minority is often confronted with the definition of majority. As written by Oman Fathurrahman in his approach to religious authority, minorities are always in a marginal position, identified as opposed to the majority. It happens not only in line of thinking but also in action. In fact, it is much rooted in the approach to democratic politics. The most votes are the ones that are declared as correct, valid, and becoming a decision. Therefore, minorities not only experience being marginalized but are also oppressed by the majority.

In the Indonesian dictionary, a minority can be defined as a social group whose number of citizens is much smaller when compared to other groups in a society and thus discriminated against by that group.

The existence of minority groups always closely relates to and opposes the dominant group, namely those who enjoy high social status and some privileges. These people develop a set of prejudices against minorities in their society. This prejudice develops based on (a) a sense of superiority, (b) a feeling that is intrinsically present in their belief that the inferior minority group is different from them, and thus classified as a foreigner, and (c) the claim by the dominant group that access to the resources available is their right, which is accompanied by a fear that those who are classified as minorities and inferior will take resources.

Minority communities are an association of people that we often find. Minority communities exist in every corner of the world, especially in Indonesia. Existing minority communities are classified as minorities due to religion, tribe, or ethnicity. Minority groups usually experience all their limitations in the environment where they live.

4. Efforts to Strengthen Islamic Religious Education

Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System mandates the teaching of religious education subjects in every type, path, and level of education. In Junior High School (SMP), Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is taught with a portion of 2-3 hours of lessons per week. The portion of class hours was complained by PAI teachers and the community, who are also the parents of the students.

The main problem with the religious education curriculum in schools is the curriculum load that is disproportionate to class time (division). The content of the religious education curriculum includes the history of the Quran, hadith, creed, jurisprudence, morals, and Islamic civilization. The solution is to improve all types of curricula, including internal curriculum, joint curriculum, extracurricular, and secret curriculum. What cannot be pursued in one curriculum can be implemented in other curriculum formats.

Islamic Religious Education extracurricular is an Islamic religious activity that takes place outside of class hours and is integrated into the value of Islamic religious education as a refinement and practice of the material studied. Therefore, extracurricular activities can be described as direct and indirect learning.

Based on the observation results conducted by researchers at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka, PAI learning at this school takes place once a week. All PAI materials at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores are listed in one subject called Islamic Religious Education (PAI). It includes materials on monotheism, moral creed, Islamic cultural history, Fiqh, and al-Quran Hadiths. It is different with Madrasah schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, where religious subjects have been divided into four subjects, namely moral creed, Islamic cultural history, Fiqh, and Al-Quran Hadiths. It becomes the difference between Madrasah and public junior high schools in general.

In addition to carrying out formal learning, SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur has several efforts to strengthen Islamic understanding or knowledge among students. Based on the observations made by the researcher, efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores are through religious activities.

It was supported by the information provided by the principal, taken from the interview results. These religious activities are part of the non-formal education category. Some of the activities carried out by the school to strengthen the understanding of Islam are spiritual development activities for all Muslim students at school, spiritual strengthening for the 9th-grade Muslim students who have completed the National Exam, breaking the fast together (iftar gathering) for all Muslim students, teachers, and employees at school, and halal bi halal event for Muslim students, teachers, and employees at school.

(1) Spiritual Development/Coaching

Spiritual development activities are school programs that involve all grade levels, which means all students, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Spiritual coaching is an annual activity in SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores held after the Final Semester Exam. The purpose of this activity is to provide guidance, motivation, and direction for students to increase their educational insight into each religion and improve the morals (akhlaq) of Muslim students.

Based on an interview with one of the PAI teachers, spiritual coaching activities are carried out three to 7 days after the Final Semester Exam at School. This activity is usually held inside and outside of school. For Muslims, it can be conducted in the school environment or mosques outside the school. Meanwhile,

non-Muslim students perform this activity in places of worship, such as churches and temples. They also can have it at school in a separate place from other religious activities following the choice of their respective religious teachers.

Spiritual development activities include the delivery of materials on reading the Qur'an, moral beliefs, instilling fear of God, and exemplary stories from the Prophets and Messengers, as well as the companions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Each material was delivered by various speakers, from PAI teachers to community leaders.

(2) Spiritual Strengthening

Meanwhile, spiritual strengthening is a school program that involves all IXgrade students who have completed the National Exam. It is a general activity, but there will be a division according to each religion. This program is followed by all their respective religious teachers and other teachers who are not religious teachers but master the material that will be presented in this activity.

The purpose of spiritual strengthening activities is not only to equip students who are about to leave the junior high school level with qualified provisions but also to evaluate Islamic Religious Education learning in the future so that it runs in keeping with the development of the times and the conditions of the student's environment.

Spiritual strengthening activities are held seven days after the National Exam, usually outside the school but close to places of worship and lodging. It includes outbound activities attended by students and all teachers and continued with materials and worship practices for Muslim students.

(3) Iftar Gathering

Iftar gathering (breaking fast together) is an activity held by mosque youth who invite junior and senior high schools in Larantuka District, East Flores. It has become proof of the principal's policy that supports students to participate in extracurricular activities outside of subject hours to gain more experience and education. The purpose and function of this activity is to strengthen the relationship between fellow students, teachers, alumni, and the school community that has spread throughout the region.

This activity includes the material delivery by community leaders in the form of wisdom and the virtues of fasting in the month of Ramadan. After the delivery of the material, students were given the opportunity to have a dialogue with the presenters.

(4) Halal Bi Halal

The purpose of halal bi halal is to build silaturahim (to connect) between teachers, administrative staff, school employees, and Muslim students. It also can

provide learning about the beauty of togetherness and sharing. Halal bi halal activities are held on the first day of school after the Eid al-Fitr holiday. This activity included tausiyah from PAI teachers and then continued with friendly greetings with teachers.

The urgency of halal bi halal is thalabu halâl bi tharîqin halâl, which is to seek a solution to problems or seek harmony in relationships by forgiving mistakes, and halâl yujza'u bi halâl, which is the forgiveness of mistakes, is also reciprocated by forgiving mistakes. Therefore, it is important to hold it at school to give students a direct overview of the wisdom and virtues of halal bi halal.

5. Problems and Solutions to Efforts to Strengthen Islamic Religious Education

Larantuka District of East Flores has a community that is predominantly Catholic. It is one of the triggers for obstacles for Muslim teachers and students in Larantuka District, East Flores, in terms of performing religious activities. Some inhibitions regarding Islamic education activities include:

(1) Spiritual Development

Based on the observations made by the researcher, the problems found in this activity include the lack of supportive school infrastructure. As the school hall has become blocked classrooms, the activity is carried out in a cramped laboratory room.

Moreover, this activity starts from a Catholic religious event. Accordingly, if there is no Catholic religious activity, it means no Muslim religious activities as well. Meanwhile, activities like this are needed to strengthen Islamic Religious Education for students. Another problem found is that many students are not enthusiastic about participating in this activity due to the lack of coordination between teachers and parents. Parents do not know about this activity, resulting in no support from the parents.

Starting from the above problems, the solution that PAI teachers have tried to pursue is keeping the activities going every year by setting up a separate program for Muslims. For infrastructure problems, PAI teachers try to hold it in the nearest mosque so that the activity can run in a conducive and comfortable manner.

As a solution for coordination with parents, PAI teachers use WhatsApp social media to coordinate with students' parents so that every activity at school can communicate with students' parents.

(2) Spiritual Strengthening

Similar to spiritual coaching, the problem found is that activities have not become permanent for Muslim students. Accordingly, it is necessary to make it a permanent activity, so it becomes a PAI strengthening that won't lost from the students' minds.

Another problem found was related to the student's attendance. Despite a mandatory activity for all XI-grade students, the lack of coordination with students' parents has caused some students to fail to participate in this activity without permission or notifying the homeroom teacher or PAI subject teacher.

Based on the above problems, the solution that PAI teachers have tried includes keeping activities going every year by setting up a separate program for Muslims. For infrastructure problems, PAI teachers try to hold the activity in the nearest mosque so that the activity can run in a conducive and comfortable manner.

(3) Iftar Gathering

The iftar gathering activity was not a program held by the school or PAI teachers of SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur. It was an invitation from the mosque youth that received support from the principal. Likewise, there is no guarantee that this activity will also be in the Ramadhan month next year. If there are no activities from the mosque youth for the upcoming year's Ramadhan, then it is more likely no iftar gathering activities as well.

Based on field observations conducted by researchers, the event went well and ran smoothly. The students did not make a fuss during the *tausiyah* delivery by the *ustadz*. The only problem was the student's discipline. Many students did not come on time. When the invitation was to gather at the mosque at 16.00 WITA, however, until 17.30 there was only a few students came.

Halal bihalal was held for the first time this year. Despite its simple celebration, the essence of halal bi halal activity could be felt by Muslim teachers and students of SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur.

The solution to this problem is to strengthen cooperation with the mosque youth to continually hold this activity each year. Because for minority communities, it is easy to collaborate with all mosque youth in Larantuka District, East Flores.

(4) Halal Bihalal

In this activity, all students attended as it coincided with the first day of school after taking leave together. The problem found was inadequate infrastructure. The halal bihalal activity used one of the classes at the school that was not being used that day. As a result, students could be seen sitting in jostling.

Therefore, PAI teachers strive to make this activity not only a simple event but can be held in the schoolyard by involving all school residents despite their different religions. It also has a positive effect on the school community itself, namely strengthening the sense of tolerance between religious communities at school.

Conclusion

Based on the above outline regarding the efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education in the Muslim minority environment at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores, it can be concluded that:

The efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores have been pursued through religious activities. These religious activities are part of the extracurricular education category. Some activities carried out by Muslim residents of SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka East Flores have included spiritual development, spiritual strengthening, iftar gathering, and halal bihalal.

The problems faced in the efforts to strengthen Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur may include internal factors, lack of support from the teachers of SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur, and inadequate school facilities for indoor activities. Moreover, some activities still follow school policies, which contrarily should embark on the initiative of PAI teachers themselves. The background reason is that religious activities should be the program of each religious teacher. Another problem is the low level of student interest and attendance to participate in the activities.

The solution to the existing problems is about how Muslim residents in the school continue to respect and maintain tolerance between fellow religious people and how teachers adjust themselves and try to manage activities by not imposing their own will. Also, PAI teachers of SMP Negeri 1 Larantuka Flores Timur must keep up those positive activities as they have a great influence on the student's spiritual development.

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