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## Seeds of Violence: How Fanaticism and Exclusivism in Early Childhood Religious Education Shape Intolerant Dispositions

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### Abstract

*This study aims to reveal and analyze the potency of violent values in early childhood education that is taught through religious teaching materials. This study is critical to analyze because the understanding of violence instilled in childhood can have long-lasting effects on their social and mental development, such as fostering aggressive behavior, normalizing violence, and causing social maladjustment. This study uses a qualitative method. And to reveal the forms of potential violence through the teachings, this study is also supported by questionnaire data. The findings in this study show that two types of religious teachings have the potential to be seeds of violence internalized in kindergarten, namely exclusivism and fanaticism. These two types represent characteristics of theological claims that exert consequences in shaping the understanding of intolerant motivations and behaviors. By using the genealogy of power theory as a knife analysis, this study concludes that the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education not only reflects how the power operates systematically within religious teachings in a micro context in the form of teacher-student relationships in generating violence understanding, but also reflects a broader context within social and political structures.*

**Keywords:** *violence, religious understanding, early childhood education, genealogy of power*

### Introduction

The potential for religiously-based violence in early childhood education is a serious concern, as it threatens to normalize discrimination and hinder peaceful social integration from a young age (Gonçalves et al. 2022). This study classifies its manifestations into two categories: fanaticism and exclusivism. In this study, both fanaticism and exclusivism assert the creation of knowledge, norms, and truths within the system of power in educational settings and reflect the genealogy of power within broader social and political structures. Religion-based violence, commonly referred to as radicalism and extremism (Brakoniecka, 2024), it involves individuals and groups using religion to justify aggressive actions against other individuals, certain social groups, and even the state. The justification has a relation to fanaticism and exclusivism in understanding religious teachings, which contributes to shaping the potency of violent behavior (Chouraqui, 2019).

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Studies that discuss violence based on religion so far focus on three contexts. First, studies focus on religious violence as a socio-political symptom (Gordon & Kinna, 2019; Intan, 2019). Critically, religiously-motivated violence is not only triggered by narrow theological understandings but also reinforced by structural factors such as social injustice, economic marginalization, and political inequality. Second, studies focus on restrictions on minority faith-based communities as the onset of violent religious hostilities (Saiya et al., 2024; Scheitle & Howard Ecklund, 2020). Third, studies focus on the spread of religious beliefs and radical networks in universities, high schools, and senior high schools (Korol, 2022; Yani et al., 2020).

In general, studies that discuss violence based on religious beliefs only focus on three dominant contexts, such as the political context, social hostilities related to belief context, and radical understanding in schools from junior high school to university level. The focus of the study indicates that most research remains confined to macro-structural approaches, thereby failing to capture the dynamics of religion-based violence emerging in more intimate and hidden spaces. Thus, it can be said that studies that discuss the religious-based violence in early childhood have not been conducted comprehensively, especially studies that discuss the genealogy of power in relation to the potency of religious-based violence in early childhood education. Based on existing literature, studies in the early childhood education context discuss how to prevent radicalism and promote moderation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is not only to address the shortcomings of previous studies but also to explain and reflect on the forms and values arising from the potency of violence, grounded in religious understanding, in early childhood education.

Violence based on religion appears in various contexts. In 2017, the Pew Research Center recorded the highest peak in social hostilities related to religion, both violent and non-violent behavior categories. The use of violence to impose religious norms and practices has seen the largest increases (Gorur and Gregory 2021). Furthermore, Pew Research Center revealed that in the year of 2018, social violence resulted in one or more deaths in 39 countries, with non-fatal assaults occurring in 66 countries. Of all types of non-state religious violence, property damage and the use or threat of violence to impose religious norms and practices have seen the largest increases, with these two categories more than doubling since 2007 (Gorur and Gregory, 2021). The underlying potential driving this violence originates from various media, one of which is education that is based on religious schools. Educational institutions exposed to violence, understanding allegedly spreads from the highest level at the university to the basic level of early childhood education (Wahid et al., 2020). Educational institutions serve as the initial breeding ground for exclusive religious notions through exclusive discussion forums, subsequently disseminating to lower echelons through alumni networks, religious organizations, and teachers who have been exposed to similar ideologies.

The potency of violence through religious understandings in education settings, especially in early childhood education, is then of paramount importance to analyze. This is because early childhood education plays a critical role in shaping individuals' basic

values, beliefs, attitudes, and character. The understanding of violence instilled in childhood can be extremely harmful and have long-lasting effects on their emotional, social, and mental development, such as fostering aggressive behavior, normalizing violence, and causing social maladjustment (Gonçalves et al. 2022).

This is because children are in a highly vulnerable stage of cognitive development (Little et al., 2021), during which they are not yet fully able to distinguish between universal values and discriminatory social constructs. Over the long term, this not only impedes the development of empathy and tolerance but also establishes a cycle of violence that is challenging to disrupt, as it becomes embedded in children's cognitive structures from an early age. Religion is a fundamental and essential value in individual life. And, the ideology of violence derived from religion can constitute a grave threat (Abbink, 2020). Therefore, this violent potential is a fascinating phenomenon that can be explained in context and reflected on.

In order to reveal the values of violence potency, this study stresses a question on what are the forms of religious teachings that are potential to violent understanding that is taught in early childhood education. This question will guide this study. The framework of this study is organized into three primary sections: the conceptual framework of the genealogy of power; the forms of religious teachings that possess the potential for violent understanding; and the analysis of the potency of violent understanding based on religious values. The form of religious teachings that contains values of violence does not exist in a vacuum chamber. These teachings have a genealogy into a doctrine that allows violence to achieve its objectives (Pischedda and Vogt 2025). Consequently, the teachings are systematically transmitted into school settings. This study uses Michel Foucault's theory of the genealogy of power to analyze how the genealogy of violence's understanding infiltrates early childhood education. In line with that, this study is based on the argument that the potency of violence in early childhood education schools is not only transmitted through the covert, systematic operation of power within religious teachings, in the form of teacher-student relationships, but also reflects broader social and political structures.

### **Research Method**

This study used a qualitative method. And, to strengthen the qualitative argument, this research is supported by survey data from selected respondents. This is intended to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under discussion. The qualitative data based on primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through focus group discussions on childhood education, involving 46 participants, including early childhood education leaders and teachers, as well as representatives from integrated Islamic schools. The research is located in Jambi and West Sumatra Provinces. This research was conducted in the year 2024. The researchers in this study explored the experiences and teaching-learning processes of students and teachers in early childhood education institutions. The process was conducted through sharing and discussion

between the research subjects and the researchers. Thus, the researchers can interpret how potential forms of violence exist within the early childhood educational environment.

This qualitative data was supported by questionnaire data on religious values or teachings that have the potential to be violent. The questionnaire used a random sampling technique, with 30 selected respondents among early childhood education teachers, including those from integrated Islamic schools. This selection is due to the strong relationship of integrated Islamic schools with external religious networks, particularly those from the Middle East. The underlying premise addresses the strength of this relationship by citing previous studies that have revealed the potential for a connection, as well as the transmission mechanisms for ideas and ideologies originating in the Middle East (Majid et al. 2023; Malik 2024). The number of 30 selected respondents is based on the need to obtain a sufficiently representative quantitative sample to reinforce the qualitative findings, while still maintaining the principles of feasibility and proportionality in small-scale educational research. The sample size of 30 respondents follows the minimum threshold commonly used in exploratory and mixed-methods designs, in which 30 respondents are considered adequate to capture basic patterns, variability, and tendencies within a population of limited size in early childhood education teachers (Creswell, 2022; Squire et al. 2024). In addition, the sampling decision reflects practical considerations regarding field accessibility and the manageable scope needed to integrate questionnaire data into a predominantly qualitative research framework. Based on this explanation, the number 30 was selected from the informants who participated in FGDs and interviews.

Random sampling is used to avoid respondent selection bias, minimize researcher subjectivity in sample selection, obtain representative data, and strengthen the external validity of interview-based data. Therefore, the genealogy of power, as reflected in the selection of these schools, can be explored and reflected on. Secondary data in this study were obtained through various documents, reports, and studies on religion-based violence or radicalism cases. Therefore, survey data are essentially data used to strengthen qualitative arguments concerning the observations conducted.

The main data analysis in this study refers to the genealogy of power theory. Meanwhile, for the data processing, this study refers to Fernando (Fernando et al. 2023) which focused on three processes: First, the process of reducing data. Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming data from interviews, observations, and documents into a more organized and meaningful form to enable conclusions. In this research, the process of rearranging data into a systematic form based on the classification of data obtained according to potential or teachings that contain intolerant and violent values. Second, verifying data is the process of thematically concluding the reduced data. The important and requisite data for the needs of this research will be consolidated into a single entity, while less relevant information will be segregated, thereby enabling the attainment of the research's objectives. Third, displaying data as a process of describing the data obtained and then displaying it to focus of the discussion has been verified. From these three processes, the next step is to analyze the data inductively as a basis for interpreting the data obtained. The interpretation stage

restates and reflects the data by the patterns of violence rooted in religious values. The process and stages of analysis made it possible to understand how the genealogy of power operates within early childhood education teachings that promote and perpetuate violent values.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Genealogy of Power: A Review of the Literature**

In analyzing the problem of this research, a theoretical conceptual framework was established as a systematic and objective analysis to explain and reflect the potency of violent values in early childhood education. The theoretical framework used is Foucault's genealogy of power. Based on Foucault's theory (Valeirão et al., 2021), a genealogy of power highlights how power and knowledge are interconnected and shape a discourse. In this context, the discourse highlighted is how the discourse of violence is discursively constructed through religious teachings towards early childhood education and becomes a potential for violence based on religious values. This discourse, as explained by Valeirão (2021), is not a natural occurrence but the result of a historical process driven by certain actors, including the state, religious institutions, and educational bodies, which hold the authority to define truth and morality. In this context, early childhood education becomes a space for the production and reproduction of religious discourse, within which complex power relations are embedded. The religious teachings imparted to children do not merely shape personal spirituality but also construct cognitive and affective structures that can create perceptions of right and wrong, as well as various dichotomies. Power operates not merely through prohibitions or physical coercion, but through the institutionalization of what is considered legitimate and true knowledge, which is then reproduced from language, symbols, and daily pedagogical routines (Kramsch, 2020). Therefore, a genealogical analysis of the construction of religious-based violence discourse in early childhood education is crucial, considering its long-term impact on broader social structures and the potential normalization of violence hidden beneath the discourse of morality.

Foucault's theory presents a decentralized view of power that operates through everyday practices, institutions, and societal norms (Souza et al. 2020). Genealogy of power represents a fundamental shift in understanding how knowledge and truth are produced within systems of power. Genealogy itself is a tool to uncover the historical processes that have shaped power relations. Power is not only about domination, but also about the creation of knowledge, norms, and truths (Haugaard 2022). The relationship between power and knowledge is central to understanding the genealogy approach. Genealogy is concerned with tracing the origins of power-knowledge configurations and how they became naturalized within society, including in contexts of violent understanding in the name of religion, as discussed in this study.

From Foucault's perspective (Haugaard 2022), power is not a fixed entity possessed by specific individuals or institutions, but rather a relation dispersed throughout the social network, operating through the production of knowledge and the formation of

discourse. In this sense, power is not merely repressive but also shapes subjects, determines what is considered truth, and directs how individuals think and act. In the context of religion-based violence, Foucault's genealogical approach allows us to trace and analyze how certain religious teachings are produced and legitimized as the sole truth by religious authorities and educational institutions. Dominant religious discourse, through literal, exclusive, and dogmatic interpretations, not only becomes a source of morality but also a tool of power that limits critical thinking and shapes a collective identity prone to rejecting differences. When such religious narratives are internalized from an early age, especially within religion-based educational institutions, they can give rise to a worldview that justifies symbolic or even physical violence against those considered different or deviating from hegemonically constructed norms.

Within religious discourse, power relations are discernible in educational practices where particular religious norms and values are imposed as the singular truth through pedagogical methods and teacher authority. This power functions through disciplinary mechanisms such as surveillance, moral evaluation, and the strengthening of group identity, ultimately forming subjects who are compliant and subservient to the dominant structure (Gjerde 2024). In this context, early childhood education becomes a crucial arena, as it is here that power begins to operate subtly yet systematically in shaping thought structures that can be exclusive. The genealogy of power in this study is used to show that religiously motivated violence is not merely the result of individual deviation but rather a long historical and social process in which religious discourse has been used as an instrument of normalization and control.

In the context of research problems, educational institutions can be places where power and knowledge operate, where students internalize values and an understanding of violence through teachers as mediators in educational settings. Educational institutions represented by the teacher-student relationship play a significant role in shaping values of violence through the process of infiltration of intolerant and exclusive ideologies towards students. In this regard, the indicators utilized to reveal the values potentially leading to violence take the form of discursive practices and pedagogical exposures that can normalize potential values of violence in the name of religion. These discursive practices include the exposure to narratives that frame other groups as inferior, deviant, or threatening, and the use of religious texts interpreted in an exclusive, rigid, or punitive manner. Furthermore, the pedagogical exposures include, but are not limited to, instructional content containing dichotomies (the others) and classroom activities that emphasize strict obedience through religious justification. Therefore, this theoretical concept will address the potency of violence in early childhood education by emphasizing the interplay between power relations and religious understanding as the underlying condition for its potency.

### **The Forms of Religious Teachings Which Are Potentially Violent Understanding**

Religious teachings have the potential to be interpreted in ways that promote violence. As stressed by Munson (2020), religious teachings have the potential to justify

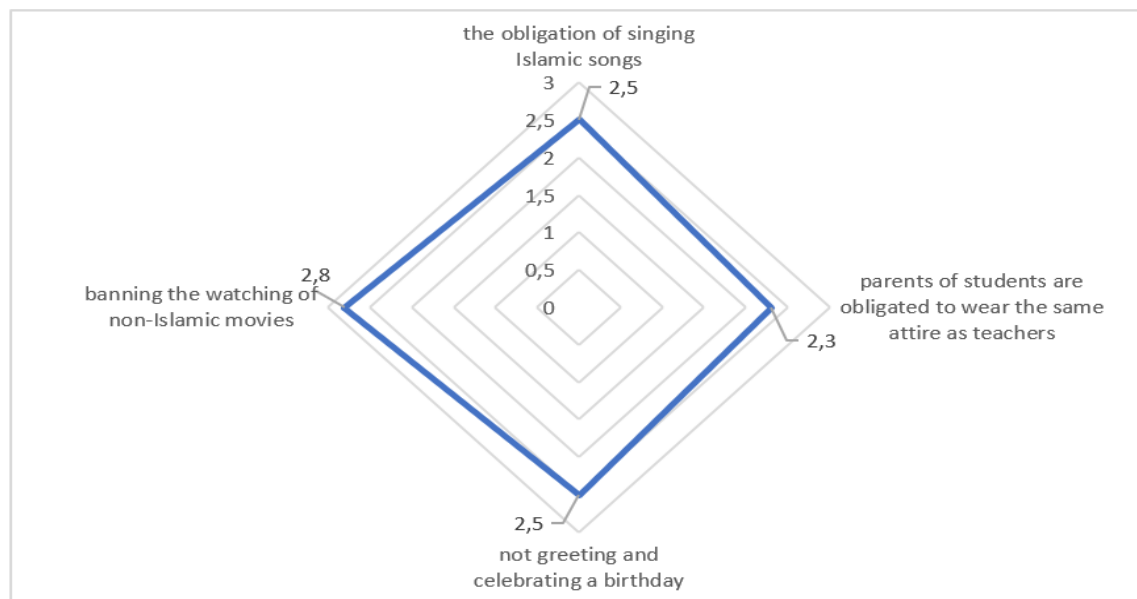
and incite violence. The potential arises from interpretation and socio-political context, exploiting religious narratives through differentiation and compartmentalization, and highlighting the separation and exclusion of certain individuals or groups. Saiya et al. (2024) reinforce this point by contextualizing it within three religious experiences. The restrictions on minority faith-based communities tend to relate to the onset of violent religious hostilities. In the context of this study, the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education has been shown through two main findings. They are fanaticism and exclusivism. Both of them will be elaborated in the findings and analysis below.

### **Fanaticism Towards Religious Teachings**

Fanaticism in religious teachings is a fundamental concept. Religious fanaticism refers to an attitude or behavior that is extremely intense in holding and defending religious convictions. In view of Chouraqui (2019), fanaticism is a certain relationship to one's beliefs that is informed by the assumption that there is a mutual incompatibility between consistency and moderation. This fanaticism often results in an inability to appreciate and/or accept others' different viewpoints. It is characterized by the belief that one's own religious teachings are the only truth, and different groups are considered heretical. This can foster a sense of superiority among followers of the belief, thereby prompting them to distance themselves from others, even in terms of tolerance. Thus, fanaticism is a potential factor in the emergence of violence. In the context of this research, the concept of violence is not merely restricted to physical acts, but is understood more broadly as forms of domination, coercion, and discriminatory practices that can manifest through religious fanaticism. In early childhood education, the fanaticism appears in several forms of teaching. This context can be reflected through data elaborated in the following interview:

“..One early childhood education school and an Islamic boarding school have been identified as having the potential for radicalism, stemming from their highly fanatical values embedded in teaching materials that contain distortions. After a thorough review and subsequent report, its operating license was revoked; additionally, several other institutions were found to be operating without proper authorization. Thus, it is crucial to cultivate an understanding of religion as *rahmatan lil alamin* (a mercy to all the worlds) from an early stage (Focus Group Discussion, 01 November 2024).

In addition, the data presented above is corroborated by the following figure. This figure serves to deepen understanding rather than to represent.



**Figure 1 The Potency of Fanaticism Towards Religious Teachings in Early Childhood Education, Using 1-3 Interval Scale**

Figure one shows a fanaticism towards religious teachings. This finding can be said to be a critical potency for violent ideologies that stems from religious values, which are internalized in early childhood education. In line with that, the data highlights three crucial aspects regarding the potency of violence based on religious values. First, the potency of violence based on religious values appears in the context of fanaticism toward religious teaching and religious symbolism. This is characterized by strict teachings and attitudes regarding the obligation to wear the same uniform as the teachers, even for the students' parents. Second, fanaticism is not solely exhibited in the context of excessive adherence to beliefs or interests, such as Islamic songs, but also in the prohibition of wishing and celebrating a child's birthday, which is a common practice among the general public, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Third, teachings that encourage fanaticism are fundamentally incompatible with the substantive values of religion. The fanaticism in the data is more of an artificial form of compulsory compliance, mirroring the behaviors of actors in a school setting, involving not only students but also their parents.

The three contexts indicate that fanaticism in religious teachings leads to an exaggerated focus on external conformity through uniforms, prohibitions, and enforced practices, thereby distorting the deeper, more substantive values of religion. In the context of early childhood education, this fanaticism is particularly problematic because it affects not only students but also their parents, shaping a community in which compliance with artificial rules takes precedence over meaningful engagement with the core teachings of faith. This results in a form of religious practice that can be seen as shallow and disconnected from the true essence of religion. Moreover, within early childhood educational environments, a narrow and exclusive focus on expressing religious values can provoke discriminatory or intimidating behavior from both educators and peers. Children who do not comply with certain dress codes or do not participate in dominant

religious rituals may face social exclusion or even unjust treatment. This condition fosters a learning environment that is neither inclusive nor free of pressure. Furthermore, this condition indirectly hinders children's emotional and social development. The potential for violence, instilled through guilt, fear, or feelings of unworthiness, becomes very real and dangerous for children's development at a highly vulnerable age when religious values are taught without contextual and empathetic understanding.

The data also indicate that the school becomes a space for enforcing rigid, unquestioned religious conformity. Religious or ideological control is enforced at multiple levels within the community. In a broader context, this creates a culture where compliance with authority becomes more important than critical thinking, creativity, or personal spiritual growth. It turns religious identity into something imposed. Therefore, fanaticism in this context might lead to a potency in the formation of attitude or behavior that is extremely strong in holding and defending religious convictions. Furthermore, this context shows how knowledge and truth are constructed within systems of power in the school environment through the reinforcement of a fanatic culture.

### Exclusivism Towards Religious Teachings

Exclusivism towards religious teachings exerts a critical influence on tolerance, diversity, and the prevalence of violence. The principle of uniqueness legitimizes exclusivism as the permanent attitude of those who have religious faith. Exclusivism towards religious teachings is the exclusive view that only one specific religion is true and correct, dismissing all other faiths as false. As stressed by Grube (2024) Truth-gearred exclusivists hold that only one religion possesses the truth, usually their own. Salvation-gearred exclusivists hold that only one religion leads to salvation, again, usually their own. Therefore, exclusivism emphasizes the separation and or rejection of other groups of people. As a consequence, exclusivism can be said to be the initial potency for violent behavior. In early childhood education, exclusivism appears in several forms of teaching and shapes the discourse that differentiates “the others”. This context is reflected in the findings below.

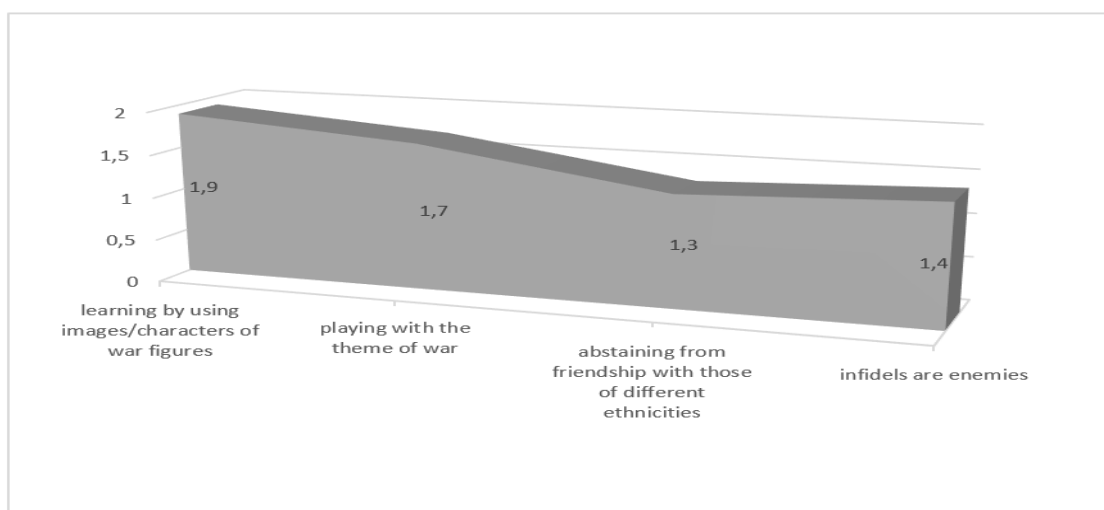


Figure 2 The Potency of Exclusivism towards Religious Teachings in Early Childhood Education, Using a 1-3 Interval Scale

Figure 2 shows the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education. The data highlights the teaching of exclusive doctrines. In line with that, the data also contains three important classifications that contribute to the potency of violence. First, the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education is shown by the solitary religious teachings, characterized by the prohibition of befriending those of different religious beliefs. Second, the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education involves a cultural context that is shown by the prohibition against associating with different ethnic groups. Third, the potency of violence based on religious values involves a labelling context. This is demonstrated by the teaching of labelling people of other faiths as enemies.

This context is strengthened by the argument elaborated in the following interview: ..even now, we need to be vigilant of deviant religious ideologies or teachings. These are misleading doctrines taught to children. The ideologies have permeated education, including early childhood education, to brainwash them. These teachings are dangerous because they promote fanaticism and intolerance, two threatening forces that harm children's mindsets (Focus Group Discussion, 5 November 2024).

The three contexts indicate that exclusivism, and thus fanaticism, can instill harmful beliefs about religious, cultural, and ethnic differences. The teaching, whether through isolating children from others based on faith, ethnicity, or by labeling the others as enemies, risks creating an environment ripe for the development of intolerance and discrimination. In societies where cultural and religious diversity is a part of their social reality, exclusivism affects a divisive and exclusionary atmosphere, in which the belief that those who are different in terms of both culture and religion are enemies or threats. Moreover, exclusivism towards religious teachings in early childhood education entails constructing a discourse that differentiates “the others”. This context can heighten the sense of religious rivalry, persecution, and even aggression as they grow. In other words, exclusivism towards religious teachings in early childhood education is a critical factor in creating violent values.

### **Making Sense of the Potency of Violence Understanding Based on Religious Values**

The potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education has complex characteristics and shows the creation of knowledge, norms, and truths within the system of power in education settings. This context is evident in two important findings from this research. First, the potency of violence based on religious values appears in the context of fanaticism on religious teachings. Second, the potency of violence based on religious values appears in the context of exclusivism. The two elements indicate that the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education represents a characteristic of theological claims that exert consequences in shaping intolerant motivations and understandings. This type of violence is an inevitable consequence when the time is ripe, and the belief converges with a certain

socio-political power structure. Aviz and Girardello (2021) emphasize that religious fanaticism can lead to violence and spiritual abuse, and reinforce conservative theocratic power structures. Religious fanaticism instilled from an early age does not emerge spontaneously. Instead, it is the result of a systematic process (Nasirdinova, 2023) in which educational institutions help shape a mindset that is closed to the reality of diversity. Early childhood is a critical period for shaping values, identities, and social behaviors. The exposure to religiously-biased narratives or exclusionary practices at this stage can normalize intolerance and sow the seeds of future violence.

The potential for violence stemming from religious fanaticism and exclusivism in early childhood education reflects that it doesn't stop at the ideological level but also becomes institutionalized in daily pedagogical practices. A certain set of religious values is taught without critical and reflective space, and students are shaped to understand the world through rigid moral dichotomies. This indicates that early childhood education has become a field in which religious power discourse is subtly yet effectively exercised, shaping the child's subjective structure from an early age through disciplinary mechanisms cloaked in the language of morality. From a Foucauldian perspective, this is a manifestation of power that operates not through direct repression but through the internalization of norms and the cultivation of a desire to conform to a specific value system. This pattern risks producing a generation that is not only intolerant of differences but also capable of reproducing symbolic and structural violence in the name of the truth they believe in.

Fanaticism and exclusivism are reflections of a more extensive genealogy of power. In other words, as revealed by Tietjen (2023), fanaticism, including exclusivism, essentially is a group phenomenon. The identity of fanatical individuals and groups is defined by their shared, passionate commitment to values they consider sacred, which binds them to an object of intense loyalty and a community of fellow fanatics. The passionate, shared commitment of a fanatical group to values they consider sacred is usually accompanied by hostility towards those who do not share them. The others are perceived as threatening their group's values, identity, and existence (Tietjen, 2023). Fanaticism and exclusivism, therefore, are two potential elements to create polarization, intolerance, and violence towards individuals or groups with differing views, beliefs, or identities.

This study shows that the potency of violence rooted in religious values in early childhood education is not only transmitted through the covert, systematic operation of power within religious teachings at the micro level, in the form of teacher-student relationships, but is also reflected in macro contexts, in social, cultural, and political structures. Referring to Foucault's theory (Haugaard, 2022), the early childhood learning context can be seen as a practice that reinforces asymmetrical power relations and authority by dichotomizing understandings of communal living. This context can be seen as a reinforcement of pre-existing social hierarchies by privileging one religious group over others based on race or ethnicity, religion, and social group through fanaticism and exclusivism teachings. These types of teachings reinforce racist systems in a manner

consistent with the Foucaudian concept of 'normalization'. The creation of fanatical and exclusive religious teachings normalizes dominant knowledge systems, thereby shaping and socializing students into a mindset that perpetuates intolerant and violent understandings against divergent groups.

Moreover, the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education also reflects a broader context in social, cultural, and political structures. Culturally, violence based on religious values has a genealogy with external influence from radical religious culture from the Middle East, which has brought the Islamic movement and global caliphate, and Muslims in Indonesia (Vergani et al., 2022). In other words, the genealogy of violent understanding based on religious values is generated from a transnational network and then influences educational settings. As revealed by Hanafi et al. (2022), Indonesian students' understanding of Islamic terms such as jihad and caliphate is influenced by radical Muslim groups. The violent understanding arises from a literal interpretation of scriptures. The understanding allows for virtually no compromise with other groups perceived as different. This literal interpretation is exploited by radical groups by utilizing educational institutions to teach fanaticism and exclusivism toward students. Education is considered the most effective means for propagating extremist Islamic ideologies.

Structurally, the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education reflects an endeavor to foster group militancy in response to marginalization by the political system and or injustice. In Islamic countries in general, the global caliphate claimed as the purpose of radical Muslims is actually a kind of response from the authoritarian forces (Kaya, 2021). The roots of violent understanding in the Islamic religion must then be looked at in a broader context, such as structural inequality and socio-political oppression. This context is a basis for saying that the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education has a genealogy from social and political structure conditions that generate the emergence of efforts to create a new form of power by religious groups.

This shows that early childhood education is inseparable from the power dynamics that take place in the wider socio-political space. When religious values taught from an early age are framed as resistance to structural injustice, the educational process can become a tool for ideological mobilization. In this context, children are not only positioned as learners but also as part of a long-term socio-political project that is unconsciously directed toward accepting the narrative of the struggle for group identity. This practice not only jeopardizes the neutrality of the educational space but also instills a confrontational mindset from an early age, which normalizes notions of "enemy" and "struggle" within the framework of a single religion-based truth. Furthermore, when schools, as educational institutions, absorb and reproduce structural inequalities through exclusive curricula or religious practices, they lose their primary function as safe and inclusive spaces. Children who come from minority religious backgrounds or who show a critical attitude towards the dominant narrative are vulnerable to symbolic and real exclusion. Violence in this form is often not physically visible, but is strongly recorded in

the psychological experience of children who feel unaccepted, blamed, or silenced. In other words, early childhood education becomes a place where unequal power structures are learned and reproduced, rather than resisted or corrected. This points to the need for an educational approach that is not only sensitive to religious values but also aware of the socio-political complexities underlying the emergence of certain religious ideologies.

The findings in this study differ from those in previous studies. Studies that discuss violence based on religion only focus on socio-political symptoms, violent religious hostilities, the spread of religious beliefs, and radical networks (2019; Gordon & Kinna, 2019; Intan, 2019; Scheitle & Howard Ecklund, 2020; Yani et al., 2020; Korol, 2022; Saiya et al., 2024). However, the findings in this study show that violence based on religion has infiltrated early childhood education, as evidenced by the potential for violence rooted in fanaticism and exclusivism towards religious teachings. Although kindergarten children are not yet capable of committing violent acts because of their ages, the underlying values within religious teachings reveal a potential that may lead to dangerous violent behaviors in the future. This also has potential for their emotional, social, and mental development, such as fostering aggressive behavior, normalizing violence, and causing social maladjustment.

Furthermore, when religious values are conveyed dogmatically and without room for dialogue in early childhood education settings, they can limit children's ability to develop empathy, tolerance, and critical thinking skills. When children are shaped in an environment that emphasizes a singular truth and rejects differences, they tend to view the world in stark terms and readily judge others who differ. In the long run, this way of thinking can sow the seeds of intolerance and even identity-based violence when they become adults. This reality reveals a serious flaw in the early childhood education system, where educational institutions often fail to distinguish between religious education that fosters children's spirituality and indoctrination that restricts freedom of thought. In practice, schools instead become spaces for the reproduction of narrow religious ideologies, where children are fed doctrines, they are not yet cognitively able to understand, let alone critique. Furthermore, there's a tendency for educational institutions to succumb to social and political pressure from certain religious groups, thereby normalizing discriminatory rules and practices in the name of religious teachings. This situation not only disregards pedagogical and psychological principles in educating children but also indirectly plants the seeds of structural and cultural violence that can persist into adulthood.

The context can be understood through the socialization process in education settings. Socialization is a process through which individuals internalize the norms, values, attitudes, and, in this case, the roles prescribed by socializing agents, namely, schools and teachers. The socialization process is rooted in a system of extremist beliefs and norms that are reproduced and transmitted through the learning process within radical discourse communities and environments. In this context, attitudes, perceptions, emotions, and actions become increasingly polarized, deviating from social consensus and ultimately leading to violence (Pisoiu et al. 2020). Therefore, the potential for violence

based on religious values in early childhood education is not only evident in how power operates covertly and systematically within religious teachings in a micro context, in the form of teacher-student relationships, but is also reflected in the genealogy of power within broader social and political structures.

The potential of violence based on religious values in early childhood education has complex characteristics. Fanaticism and exclusivism toward religious teaching are clearly problematic. Both of them exhibit a religious principle, but they fundamentally fail to address the underlying values and motivations behind deviant behavior. The condition could promote perceptions of unfairness in contexts of pluralism and interreligious harmony. In line with that, the critical findings in this study can also be used as a lesson learned to transform educational systems, structures, and practices that perpetuate institutionalized racist patterns. Educators and/or schools must also adopt a critical approach to their duties and develop strategies to counter institutionalized violence. Therefore, in addition to realising and campaigning for moderation purposes, the genealogy of power approach reveals the embedded structural racism in education, enabling a thorough critique of the status quo and a religious and practical solution to address exclusivity and fanaticism. The concept is useful for analyzing the issues of power, knowledge, and the truth of subjectivity, thereby facilitating an understanding of racial justice reforms in early childhood education.

## **Conclusion**

The potency of religious violence in this study's findings is attributed to two main contexts: fanaticism and exclusivism of religious teachings. The two contexts indicate that the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education represents a characteristic of theological claims that exert consequences in shaping intolerant motivations and understandings. Fanaticism and exclusivism are reflections of a more extensive genealogy of power. As a consequence, the potency of violence based on religious values in early childhood education is not only transmitted through the process of how power operates covertly and systematically within religious teachings on a micro context in the form of teacher-student relationships, but also reflected in macro contexts in social, cultural, and political structures. This study differs from previous studies. Studies that discuss violence based on religious beliefs only focus on three dominant contexts, such as the political context, social hostilities related to belief context, and radical understanding in schools from junior high school to university level. However, the findings in this study show that the potency of violence also exists in early childhood education through religious teachings.

The findings in this study are expected to be a dialogical basis for religion, religious pluralism, and endeavors towards religious moderation within the framework of faith-based schools. Within this context, this study recommends a cross-sectoral policy development, involving systemic monitoring by state agencies and state-society collaboration to ensure long-term prevention and disrupt the internalization of exclusivism and fanaticism at an early stage. This study has a weakness in its data

collection process, which is carried out solely through an emic investigation of early childhood education, particularly in integrated Islamic-based school settings. Therefore, the data obtained in this study refer only to the descriptive and analytical forms of religious teachings that are potentially violent, as understood in early childhood education. However, the weaknesses in this study are expected to be the basis for future studies, especially those that want to explain the seeds of violence and strategies to counter violence rooted in religious movements within educational institutions, both in early childhood education and or school settings in general, with an approach of in-depth interview in problem investigation.

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