

Religious Education for Non-Muslim Students in Aceh: An Evaluation of Inclusivity and Implementation

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ABSTRACT

The right to religious education for all students is guaranteed by Indonesian law. However, in Muslim-majority regions such as Aceh, the implementation of religious education for non-Muslim students remains inconsistent and under-explored. This study investigates how such education is implemented and evaluated in public schools, with a focus on inclusivity and compliance with legal standards. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study explored the lived experiences of principals, religious teachers, non-Muslim students, and religious leaders across four regions in Aceh: Aceh Singkil, West Aceh, Sabang, and Lhokseumawe. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, and analyzed using thematic triangulation. Findings reveal that due to the lack of non-Muslim religious teachers, schools rely on external religious leaders to provide instruction and conduct evaluations. Most learning takes place in houses of worship and is integrated into regular religious activities. While schools facilitate this process, the absence of standardized curricula and assessment rubrics has led to inconsistent learning outcomes and unequal educational experiences for minority students. The study identifies a hybrid model of religious education delivery that partially fulfills legal obligations but lacks integration with national educational standards. It concludes that while efforts to provide religious education for non-Muslim students exist, they are fragmented and depend heavily on local initiatives. A national policy framework is urgently needed to ensure equitable, inclusive, and accountable religious education for all students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a journey towards human maturity in achieving perfection as an individual. Human maturity covers all aspects of life, including physical, psychic, mental/moral, spiritual, and religious dimensions (Winditya, 2021). One of the missions of national education development is to improve the

readiness of inputs and the quality of the educational process to optimize the formation of a moral personality (Andriani, 2021). The mandate emphasizes the role of education in developing the character and character of students in carrying out the educational process (Murtadlo & Basri, 2022). Education has various forms; it can occur formally in the school environment, informally through educational and training institutions, and informally in the family environment. In the context of schools, religious education plays an important role as part of efforts to mature humans in the spiritual-religious dimension.

The existence of religious learning in schools is not only an effort to fulfill human religious nature but also a step to meet the objective needs of students for religious services in their lives. Religion and faith are considered objective needs for every individual. (Khasanah, 2023). Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning SISDIKNAS, article 12, paragraph (1) letter a, stipulates that every student in every educational institution has the right to receive religious education according to their religious beliefs, taught by educators who are in line with that religion. This applies not only in public schools but also in private schools. The government must ensure the provision or appointment of religious teaching staff for each student's religion, in both public and private schools. (UUD Sisdiknas, 2006). The implementation of public schools with religious elements is a community right, as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003, Article 55, which states that the community has the right to provide community-based education in the form of formal and non-formal education by the character of religion, social environment, and culture for the common good.

The obligations of schools carried out by the community include the implementation of religious lessons according to religious characteristics, as mandated by PP No. 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education and Religious Education, article 3, which affirms that every education unit in all paths, levels, and types of education must provide religious education. The right to receive religious instruction is the right of parents and students, and as citizens, these rights must be guaranteed by the government (UUD Sisdiknas, 2007).

Arguably, the presence of religious subjects and educators from different religious backgrounds does not diminish the unique characteristics and religious autonomy of the school. Instead, having educators from different religions can promote interaction, dialogue, and the sharing of religious teachings and experiences within religious study groups. In other words, religious education becomes enriched through diversity. (Hanafy, 2015). The principle of 'unity in diversity' is achievable, fostering inclusive behavior that promotes tolerance and mutual respect for differences. (Saihu, 2019).

Religious lessons have been integrated into the nationwide school curricula in Indonesia as a compulsory subject accepted by all students. (Seilatu, 2014). However, the current implementation of religious education in both public and private schools has indeed sparked debates and even caused problems (Sani, 2018). Moreover, the lack of clarity in religious education patterns for non-Muslim students attending state schools is a recurring issue, particularly in Aceh. According to Indonesian laws and regulations, every non-Muslim student whose religion is recognized has the right to receive appropriate religious education. Based on initial observations by researchers, it appears that religious education for non-Muslim students has not been adequately implemented. Despite the Ministry of Religious Affairs being tasked with ensuring religious education for all recognized religions in Indonesia, it has developed comprehensive guidelines for this purpose (Harmi, 2022). These guidelines are integrated into education policies and the religious moderation program in schools. Therefore, students with diverse religious beliefs are guaranteed to receive an appropriate education that aligns with the ethical and moral teachings of their respective religions. (Rofik & Misbah, 2021).

Based on the data retrieved from Satu Data Kementerian Agama, Aceh Province is the area with the highest percentage of Muslims. This fact will certainly impact the implementation of religious education for minority students. However, the findings obtained by the author are that several schools in Aceh Province have implemented learning schemes as mandated by the government. Among these schemes are the involvement of religious leaders in the learning process, the use of houses of worship as a substitute for classrooms, and the learning evaluation process based on basic competencies and

learning outcomes to be targeted. Thus, the right to obtain religious education, especially for adherents of minority religions, can be fulfilled. The shortage of qualified religious teachers and limited learning facilities are no longer obstacles to fulfilling the religious rights of all students.

However, if examined further, not all schools in Aceh province implement such a scheme. There are still schools that are confused about fulfilling religious rights for students who adhere to minority religions. This problem certainly has an impact on the acquisition of religious knowledge received by minority students. The lack of a clear assessment benchmark is also one of the triggers for the gap between students of other religions. This problem makes the implementation of religious education have its own challenges. (Rissanen et al., 2020) explained that there are increasing challenges faced in implementing religious education for minority students. One of the main causes is an inclusive curriculum that results in minority students being increasingly marginalized. Students from minority religions often experience social pressure that ultimately impacts the social and spiritual development of the student (Dupper et al., 2015). Government policy and regulatory factors are also one of the factors that aggravate this situation. Religious education in schools often reflects bias and injustice against students who adhere to minority religions (Schleutker, 2019)

It is well known that, according to Indonesia's laws and regulations, every non-Muslim student whose religion is recognized has the right to receive appropriate religious education. Every school is required to provide the same service to all adherents of different religions. The availability of teachers, learning facilities, and religious guidance is the main parts that need to be considered by the school, all of which have been affirmed in government policy.

We identify the study focused on the implementation of religious education in schools. Naeem & Yousaf, (2023). Found that the International Islamic School of Darul Madinah and the Al-Hira Islamic School of India emphasize strong religious tolerance. To achieve this, these schools strategically design their curriculum through interfaith dialogue and provide facilities that enable students to coexist harmoniously, both within and outside the school environment. However, it is undeniable that misunderstandings rooted in religious beliefs often lead to disputes among religious communities. In response, these schools serve as mediators, bridging differences and offering proactive solutions to emerging issues. At the same time, schools will act as inclusive platforms that ensure open access to the fulfillment of religious rights.

Unfortunately, not all schools, especially in Indonesia, can fulfill these rights. Research conducted by Raihani (2016) indicates that minority religious students often face discriminatory treatment and encounter difficulties in accessing equal religious education. The shortage of qualified religious teachers and inadequate learning facilities are among the obstacles faced by minority religious groups. To overcome these various problems, Huda & Fattah, (2021) emphasize the importance of special strategies needed to overcome the problems that are often experienced by religious minority groups. The availability of appropriate facilities and educational personnel is an absolute requirement that must be fulfilled by every educational institution.

The above descriptions indirectly show that there is still a gap in scientific literature that should be able to provide a real picture of the solution to the problems that often occur in educational institutions, especially in the implementation of religious education for minority groups. Therefore, this study positions itself as the latest study that can explain how schools in Aceh Province provide religious education for minority groups. The focus of this research is the implementation of religious education evaluation for non-Muslim students in Aceh Province. The results of this research can later be a reference for both education providers and education implementers in fulfilling religious rights for all students, starting from policy formulation and implementation of religious education in schools.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of religious education evaluation for non-Muslim students in Muslim-majority schools in Aceh Province. The focus of the research includes learning activities, available facilities, religious learning evaluation processes,

and systematic assessment frameworks applied. The research approach used is qualitative with a phenomenological type, suitable for exploring phenomena that have not been studied much before (Flowerday & Scraw, 2000; Creswell, 2009).

The research took place in Aceh Province, focusing on four regions: Aceh Singkil Regency, West Aceh Regency, Sabang City, and Lhokseumawe City. The selection of the location was carried out through a multi-stage sampling method on the grounds that the area has a significant percentage of religious minorities. The research participants were selected purposively using criterion sampling according to Cohen et al. (2007). Participant criteria include: principals and students from multireligious schools, religious education teachers with at least one year of experience in the evaluation process, non-Muslim students of grades XI and XII, as well as competent religious figures such as priests, monks, and nuns. This selection is based on the need for data to determine the implementation of school policies related to religious education for minority students and observations on the implementation of learning in the houses of worship of each religious leader.

To maintain the confidentiality of identities, the names of participants and schools were changed with pseudonyms. Participants were taken from four different schools, namely Gumer High School, Abar High School, Island High School, and Acut High School. Quantitative data involved 80 students, while qualitative data was obtained from four participants per school (principal, a non-Muslim student, a religious education teacher, and religious leaders).

The main data collection techniques are semi-structured interviews and documentation. The interview was directed to explore the process of evaluating religious learning for non-Muslim students through three guiding questions:

1. How is the learning process of religious education structured for non-Muslim students?
2. How is the assessment and evaluation process conducted for non-Muslim students?
3. What are the main obstacles faced by teachers and religious leaders during the learning and evaluation process?

Documentation includes the collection of files in the form of curriculum, religious learning materials, and assessment documents such as exam questions and answer keys. This data is used to understand the implementation of religious education evaluations for non-Muslim students in Muslim-majority schools in Aceh. As supporting data, the study also used questionnaires to collect data not captured by interviews and observations. Therefore, the phenomenological method was not used purely, but rather incorporated a quantitative approach.

The collected data were then analyzed using data triangulation techniques to increase the validity of the research results (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The research procedure consists of several main stages: the preliminary study stage to identify the initial phenomenon at the research site; the stage of problem analysis and determination of research direction based on initial data; the stage of data collection using predetermined research instruments; the stage of data processing and analysis to obtain research findings; and the stage of drawing conclusions based on the results of the analysis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study by focusing on four key dimensions of the evaluation of religious education for non-Muslim students in Muslim-majority schools: (1) the inclusivity of instructional practices, (2) the mechanisms and actors involved in assessment and learning evaluation, (3) the existence and use of formal standards or guidelines, and (4) the systemic constraints that affect the fulfillment of minority students' religious rights. Rather than merely describing classroom practices, the analysis critically examines to what extent these practices meet the principles of inclusive religious education, minority rights, and accountable religious education governance. In other words, the focus of this evaluation is not only on how learning and assessment

are conducted, but also on whether these arrangements comply with the legal guarantees of religious rights and with international principles of minority protection and inclusive education

3.1 Distribution of non-Muslim students in Aceh

Based on the research data, responses from at least 80 participants provided the necessary information. The data collected from non-Muslim students in each school indicates a wide diversity of religious affiliations. The distribution of religious variations adopted by students in each school is illustrated in the following diagram and table.

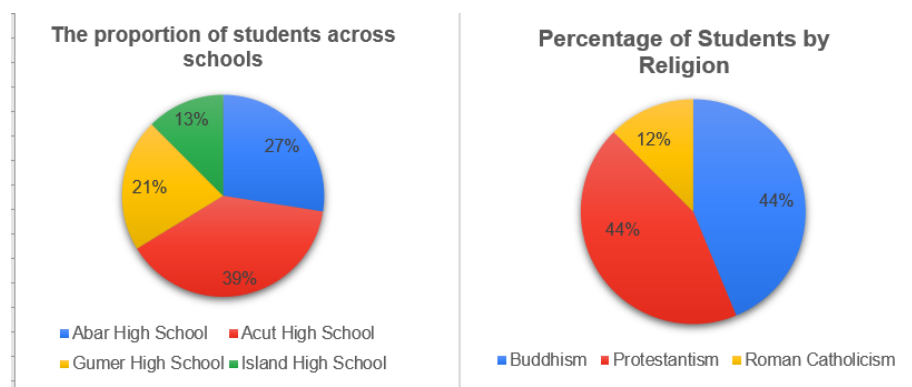


Figure 1: Distribution of religions across different schools

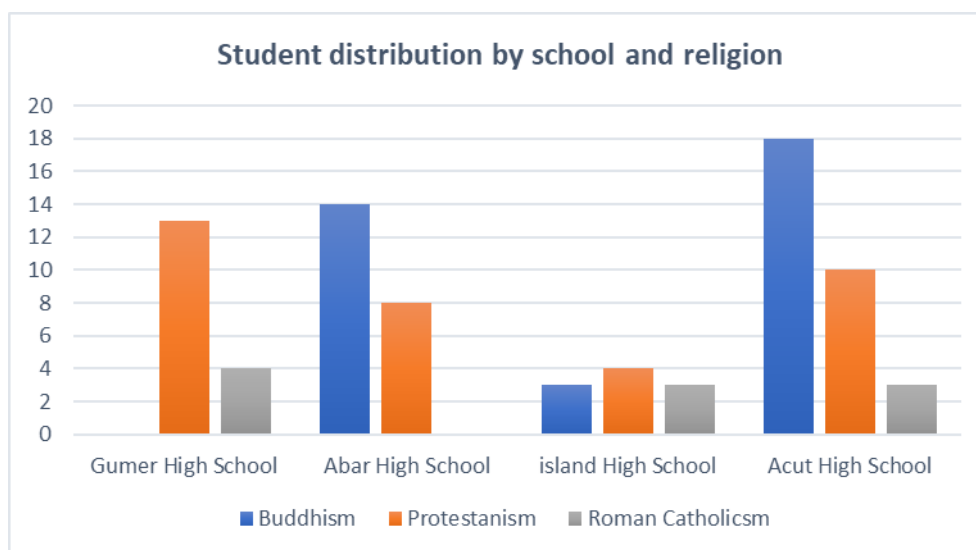


Figure 2: Student distribution by school and religion

The provided data show the distribution of religious affiliations among students in schools across four regions of Aceh (north, east, middle, and west). Specifically, it highlights the variations in student populations and their religious affiliations, with Acut High School having the highest number of non-Muslim adherents, and Island High School having the lowest. Here is a summary of the key points:

1. Acut High School in northern Aceh has the highest proportion of non-Muslim students, at 38.75% (31 students). This is followed by Abar High School in western Aceh with 27.5% (22 students). Meanwhile, Gumer High School in Gunung Meriah comes next, with 21.25% (17 students). Lastly, Island High School in Sabang has the lowest proportion, at 12.5% (10 students).

2. The dominant religions among the students are Buddhism and Protestantism, each comprising 43.8% of the student population, with 35 students each. Finally, Roman Catholicism accounts for 12.5% of the students, with 10 adherents.

3.2 Instructional Practices

A strong reliance on collaboration with local religious leaders and institutions characterises instructional practices for non-Muslim students in the studied Aceh schools. Most non-Muslim students do not receive their religious education inside regular classrooms; instead, learning is organised in churches or other houses of worship and is embedded in routine religious activities such as Sunday services, catechism classes, or weekly Bible study meetings. School principals and teachers coordinate with pastors and religious leaders to ensure that students are formally registered and that their participation in these activities is recognised as part of their schooling. In several cases, schools also adjust timetables or allow students to leave early so that they can attend religious instruction outside the school premises.

From an evaluative perspective, these instructional arrangements indicate a partial fulfilment of minority students' right to religious education, as schools formally acknowledge and facilitate access to faith-specific learning opportunities. However, the strong dependence on external religious institutions and the absence of structured school-based modules mean that non-Muslim students do not enjoy the same level of curricular clarity, learning time, and pedagogical support as their Muslim peers. This situation reflects a form of "segregated inclusion, in which minority students are included through ad hoc accommodations, but their learning experiences remain weakly integrated into the official curriculum and quality assurance mechanisms of the school. In terms of minority rights and inclusive religious education, these practices reveal a gap between legal recognition of diversity and the provision of substantively equal learning conditions for all students. The issue mentioned above is highlighted by the statement made by IA, the religious teacher at Gumer High School:

"The learning process that we do, especially for non-Muslim students, is to involve religious leaders or pastors as substitutes for religious teachers in schools. But in the learning process, pastors do not teach in schools, but remain in their houses of worship, and every worship they do becomes part of the learning process."

Furthermore, if the process of religious learning for non-Muslim students is seen from the student's side, another problem is found in the form of the lack of a role of religious figures in the learning process. Although their worship activities became part of the religious learning process. However, these activities are limited to ordinary routine worship in which there are no teaching and learning activities or religious guidance. As a result, students' knowledge related to religious learning is only about the worship they run. Even though there should be a lot of material that must be obtained by students, such as in class XI Christianity, there are materials that students must learn, namely: Christian education in the family, marriage with a Christian perspective, emulating the Lord Jesus in justice and peace, and others

However, a questionnaire completed by 35 students showed that 60% answered that religious leaders had never been involved in learning activities at school or in their places of worship, 20% answered always, 17.1% answered occasionally, and 2.9% answered frequently. This data shows that learning activities carried out by religious leaders have not run as it is intended.

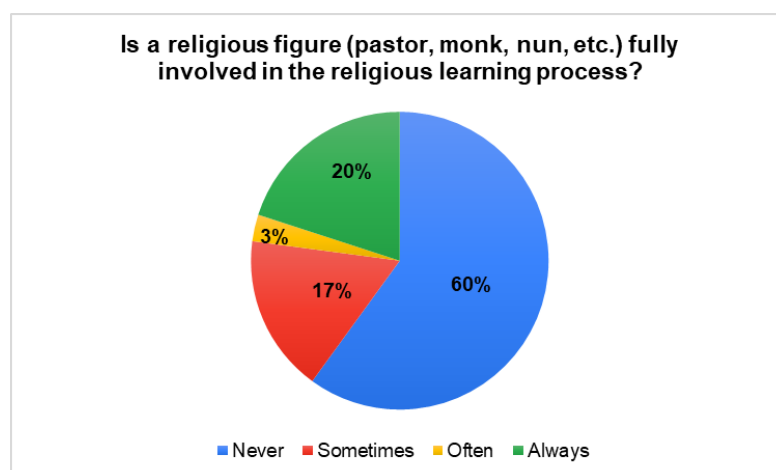


Figure 3. Questionnaire data on the role of religious leaders in religious learning

Furthermore, as a form of validation of the information obtained by researchers, it was found that the problem was triggered by several things, such as religious leaders, difficulties in providing teaching, and the absence of study guides. This is, as stated by Pastor HT below:

"The schools involve us pastors directly in the learning process. They've assigned us as substitutes for the regular religious teachers. So, alongside our church worship activities, we incorporate learning sessions for the students. It's like their worship time doubles as their religious education. But, surprisingly, our teachings aren't reflected in the school's religious textbooks. So, we mainly focus on what we cover during our weekly worship sessions" (HT, Pastor of GKPPD Church)

Based on data collected through research, the learning process for non-Muslim students in this school adopts a distinctive approach. Religious leaders serve as substitutes for regular religious teachers in schools. Interestingly, they do not teach within the school setting but rather in their places of worship. However, they explain that every worship activity conducted in their respective houses of worship becomes an integral part of the learning process for non-Muslim students at the school. This creates a close link between daily religious life and education in schools.

According to religious leaders, this strategy helps students gain a deeper understanding of the values of different religions and how to integrate these values into daily life. It also allows non-Muslim students to have an immersive experience in understanding and respecting other religions. However, they also acknowledge that the challenge faced is how to integrate this approach with public school curricula. They think that there is a need to better tailor the curriculum to religious activities conducted in houses of worship by religious leaders so that non-Muslim students can benefit from this approach without feeling separate from the existing school curriculum. This condition is further justified by a religious teacher as follows:

"For us at Island High School, all our teachers are Muslim. We don't have teachers from other religions. Since there are no non-Muslim teachers here, we've had to find alternative solutions for religious education. That is why we involve religious leaders in the learning process." (Interview EL, Religious Teacher of Island High School)

The same statement was echoed by a non-Muslim student at Island High School in the following comments:

"The learning process we have had so far is through the pastor at church because there are no teachers in school who share our religious beliefs. Our learning activities resemble weekly worship sessions, and sometimes these worship activities are part of our religious education" (Interview CT, non-Muslim student of Island High School).

Abar High School follows a similar approach to religious education for non-Muslim students as seen in other schools. They involve religious figures as substitutes for regular teachers, such as Bante and the Pastor, to ensure students' religious knowledge needs are met. The learning process occurs primarily in their respective places of worship, where weekly religious activities are valued and overseen by these figures. In addition to these activities, every Friday morning, students are given time to discuss and explore their religions. This coincides with a school routine where they gather in the school yard to collectively read Surah Yasin. One teacher said:

"In this school, non-Muslim students learn about religion through their own religious leaders because the school doesn't have teachers from their specific religions. They conduct their learning in their places of worship. Additionally, every Friday morning, we provide them with time to independently discuss their religion." (Interview of Islamic religious teacher.)

In line with the religious teacher's narrative, the Vice Principal of Curriculum at Abar High School, AD said that:

"So far, the religious learning process for non-Muslim students involves non-Muslim religious leaders as well. By the religion professed by the student. Incidentally, for non-Muslim students at Abar High School, there are only 2 religions. That is Buddhism and Protestantism. So that the religious figures we are involved in the religious learning process are the Bante and the Pastor. As for technical learning, it is completely held by the priest and banter. However, the school provides basic points that must be met in the learning process, especially regarding the assessment of non-Muslim students."

As confirmation of the interview data explained by the two sources above, the author validates the information with the students concerned. The author's findings show that the process of religious learning is obtained by students through weekly worship activities and other forms of worship. Religious formation and assistance are entirely carried out by each worship figure. But besides that, schools also have a role in instilling universal religious values such as cultivating student character.

Based on the interviews with the participants mentioned above, it is evident that at this school, the religious learning process for non-Muslim students occurs independently every Friday. This reflects the school's commitment to providing adequate space for religious diversity. Non-Muslim students can explore their understanding of their religious values by immersing themselves in the course material presented specifically on that day. In addition, for Protestant students, the learning approach becomes more personal with direct guidance from teachers of the same faith. Protestant teachers have a central role in guiding students about the teachings and values associated with their beliefs. This step not only ensures students' familiarity with their religious teachings but also reinforces the concept of togetherness in the context of religious diversity in schools.

In addition, the school also continues to involve religious leaders in the religious learning process. The involvement of religious figures brings a practical and applicable dimension to teaching, linking theory to everyday life. With this approach, the school provides a well-rounded religious learning experience, creating an environment where students can respect and understand religious differences more deeply.

In addition, the school also continues to involve religious leaders in the religious learning process. The involvement of religious leaders brings a practical and applicative dimension to teaching, connecting theory to everyday life (Syafei & Zam'an, 2024). With this approach, the school provides a well-rounded religious learning experience, creating an environment where students can respect and understand religious differences more deeply. (Zuhri et al., n.d.) explained that religious leaders have a central role in the religious learning process in schools. Religious leaders function as teachers, counselors, and models that connect schools and communities. This ensures that religious education in schools will be in line with the religious values embraced by the community (Suryani & Muslim, 2024)

For multicultural schools, the implementation of religious literacy often has great challenges. Therefore, religious leaders and school institutions must work together to be able to create a curriculum that can respect and appreciate diversity so that it can reduce the potential for interfaith conflict (Rissanen et al., 2020)

From an inclusivity perspective, these arrangements indicate a partial fulfillment of minority students' right to religious instruction, as schools formally recognize and cooperate with religious leaders of different faiths. However, the strong reliance on worship activities outside the school and the absence of structured teaching modules mean that non-Muslim students do not receive the same level of curricular clarity, time allocation, and pedagogical support as their Muslim peers. This situation reflects a form of "segregated inclusion" where minority students are acknowledged but their learning experiences are not fully integrated into the official curriculum and quality assurance mechanisms of the school. In terms of minority rights, this pattern shows that the formal recognition of religious diversity is not yet accompanied by substantive equality in access to structured learning opportunities, as emphasised in previous research on the marginalisation of religious minorities in schools.

3.3 Evaluation Method

An important process known as the evaluation of religious learning in schools aims to measure the extent to which students understand, internalize, and apply religious teachings, values, and concepts in their lives. This evaluation is very important to ensure that religious education in schools achieves the goals that have been set and provides the best benefit to students (Novarita et al., 2023).

Evaluation activities for religious learning in schools encompass various techniques, including written exams, project presentations, class discussions, student participation in religious ceremonies, and project-based assignments that apply religious principles in daily life (Febriana, 2021). However, if there is no religious teacher at the school, these activities will undoubtedly become different. Gumer High School, for instance, lacks a religious teacher for non-Muslim students. To overcome this problem, religious teachers in schools also involve religious leaders to provide assessments of religious lessons. The following is the explanation of IA, the religious teacher of Gumer High School:

"The evaluation process in religious learning involves the pastor. Initially, the school created assessment rubrics and gave them to pastors to assess students' activities during their learning in churches. However, over time, these rubrics didn't align with church teachings. So now, pastors design their own rubrics for assessing activities. Then, the school's religious teacher adjusts the grades given by the pastor to fit the school's rubric. The challenge is that schools lack guidelines for this process, and pastors have varying assessment criteria. This leads to differences in assessments among pastors."

Furthermore, as confirmed by the researchers, the priest acknowledged the existence of the problem, as indicated by the following quotes:

"When it comes to assessing students, the school includes us in the process where we evaluate their worship activities. We base our judgment on how disciplined they are during worship. We also design the assessment criteria ourselves. But honestly, we're not sure if it aligns with the educational concept because the school doesn't give us guidelines on what exactly to assess during the learning process" (HT, Pastor GKPPD)

Based on the data obtained, researchers also observed an interesting aspect of the assessment process for religious learning in this school. Assessments are not conducted by school teachers but by religious leaders, focusing on students' participation in religious activities within their community. This underscores that student assessment is closely tied to their engagement in religious practices within their religious community.

No.	Nama	Kelas	Kategori	Nilai (0-100)	Peringkat (1-10)	Peringkat (A-D)
1	Yusuf Pradana Catur	XII	ISLAM 1	94	A	
2	Pradita Lita Nuraini Chusaini	XII	ISLAM 1	91	A	
3	Fitri Aidi Supriana	XII	ISLAM 1	91	A	
4	Amalia Zahra F. Pranggiana	XII	ISLAM 1	90	A	
5	Alvinia Wahyu Setiawan	XII	ISLAM 1	91	B	
6	Yusuf Pradana Catur	XII	ISLAM 2	90	B	

Figure 4: List of scores of non-Muslim students of Island High School

As mentioned earlier, Acut High School lacks a suitable religious teacher. Therefore, the school adopts an alternative approach to assess religious learning by involving religious leaders from various faiths, including Buddhists, Protestants, and Catholics. This step aims to foster an inclusive learning atmosphere and promote respect for religious diversity among students. Upon further examination, some efforts have been made to scrutinize the process of religious learning. These efforts include: First, to ensure the suitability of the material with the teachings of each religion, Acut High School involves Buddhist, Protestant, and Catholic religious leaders in compiling questions and answer keys.

Second, the exam questions and answer keys are prepared by their respective religious leaders. This decision is taken to ensure that the material tested is by the students' religious beliefs so that the exam truly reflects the understanding and application of religious teachings received during learning.

The exam process is carried out in a school environment, creating a conducive and comfortable atmosphere for students. This step also aims to reduce students' potential stress, so that they can show their true abilities without excessive emotional burden. Once the assessment is completed, students' questions and answers are returned to the religious leaders involved. This action is not only a form of transparency but also provides an opportunity for religious leaders to provide constructive feedback to students regarding their understanding of religious teachings. The above conclusion is indicated by the following narration of religious teachers from Acut High School:

“Because we don’t have a qualified religious teacher, just like the learning process, we also involve religious leaders as partners to make exam questions. Questions will usually be sent or delivered to the school by the banter and pastor directly to the school. But usually, before the exam period takes place, we write first to each religious leader involved. The letter contained a notice that the exam was about to be held. The exam process is still being done at school, while the questions given are questions sent by the priest or banter.”

Through this distinctive approach, Acut High School not only creates an inclusive learning atmosphere but also ensures that religious learning assessments truly reflect the values of diversity and respect for each religious belief. This collaborative approach between religious leaders can inspire other schools to adopt assessment methods that value and respond to religious diversity in the community. Therefore, the findings of this study indirectly deny that the limited number of religious teachers in schools can be an obstacle to the equitable implementation of religious education. The right curriculum is the key to the success of the implementation of religious education in schools (Hatim, 2018). The involvement of religious leaders in the preparation of the curriculum is a part that needs to be considered (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). The establishment of stronger partnerships between schools and religious communities can help strengthen the support and integration of religious values in the curriculum (Davies, 2019).

3.4 Challenges and Constraints

The implementation and evaluation of religious education for non-Muslim students in Aceh schools are confronted with multiple, interrelated challenges. The most frequently mentioned obstacle

is the shortage of qualified teachers of the same faith within the school system, which forces schools to rely almost entirely on external religious leaders for both instruction and assessment. This is compounded by the lack of official curriculum documents, textbooks, or learning modules for non-Muslim religious education that are recognised by education authorities. As a result, teaching content, instructional methods, and evaluation standards are largely determined by each religious institution, leading to considerable variation between regions and congregations.

These challenges indicate that the problem is not merely technical but also systemic, touching on the broader governance of minority rights in education. Without clear national or provincial guidelines that regulate roles, standards, and accountability mechanisms, schools and religious leaders are left to improvise their own arrangements, which can unintentionally produce unequal treatment and inconsistent recognition of non-Muslim students' learning achievements. From the perspective of inclusive religious education and minority rights, this governance gap means that legal guarantees of religious freedom and equality are only partially realised in everyday school practice. Addressing these systemic constraints, therefore, requires not only additional human resources but also a coherent policy framework that explicitly integrates minority students' religious education into the broader architecture of educational governance in Aceh.

3.5 Coping Strategies

Overcoming these constraints requires a holistic approach involving various stakeholders. First, the development of inclusive religious education policies and national standards that accommodate the needs of religious minorities is essential, including clear learning guidelines and assessments (Raihani, 2015). Second, strengthening cooperation between schools and religious leaders and minority communities actively and systematically for the implementation of integrated education in schools (Ichwan et al., 2020). Third, increasing the quantity and quality of minority religious teachers through training, special recruitment, and incentives will help provide more formal and effective religious learning (Saragih & Henri, 2024). Fourth, the development and distribution of appropriate and inclusive religious learning modules for religious minorities must be supported by the government and educational institutions so that learning materials are not just outside schools (Bahdar et al., 2024). Fifth, the promotion of interfaith dialogue and religious moderation in the school environment that emphasizes the values of tolerance, social solidarity, and respect for diversity contributes to a conducive learning climate and reduces discrimination (Bukhari & Azwir, 2024). These strategies are in line with the principles of diversity-minded education that respect the constitutional rights of citizens in carrying out worship according to their respective religions.

In terms of religious education governance, the Aceh schools studied here operate within a hybrid model in which state schools formally delegate key functions of curriculum delivery and assessment to community religious leaders without robust regulatory frameworks. While this arrangement helps to compensate for the lack of qualified teachers, it also blurs lines of responsibility and makes it difficult to standardise evaluation across schools and districts. Strengthening governance therefore requires not only additional human resources but also clear national and local guidelines that define roles, standards, and accountability mechanisms for all actors involved.

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on inclusive religious education and minority rights in at least two ways. First, they document a hybrid model of collaboration between schools and community religious leaders in which key functions of curriculum delivery and assessment for minority students are delegated to external actors while schools remain formally accountable for reporting learning outcomes. This model extends existing discussions of inclusive education by showing how inclusion can be organised through community-based arrangements that are only partially integrated into official governance structures. Second, the study offers an alternative framework for evaluating religious education for minority students that goes beyond access and attendance, emphasising the importance of clear standards, shared assessment criteria, and transparent lines of responsibility between schools, religious leaders, and education authorities.

4. CONCLUSION

The study highlighted initiatives in predominantly Muslim schools to support non-Muslim students in the teaching and evaluation processes of religious education. However, it is important to note that these findings pertain specifically to the implementation of religious education for non-Muslim students in four districts within Aceh, among a total of 23 districts in the region. Therefore, these findings should not be generalized to all schools across Aceh. Despite facing challenges due to the absence of qualified religious teachers, the implementation of religious education for non-Muslim students has been effectively managed. The involvement of religious leaders is a crucial part that has been done by the school in anticipating the absence of appropriate religious teachers. By involving religious leaders as substitutes for religious teachers in schools, the learning process is carried out in houses of worship in conjunction with weekly worship. Meanwhile, at the stage of evaluating religious learning for non-Muslim students, the school also involves religious leaders as partners in formulating questions and answer keys to be carried out. Some schools provide some outlines of the material to be assessed. The outline is in the form of basic competencies and learning achievement indicators. At this stage, intensive communication is the key to harmony between the school and religious leaders to fulfill students' rights to get appropriate religious education.

This finding indirectly reflects the reality that occurs in the field. Although it is seen from the fulfillment of religious rights that have been fulfilled, the implementation of religious education has not implemented or followed the proper rules. So the impact is the uneven implementation of religious education in every school. Unclear learning implementation standards, unstructured assessment benchmarks are part of the problems in schools. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study can later be the basis for conducting further research related to how the ideal step for schools to organize religious education for minority students starts from the learning planning process, learning implementation to the learning evaluation process, all of which involve religious leaders as partners in the implementation process. The basic need in fulfilling religious education for minority students can be in the form of guidebooks that can be used by religious teachers in schools and religious leaders as guidelines in the learning process.

Theoretically, this study refines the concept of inclusive religious education by highlighting that legal recognition and formal access are not sufficient to guarantee substantive equality for minority students. The proposed model of school-religious leader collaboration and the evaluative framework focusing on standards, actors, and governance responsibilities can be used as analytical tools to examine how minority students' religious rights are implemented in other Muslim-majority contexts.

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