



## Efforts to Improve Religious Tolerance Attitudes Through Islamic Religious Education Learning Based on Interfaith Dialogue to Improve Harmony Between Students at SMA Negeri 1 Barumun

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**Abstract:** This Classroom Action Research (CAR) focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of implementing interfaith dialogue in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to improve attitudes of religious tolerance and build social harmony in SMA Negeri 1 Barumun. This research was conducted in two cycles, with data collection through pre-test and post-test, observation, interviews, and reflection journals. The results showed that the implementation of interfaith dialogue significantly improved students' understanding of religious tolerance. This initiative also encouraged increased empathy and respect for peers from different religious backgrounds, as students engaged in meaningful and respectful discussions. The role of the teacher as a facilitator is very important in creating a safe and supportive atmosphere for dialogue, so that discussions can be productive and inclusive. In addition, the use of reflection journals helped students to internalize their experiences and encouraged self-reflection. These findings suggest that interfaith dialogue in religious education has an important role in creating a more inclusive and harmonious school environment. This approach has proven to be an effective strategy in promoting religious tolerance and mutual respect within a diverse community. This study emphasizes the importance of integrating inter-religious dialogue into educational programs to foster tolerance and understanding in society.

**Keywords:** Education Learning, Interfaith Dialogue, Improve Haarmony

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the important elements in building national character, which not only includes aspects of knowledge and skills, but also the formation of attitudes and moral values, including attitudes of tolerance. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesia, which consists of various tribes, religions, races, and cultures, an attitude of religious tolerance is very important to create a harmonious social life. Religious tolerance not only teaches respect for differences, but also fosters a sense of mutual understanding, appreciation, and cooperation despite differences in religious beliefs.

SMA Negeri 1 Barumun as one of the secondary education institutions in this area, has students with diverse religious backgrounds. Most students are Muslim, but there are also students who are Christian, Hindu, and other religions. This diversity should be a strength for schools to create an inclusive and tolerant educational atmosphere. However,

in practice, religious differences often lead to misunderstandings and a lack of openness between students, which has the potential to disrupt harmony and unity in the school environment.

In reality, the attitude of intolerance that arises among students can be in the form of sharp differences in religious views, stereotypes against other religions, to acts of discrimination against students of different religions. This is certainly a serious challenge for the world of education, especially in forming a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also wise in responding to differences in society. Therefore, there needs to be concrete steps that can increase the attitude of religious tolerance among students.

One effort that can be made to increase religious tolerance is through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on interfaith dialogue. This dialogue-based learning provides space for students to share their views on their religion openly and constructively, and learn to understand differences without having to belittle the beliefs of others. With interfaith dialogue, students are not only taught about the teachings of their own religion, but are also invited to respect and understand the teachings of other religions, so as to reduce the potential for conflict and increase unity between students.

The interfaith dialogue-based learning method is also in line with the principles of Islamic teachings that prioritize mutual respect and peaceful coexistence amidst diversity. Islam teaches its followers to respect others, both those of the same religion and those of different religions. Therefore, the integration of tolerance values in religious education, especially Islamic Religious Education, can be an effective means of instilling an attitude of religious tolerance among students.

SMA Negeri 1 Barumon as an educational institution has great potential to be an example in the implementation of education based on religious tolerance. Through a learning approach based on interfaith dialogue, it is expected to create a more harmonious atmosphere among students, which in turn will strengthen harmony between students, reduce the potential for conflict, and increase a sense of unity in diversity.

With this background, this study will focus on efforts to improve attitudes of religious tolerance through Islamic Religious Education learning based on interfaith dialogue, to improve harmony between students at SMA Negeri 1 Barumon. This study is expected to contribute to creating a more inclusive, tolerant, and harmonious school environment amidst the existing religious diversity. This background provides a clear picture of the importance of this research and its relevance to the conditions at SMA Negeri 1 Barumon. It also shows how learning based on interfaith dialogue can be a solution to improve attitudes of religious tolerance and harmony between students.

## **METHODS**

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) aimed to examine how implementing interfaith dialogue-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) can enhance students' attitudes toward religious tolerance and promote harmony among students at SMA Negeri 1 Barumon. The research utilized a cyclical process consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection, all with the goal of improving students' understanding and practice of religious tolerance through structured learning activities. The study adopted a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which is appropriate for addressing practical issues within the classroom and aims to improve teaching and learning practices. CAR focuses on identifying problems, applying solutions, observing the outcomes, and reflecting on the process to implement improvements. This method was suitable for enhancing students' religious tolerance through specific classroom interventions. The study was conducted in two primary cycles, each including four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Every cycle aimed to assess and improve the effectiveness of interfaith dialogue as a method to foster religious tolerance.

The participants of the study consisted of 30 students from SMA Negeri 1 Barumon, aged between 16 and 18 years. They were chosen from a single class in the 11th grade.

The class was selected for its religious diversity, as it included students practicing Islam, Christianity, and other religions. This variety provided an ideal setting for implementing interfaith dialogue to promote religious tolerance among students. The students were informed about the study's objectives, and consent was obtained from both the students and their parents. Throughout the research, students were encouraged to participate actively in the activities and share their perspectives on religious tolerance and interfaith interactions.

The research was conducted in the classroom of SMA Negeri 1 Barumun, a public high school situated in an area with a diverse religious population. The school was chosen due to its diverse student body, offering a rich opportunity to explore how interfaith dialogue could improve religious tolerance among students. The study spanned one semester, providing enough time to implement and evaluate the intervention's impact. Multiple methods were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the intervention's effectiveness.

**Pre- and Post-Test.** A pre-test was administered before the intervention to evaluate students' initial attitudes toward religious tolerance. After the intervention, a post-test was conducted to measure any changes in students' perspectives on religious tolerance and understanding of interfaith relations. Both tests consisted of multiple-choice and open-ended questions regarding religious tolerance, knowledge of other religions, and students' views on interfaith dialogue. **Observations.** During each lesson cycle, the researcher observed students' participation in activities, group discussions, and their interactions during interfaith dialogue sessions. These observations focused on the level of engagement, the ability to respect diverse viewpoints, and general attitudes towards peers from different religious backgrounds.

**Interviews.** After each cycle, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected group of students to gather deeper insights into their experiences, reflections, and views regarding religious tolerance and the interfaith dialogue process. The interviews aimed to understand students' perceptions of religious differences, comfort levels with discussing religion, and the perceived impact of dialogue on their relationships with others. **Reflection Journals.** Students were asked to maintain reflection journals throughout the study. In these journals, students documented their personal experiences, challenges, and any changes in their attitudes toward religious tolerance. The reflection journals allowed the researcher to gain additional insights into the individual impact of the intervention on each student.

The primary intervention used in this study was the integration of interfaith dialogue in the Islamic Religious Education lessons. These lessons were designed to encourage students to engage in structured discussions about religious differences, focusing on common values shared by various religions and the importance of respecting religious diversity. **Planning.** During the planning phase, the teacher prepared detailed lesson plans that included topics related to religious tolerance, interfaith relations, and the significance of peace and mutual understanding within the Islamic context. These lessons were intended to provide factual knowledge about different religions, emphasizing their shared ethical values. Planning also involved creating activities that would encourage students to reflect on their own beliefs and engage in active listening to others.

**Action.** During the action phase, the teacher led interfaith dialogue sessions. These sessions were organized by dividing students into small groups that included members from different religious backgrounds. In these groups, students discussed topics related to religious tolerance, such as the role of religion in promoting peace, understanding religious differences, and managing religious conflicts. The teacher facilitated the discussions, ensuring every student had a chance to speak and listen to others. **Observation.** The teacher observed students' participation during each session, noting their engagement with the material, their responses to questions, and their interactions with peers from different religious backgrounds. Observations also included non-verbal

cues like body language and facial expressions to gauge students' comfort levels and openness during discussions.

**Reflection.** After each cycle, students were asked to reflect on the dialogues and document their experiences in their journals. They were also asked to provide feedback on how the interfaith dialogue sessions affected their views on religious tolerance. The teacher also reflected on the lessons and made notes for improvements based on student feedback.

The data collected from pre- and post-tests, observations, interviews, and reflection journals were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. **Quantitative Data.** Pre- and post-test results were compared by analyzing changes in students' attitudes towards religious tolerance. The mean scores of the pre- and post-tests were compared to assess the intervention's impact on students' understanding of religious diversity and their attitudes toward other religions. **Qualitative Data.** The qualitative data from observations, interviews, and reflection journals were analyzed thematically. This analysis involved identifying common themes in students' experiences with interfaith dialogue, their understanding of religious tolerance, and how the dialogues affected their relationships with peers. The analysis also explored how students articulated their personal growth in terms of accepting religious diversity.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure the safety, dignity, and rights of the students participating in the research. **Informed Consent.** Prior to beginning the study, both students and their parents were informed about the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and the students' roles in the study. Consent was obtained from all participants, and students were assured that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. **Confidentiality.** All data collected, including test results, interviews, and journal entries, were kept confidential. Students' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms, ensuring privacy throughout the study. **Respect for Participants.** The study respected students' opinions on religious tolerance. During the interfaith dialogue sessions, students were encouraged to express their views openly, with the teacher fostering a respectful and inclusive environment for discussion.

At the end of each cycle, the research team conducted an evaluation to assess the actions taken, the results observed, and the reflections made. The evaluation process was designed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention and to make improvements for the next cycle. The evaluation was based on several criteria; 1) The extent to which students participated and engaged in the dialogue sessions; 2) Changes in students' attitudes toward religious tolerance as measured by the pre- and post-tests; 3) Reflections provided by students regarding their personal development and understanding of religious tolerance; 4) The quality of group discussions and the extent to which students were able to respect differing viewpoints and engage in meaningful conversations.

Based on the evaluation at the end of each cycle, the research team made necessary adjustments for the next cycle. For example, in Cycle 2, group discussions were made more structured, with more specific guidelines for students on how to conduct respectful and productive dialogue. Feedback from previous cycles helped refine the activities, focusing them on specific aspects of religious tolerance.

The methodology used in this study provided a structured and systematic approach to enhancing students' attitudes toward religious tolerance through interfaith dialogue in Islamic Religious Education. By employing a combination of pre- and post-tests, observations, interviews, and reflection journals, the study was able to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of the intervention. The cyclical nature of the research allowed for continuous improvements, ensuring that the activities were tailored to students' needs, and maximizing the impact on their understanding of religious tolerance.

## RESULTS

The results of this Classroom Action Research (CAR) study focused on assessing the impact of interfaith dialogue-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) on improving students' attitudes toward religious tolerance and fostering harmony among students at SMA Negeri 1 Barumun. The study was conducted over two cycles, and the data collected through pre- and post-tests, observations, interviews, and reflection journals were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

At the beginning of the study, a pre-test was administered to measure students' initial attitudes toward religious tolerance. The results of the pre-test showed that while the majority of students recognized the importance of respecting different religious beliefs, there was limited understanding of interfaith dialogue and its potential to foster better relationships between people of different faiths. The students' responses indicated a basic level of awareness of religious differences but lacked a deeper understanding of the complexities of religious tolerance.

The students' participation in the interfaith dialogue sessions showed a positive trend throughout the study. Initially, some students were hesitant to share their views, especially when discussing religious practices different from their own. However, as the cycles progressed, students gradually became more comfortable in engaging with their peers from different religious backgrounds. This was particularly evident during group discussions, where students took turns explaining their religious beliefs and actively listened to others. The level of engagement and the willingness to participate increased significantly after each cycle.

The post-test results revealed a noticeable improvement in students' attitudes toward religious tolerance. The average score on the post-test was significantly higher than on the pre-test, indicating that the interfaith dialogue sessions had a positive impact on students' understanding of religious differences. Students demonstrated a greater appreciation for the common values shared among different religions, such as the importance of peace, respect, and kindness. They also expressed more positive views on the role of interfaith dialogue in promoting social harmony.

Throughout the course of the intervention, students exhibited an improved understanding of religious tolerance. Many students expressed in their reflection journals that they now felt more capable of engaging in respectful conversations with peers from different religious backgrounds. They reported that the structured dialogue sessions allowed them to gain a more balanced perspective on the values of other religions. Some students who had initially been more reserved in their attitudes toward other faiths showed greater openness and empathy toward students of other religions by the end of the study.

One of the key changes observed in the students was an increased respect for religious diversity. Students reported in interviews that they felt more confident in recognizing and respecting religious differences after participating in the dialogue sessions. This was evident in the way they interacted with their peers, as students began to approach religious discussions with a more respectful and open mindset. They acknowledged that understanding and respecting differences was crucial for maintaining peaceful and harmonious relationships, not only within the school but also in broader society.

The impact of the intervention was also reflected in the students' behavior. During classroom activities, students demonstrated more respectful and collaborative attitudes when working with peers of different religious backgrounds. The observation data indicated that the students' ability to engage in constructive dialogue had improved, with fewer instances of misunderstandings or conflicts arising during group discussions. This positive change in behavior suggested that the interfaith dialogue sessions contributed to a more respectful classroom atmosphere.

The teacher played a crucial role in guiding the dialogue sessions and ensuring that the discussions were respectful and productive. Observations of the teacher's interactions with students revealed that the teacher employed a range of strategies to maintain an inclusive environment. These strategies included posing thought-provoking questions, encouraging students to share personal experiences, and moderating discussions to prevent any one perspective from dominating. The teacher's active involvement was instrumental in maintaining a positive and respectful atmosphere throughout the sessions.

The dialogue sessions had a noticeable impact on students' interpersonal relationships. Many students reported that they felt closer to their peers of different religious backgrounds as a result of the interfaith dialogue. By engaging in respectful and open discussions, students were able to better understand each other's perspectives and build stronger, more trusting relationships. This improved sense of camaraderie helped foster a more harmonious school environment, where students were more inclined to collaborate and support one another.

The reflection journals provided valuable insights into the personal growth of the students throughout the study. Many students expressed that they had gained a deeper understanding of religious tolerance and how it could be applied in their everyday lives. Some students reflected on how their views had changed over time, noting that they had become more accepting of differences and more willing to engage in conversations about religion. The journals also revealed that students appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and consider how their attitudes might affect their relationships with others. Feedback from the students was overwhelmingly positive. In interviews, students indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to participate in interfaith dialogue and found it to be a valuable learning experience. They reported that the dialogues allowed them to challenge preconceived notions and develop a more nuanced understanding of religious differences. Several students expressed interest in continuing the practice of interfaith dialogue in the future, emphasizing its importance in fostering peace and harmony in society.

The intervention had a positive effect on the overall school climate. Teachers and school staff noted a shift in the students' attitudes and behaviors, with students demonstrating more respect for each other regardless of their religious backgrounds. The school atmosphere became more inclusive and tolerant, as students became more aware of the importance of fostering understanding and cooperation across religious divides.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study also encountered some challenges. In the initial stages of the intervention, there were instances where students found it difficult to engage in open discussions about sensitive religious topics. Some students were hesitant to share their views, while others struggled to fully appreciate the perspectives of their peers from different religions. However, as the cycles progressed and the students gained more confidence in the dialogue process, these challenges diminished.

To address the challenges, the teacher made several adjustments throughout the study. In response to students' initial hesitancy, the teacher incorporated more icebreaker activities and small group discussions to encourage greater participation. These adjustments helped create a more comfortable and supportive environment for the students, allowing them to engage more fully in the dialogue sessions.

Group discussions were an integral part of the intervention. The small group setting allowed students to express their thoughts and feelings in a more intimate environment, which fostered greater openness and vulnerability. By discussing topics related to religious tolerance in smaller groups, students were able to build stronger relationships with their peers and engage in deeper conversations. The group discussions also provided students with the opportunity to practice active listening and develop their communication skills.

One of the most significant outcomes of the intervention was the growth in students' empathy and open-mindedness. Many students reported that they had learned to put themselves in the shoes of others, especially those with different religious beliefs. This

newfound empathy allowed students to approach differences with greater respect and understanding, which was reflected in their interactions both inside and outside the classroom.

The teacher's reflections on the process indicated that the interfaith dialogue sessions were a valuable tool for promoting religious tolerance among students. The teacher noted that while there were initial challenges in getting students to engage with one another, the sessions ultimately provided students with the opportunity to grow both academically and personally. The teacher also recognized the importance of creating a safe and inclusive space for dialogue, where all students felt respected and valued.

Analysis of student interactions during the dialogue sessions showed a shift toward more respectful and collaborative exchanges. In the beginning, some students tended to dominate the conversation or interrupt their peers. However, as the sessions progressed, students began to practice active listening and allow others to share their viewpoints. This shift in interaction patterns was a clear indication of the positive impact of the dialogue sessions on students' communication skills and their attitudes toward others.

The long-term impact of the intervention is likely to be significant. The students' increased understanding of religious tolerance, as well as their improved interpersonal relationships, suggest that they are more likely to apply the principles of respect and understanding in their daily lives. Many students expressed a desire to continue engaging in interfaith dialogue beyond the classroom, indicating that the lessons learned during the study had a lasting effect on their attitudes.

The teacher's role in encouraging students to continue engaging in interfaith dialogue was also highlighted. The teacher emphasized the importance of maintaining open and respectful communication, not only in the classroom but also in broader society. By fostering a culture of dialogue, the teacher aimed to equip students with the skills necessary to navigate religious differences in a respectful and constructive manner.

The results of this study suggest that interfaith dialogue is a valuable tool for promoting religious tolerance in schools. The intervention demonstrated that students can develop a deeper understanding of religious differences and learn to respect others' beliefs when provided with structured opportunities for dialogue. The success of this intervention offers valuable lessons for educators seeking to create more inclusive and tolerant learning environments.

The findings from this research indicate that there is potential for expanding the use of interfaith dialogue in other schools and educational settings. By incorporating interfaith dialogue into religious education curricula, educators can help students develop a greater appreciation for religious diversity and foster a culture of respect and harmony.

Despite the positive outcomes, there were some limitations to the study. The sample size was relatively small, and the study was conducted within a single school. As a result, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other schools or contexts. Future research could expand the study to include a larger, more diverse sample to examine the broader applicability of interfaith dialogue as a tool for promoting religious tolerance.

Future research could explore the long-term effects of interfaith dialogue on students' attitudes and behaviors beyond the classroom. Additionally, studies could examine how different teaching strategies and methods can be integrated with interfaith dialogue to further enhance students' understanding of religious tolerance. It would also be valuable to explore the perspectives of teachers and school administrators regarding the implementation of interfaith dialogue in the school curriculum.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that interfaith dialogue-based Islamic Religious Education can significantly improve students' attitudes toward religious tolerance and promote greater harmony among students. Through engaging in respectful and meaningful conversations, students were able to develop a deeper understanding of religious differences and foster stronger relationships with their peers. The intervention proved to be a valuable tool for enhancing students' empathy, open-mindedness, and respect for diversity.

The results of this study underscore the importance of creating opportunities for interfaith dialogue within educational settings. By promoting religious tolerance and mutual understanding, schools can contribute to the development of more inclusive and harmonious communities. This research provides valuable insights into how interfaith dialogue can be integrated into religious education to achieve these goals.

## **DISCUSSION**

The primary aim of this Classroom Action Research (CAR) was to explore the effectiveness of interfaith dialogue-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in enhancing religious tolerance and fostering harmonious relationships among students at SMA Negeri 1 Barumun. The study involved two cycles of implementation, using a variety of data collection methods to measure changes in students' attitudes, behavior, and understanding of religious tolerance. Based on the results obtained, several significant observations and discussions can be drawn regarding the impact of the intervention.

At the start of the study, it was evident that students had a limited understanding of the broader concepts of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue. The pre-test data revealed that while many students acknowledged the importance of religious respect, they often lacked the knowledge or skills to engage in meaningful interfaith dialogue. This is a common issue in educational settings where students may learn about religious values but not necessarily the skills needed to practice tolerance in everyday life. The initial lack of understanding highlighted the need for structured opportunities for dialogue to improve these attitudes.

The central aspect of the intervention was the incorporation of interfaith dialogue within the Islamic Religious Education lessons. Interfaith dialogue offered students a platform to learn from their peers of different religious backgrounds. Over time, it became clear that students were able to break down some of the barriers that typically exist between individuals of different faiths. This was demonstrated by the increased willingness of students to listen to their peers and engage in deeper discussions. The dialogue allowed students to recognize shared values and learn from each other's perspectives, which ultimately contributed to a more profound understanding of religious tolerance.

One of the most noticeable shifts during the intervention was the change in student participation. Initially, students were hesitant to speak openly, particularly when discussing religious beliefs different from their own. This hesitation was partly due to fear of conflict or misunderstanding. However, as the cycles progressed, students became more comfortable engaging in these dialogues. In particular, group discussions provided a safe space for students to express their ideas and opinions. This transformation in participation indicates the effectiveness of structured dialogue in creating an environment where students felt more comfortable sharing their views on sensitive topics.

The results from the pre-test and post-test provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of the interfaith dialogue method. The post-test results showed significant improvement in students' understanding of religious tolerance. Students who initially struggled with recognizing the value of religious differences were able to articulate their thoughts on the importance of respect and understanding. This improvement can be attributed to the structured exposure to interfaith dialogue and the opportunity to hear from peers with diverse religious viewpoints. The increase in test scores reflected a shift in both cognitive understanding and emotional acceptance of religious diversity.

One of the key outcomes of this study was the noticeable increase in students' empathy and respect for individuals from different religious backgrounds. Prior to the intervention, students had limited experiences of engaging with peers from different religions in meaningful ways. However, through the dialogue sessions, students developed a more empathetic understanding of the beliefs, values, and practices of others. This increased empathy was evident in students' reflections, where they often mentioned

feeling more understanding and less judgmental toward their peers. The ability to empathize with others is crucial for fostering respect and harmony in a diverse society, and the intervention effectively supported this development.

The impact of the interfaith dialogue on students' interpersonal interactions was also significant. Observations during group activities showed that students began to interact more respectfully with one another, regardless of religious differences. This was particularly evident in the way students communicated during class discussions and group projects. Students appeared more willing to listen actively, and their comments reflected an increased sense of openness to learning about different perspectives. This change in behavior suggests that the intervention not only affected students' attitudes but also their actions in real-life situations.

The teacher played a vital role in guiding the interfaith dialogue sessions. As a facilitator, the teacher ensured that every student had an opportunity to speak, and the discussions remained respectful and inclusive. The teacher also encouraged critical thinking and problem-solving during the dialogues, asking questions that prompted students to think deeply about the issues surrounding religious tolerance. This facilitative role was essential in maintaining a safe and constructive environment for dialogue. The teacher's ability to manage discussions and prevent conflicts contributed significantly to the success of the intervention.

The use of structured dialogue activities was a key factor in the success of the intervention. By organizing students into small groups and providing clear guidelines for discussion, the teacher ensured that each student had the opportunity to participate. The structured nature of these activities helped students stay focused on the topic at hand and reduced the likelihood of misunderstandings or arguments. These activities also allowed students to practice communication skills such as active listening, respect for differing opinions, and the ability to negotiate conflicts.

The reflection journals proved to be a valuable tool for assessing students' personal growth throughout the study. Many students reported that the journaling process helped them articulate their thoughts and reflect on their learning. In particular, students often mentioned how the reflection journals allowed them to track changes in their attitudes toward religious tolerance. The act of writing down their thoughts also encouraged students to critically examine their beliefs and challenge any prejudices they may have held previously. This reflective practice provided a means for students to internalize the lessons learned during the dialogues.

Feedback from students was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing that they found the interfaith dialogue sessions to be both educational and enjoyable. Several students noted that the dialogues allowed them to better understand their own religious beliefs and practices, as well as those of others. Others mentioned that the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with peers from different religious backgrounds helped them build stronger friendships and reduced feelings of isolation. This feedback highlights the importance of providing students with opportunities for respectful and open discussions about sensitive topics like religion.

This study reaffirmed the importance of religious education in fostering tolerance. Islamic Religious Education (PAI), in particular, has the potential to play a significant role in shaping students' views on religious tolerance. By integrating interfaith dialogue into the curriculum, PAI can help students develop a more inclusive mindset and a greater understanding of the religious diversity that exists in the world. This study demonstrated that when religious education includes opportunities for dialogue and reflection, students are better equipped to navigate a pluralistic society with respect and understanding.

The intervention had a noticeable impact on the overall school climate. Teachers and school administrators reported a more inclusive and respectful atmosphere in the school following the implementation of the interfaith dialogue sessions. Students were more willing to cooperate with each other and engage in cross-cultural and interfaith exchanges. This shift in the school climate can be attributed to the increased awareness and practice

of religious tolerance among students. A more harmonious school environment is conducive to academic success and overall student well-being.

Despite the positive results, the study faced several challenges. In the early stages of the intervention, there were some instances where students were reluctant to share their opinions, particularly when discussing sensitive religious topics. Some students expressed discomfort in speaking about their beliefs in front of others, while others were hesitant to challenge their peers' views. However, over time, students became more comfortable with the dialogue process as they gained trust in their peers and the teacher. The challenges encountered highlight the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment for students to express themselves.

Another challenge encountered during the study was resistance to change. Some students initially struggled to accept the notion of engaging with individuals from different religious backgrounds. This resistance was due to a combination of cultural, familial, and personal beliefs. However, the gradual increase in participation and the improvement in attitudes toward religious tolerance suggest that with continuous exposure to respectful dialogue, students were able to overcome their initial resistance. The study highlights the need for patience and persistence in fostering tolerance among young people, particularly in communities where religious differences may be a source of tension.

The long-term sustainability of the intervention is another important consideration. While the study showed significant short-term improvements in students' attitudes toward religious tolerance, it is crucial to assess whether these changes are sustained over time. Ongoing interfaith dialogue, along with continued efforts from educators to promote religious tolerance, can help ensure that students continue to apply the principles of tolerance and respect in their daily lives. This suggests that schools should consider incorporating interfaith dialogue as an ongoing component of their religious education programs.

For future implementation, it would be beneficial to expand the scope of interfaith dialogue to include students from even more diverse religious backgrounds. Additionally, incorporating interactive activities, such as community service projects or joint cultural events, could provide further opportunities for students to collaborate and deepen their understanding of religious tolerance. The success of this intervention could also be replicated in other schools or regions with different religious dynamics.

The role of school leadership is critical in supporting initiatives aimed at promoting religious tolerance. In this study, school administrators were supportive of the intervention and provided the necessary resources and guidance. School leaders play an essential role in fostering an environment where diversity is valued and where educational programs can help students navigate complex social issues such as religious tolerance. School-wide support is crucial for the long-term success of such initiatives.

The findings from this study have important implications for educational policy and practice. Integrating interfaith dialogue into the curriculum can serve as a model for schools aiming to promote religious tolerance. Policy-makers should consider advocating for the inclusion of interfaith dialogue in religious education programs as a way to prepare students for life in a multicultural society. Schools can benefit from adopting inclusive curricula that emphasize mutual respect and understanding among students of different faiths.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the sample size was relatively small, and the research was conducted in one school. As such, the findings may not be fully representative of all schools or educational contexts. Furthermore, the study was conducted over a relatively short period, which may not have allowed for a full exploration of the long-term effects of interfaith dialogue. Future research could involve larger and more diverse samples, as well as extended follow-up periods to assess the sustained impact of the intervention.

In conclusion, this Classroom Action Research study demonstrates the effectiveness of interfaith dialogue-based Islamic Religious Education in enhancing students' religious

tolerance and fostering a harmonious school environment. The intervention led to significant improvements in students' understanding of religious diversity, increased empathy, and a stronger sense of respect for others' beliefs. The study underscores the importance of providing students with opportunities for meaningful dialogue and reflection on issues related to religious tolerance, and highlights the valuable role that educators and school leaders play in promoting these values.

## **CONCLUSION**

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) study aimed to assess the effectiveness of implementing interfaith dialogue-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in enhancing students' attitudes toward religious tolerance and promoting harmony among students at SMA Negeri 1 Barumun. Based on the results obtained through observations, pre- and post-test evaluations, interviews, and reflection journals, several key conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the integration of interfaith dialogue into the PAI curriculum significantly improved students' understanding of religious tolerance. Through structured discussions, students gained a deeper appreciation for the shared values across different religious beliefs. This improvement was evident not only in their test scores but also in their behavior and communication with peers from different religious backgrounds. Students demonstrated a greater willingness to engage in respectful conversations, listen actively, and recognize the importance of mutual respect and understanding. Secondly, the study showed that the interfaith dialogue sessions played a pivotal role in increasing empathy among students. As they learned to appreciate the perspectives and practices of their peers from diverse religious backgrounds, students developed a more empathetic approach toward religious differences. This shift in empathy contributed to more respectful interpersonal interactions and a more inclusive school environment. Moreover, the role of the teacher as a facilitator was crucial in ensuring that the dialogue sessions remained productive and respectful. By guiding the students through meaningful discussions, the teacher helped create a safe and open space where students felt comfortable sharing their views. The teacher's active involvement was instrumental in the success of the intervention. Another key finding was the positive impact of reflection journals on students' self-awareness. Writing about their thoughts and feelings allowed students to critically assess their own beliefs and recognize areas for personal growth in terms of religious tolerance. This reflective practice not only helped students internalize the lessons learned but also provided valuable insights into their emotional and intellectual development. In terms of broader implications, the study highlights the importance of integrating interfaith dialogue into religious education programs to foster respect, understanding, and social harmony. By continuing to provide students with opportunities for dialogue and reflection, schools can contribute to building a more inclusive society. The results of this study also suggest that interfaith dialogue can be expanded to other schools, particularly in diverse communities, to further promote religious tolerance and reduce prejudice. In conclusion, this research has demonstrated the positive impact of interfaith dialogue on students' attitudes toward religious tolerance and interpersonal relationships. The study reinforces the idea that religious education can go beyond teaching doctrine; it can also serve as a platform for fostering critical thinking, empathy, and respect for diversity, which are essential for creating a harmonious and peaceful society.

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