

Religious Stereotypes in YouTube Educational Videos to Address Controversy and Manipulation in Elementary School Classroom Environments

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Abstract

The phenomenon of religious stereotypes in educational videos on YouTube has become a worrying issue, especially in the context of early childhood education. With the increasing use of this platform as a learning tool, it is important to explore the negative impacts that may be caused by content that presents biased information. These stereotypes have the potential to influence students' perceptions of religion and create social tensions within the elementary school classroom environment. This study aims to examine the impact of religious stereotypes in educational videos and their implications for students' social interactions in the classroom. In this study, we used a qualitative approach involving video content analysis and in-depth interviews with teachers and students. The results showed that video content containing religious stereotypes contributed to misunderstandings and created tensions among students. Many students reported that they were influenced by the way religion was presented in the videos, which often did not reflect the reality of actual religious practices. These findings emphasize the need for a critical review of educational media content to prevent potential manipulation of information and controversies that can be detrimental to the learning process. In conclusion, this study recommends the development of comprehensive guidelines for evaluating and filtering educational content on YouTube, to ensure more inclusive and accurate representation of religion. This effort is important to build a positive learning environment and support the values of tolerance and interfaith understanding among students.

keywords: religious stereotypes, educational videos, youtube, elementary school classes, information manipulation, educational media.

1. Introduction

In today's digital era, YouTube has become one of the main platforms used as an educational medium, including in teaching religion in elementary schools. The use of YouTube as a means of delivering religious education materials has sparked various controversies, especially related to the emergence of religious stereotypes spread through video content. Many educational videos not only provide information, but also insert messages that influence children's perceptions of certain religions unfairly or biasedly.

The impact of religious stereotypes in educational videos on students is significant. These stereotypes can form narrow mindsets and create social tensions in the classroom, especially in religiously diverse elementary schools. Students at this age are particularly susceptible to the visual information they consume, and if left unchecked, false religious stereotypes can affect the way they understand religious diversity and beliefs. According to a report from the Ministry of Education and Culture, more than 60% of elementary school students in Indonesia use YouTube as a source of additional learning. However, a recent study shows that more than 30% of religious education content on the platform contains religious stereotypes, which can exacerbate inter-religious conflict in the school environment. For example, some videos depict certain religions in a negative way, which has the potential to form prejudices among students who are still developing. Media and education expert, Prof. John D. Marshall, revealed that media such as YouTube have a very strong influence on the formation of children's understanding of the world around them, including in terms of religion. He emphasized that without proper supervision, educational content on YouTube can reinforce stereotypes and undermine educational efforts aimed at instilling values of tolerance and inclusive understanding of religion. Previous research generally shows that media, especially platforms such as YouTube, have a significant influence in shaping children's understanding of the world, including perceptions of religion. The first tendency expressed in various studies is that media has great educational potential. Greenhow and Lewin (2016) explain that social media can enrich children's learning experiences if used wisely, but it is important to ensure that the consumption of this content is supervised so as not to be exposed to false or biased information. On the other hand, Livingstone and Helsper (2008) emphasize the importance of the role of parents in mediating children's use of digital media, ensuring that the content they access supports positive learning and avoids exposure to stereotypes or inappropriate content. However, this potential is also balanced by the risk of reinforcing stereotypes. Buckingham (2013) stated that media often depicts religion in a simplistic way and reinforces stereotypes, which can form narrow views among children about other religions. This is reinforced by the findings of Golan, Johnson, and Wanta (2001), which show that media plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of religion by conveying narratives that are sometimes influenced by certain social or political agendas. Lemish (2008) also added that religious content in digital media is often presented without sufficient historical or cultural context, so that children who access it are at risk of understanding religion superficially.

A weakness of these studies is the lack of focus on concrete solutions to address the negative impacts of media exposure that reinforces religious stereotypes and biases. These studies mostly stop at identifying the problem without providing practical recommendations that can be implemented, especially in the educational context. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how monitoring and use of educational media content, especially on platforms such as YouTube, can be effectively implemented by teachers and parents to instill values of tolerance and inclusive understanding of religion among children.

Studies on the representation of religion in educational media show that media, especially digital platforms such as YouTube, often present biased views towards certain religions. The general tendency in Previous research shows that media plays a significant role in shaping social perceptions of religion among students. Research conducted by Smith et al. (2019) found that educational video content on social media, especially YouTube, often contains stereotypes that reinforce social divisions between religions. This study concluded that children who are exposed to videos with negative representations of a particular religion tend to have less tolerant perceptions of that religion.

In addition, research from Nielsen (2020) shows that most educational content on YouTube is not structured with strict pedagogical standards, so it often reflects the subjective views of content creators. Nielsen found that 40% of the religious education content studied contained false religious stereotypes, which have the potential to create misunderstandings among students.

Recent studies have highlighted the influence of media representation of religion on children and adolescents' understanding, and the significant educational implications. Huang and Huang (2020) in their article "Understanding the Role of Media in Shaping Children's Religious Identity: The Case of YouTube" explain how content on YouTube can shape children's religious identity. They note that children are likely to be exposed to content that is not always accurate or comprehensive, which can lead to misunderstandings about certain religious practices. The application of these findings suggests the need for parental and educator supervision in guiding children when accessing content on digital platforms, to ensure they gain a correct and positive understanding of religion.

Furthermore, Barker (2021) in "The Impact of Social Media on Religious Perceptions among Youth: A Qualitative Analysis" explores the impact of social media on adolescents' perceptions of religion. This study revealed that the presentation of inaccurate content often forms negative views among adolescents. The application of the results of this study can be integrated into the educational curriculum, by teaching media literacy skills to students, so that they can critically analyze and evaluate the information they receive.

Chaudhry and Khan (2022) in the article "Digital Media and Religious Stereotypes: Implications for Education" analyze how digital media has the potential to reinforce religious stereotypes. They emphasize that biased depictions in the media can influence children's views of other religious groups. The application of the results of this study in educational settings is important to build tolerance and understanding between religions. Schools can hold discussions or workshops on religious diversity and how the media presents information, so that students can learn to recognize and reject inaccurate stereotypes.

Kumar and Singh (2023), in "The Role of Online Platforms in Shaping Young Minds: Religion, Stereotypes, and Education," highlight the role of online platforms in shaping religious perceptions among children and adolescents. They criticize that the presentation of often sensational content can obscure a deeper understanding of religion. These findings can be applied in educational practice by emphasizing the importance of a critical approach to media consumption. This approach can be integrated into religious studies or civics education, helping students understand the context behind the content they see.

Almeida (2024), in "Sensationalism and Religion in the Digital Age: Effects on Children's Understanding," investigated the impact of sensationalism in media representations of religion. The study found that content presented in an exaggerated manner can influence children's understanding of religious practices, potentially creating stigma. Applications of this research in education could include the development of learning modules that include critical analysis of various media representations of religion, to help students recognize and avoid misconceptions.

Finally, Fisher (2023) in "Religious Representation in Media: Impacts on Youth and Education" explores how religious representations in the media affect the views of children and adolescents. This study suggests that children who are exposed to biased depictions may develop distorted views of other religions. The application of the results of this study can be done by developing educational programs that encourage discussions about tolerance and diversity, as well as teaching skills to critique religious representations in the media. In this way, education can contribute to the formation of a more inclusive and tolerant society. Anderson and Jones (2021) also examined the effects of media representation of religion on elementary school students and concluded that social media often depicts religion in a sensational way. They cited an example of a video that portrayed a particular religious ritual negatively, resulting in misunderstandings among students about the religious practice. A quote from Anderson and Jones' (2021) study states, "Media content that presents religion in a biased or sensational way tends to reinforce existing prejudices, especially among children who are still in the process of forming their identities." This study shows how religious stereotypes in educational videos can reinforce prejudices that are inconsistent with the values of inclusiveness and tolerance expected in education.

Through a deeper understanding of media influence, education can play a role in guiding children and young people towards a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of religion, and reducing the potential for misunderstandings resulting from sensationalist representations. However, a weakness of these studies is that they have not explored in depth the specific impact of religious stereotypes in the context of the elementary school classroom. Although there is evidence that religious stereotypes negatively influence students' perceptions, research focusing on how teachers and students in elementary school classrooms interact with such content is limited. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the classroom environment, where the interaction between media and religious education occurs directly.

The purpose of this study is to fill the gap that has not been touched in previous studies by analyzing in depth how, YouTube videos about religious education present stereotypes that can affect students in elementary schools. This study will not only explore how these contents shape religious perceptions among students, but will also look at how teachers and students respond to and overcome these stereotypes in the classroom environment. Thus, this study is expected to make a significant contribution in understanding the impact of digital media on religious education and finding practical solutions to address these problems.

This study focuses on three main questions: First, how is the process of religious stereotype formation in educational videos on YouTube? This question aims to understand how media content creates and spreads biased perceptions about religion. Second, how do religious stereotypes displayed in YouTube videos impact students' understanding and attitudes in elementary schools? This study will examine the extent to which such content influences the way students understand religion and diversity. Third, how do we handle manipulation and controversy related to religious stereotypes in the classroom environment? This section will explore strategies that teachers and educational institutions can implement to reduce the negative impact of existing stereotypes.

This study is based on the argument that the representation of religion in educational media, especially through the YouTube platform, has a significant influence on the formation of religious stereotypes among elementary school students. These stereotypes, if not managed properly, can create social problems in the

classroom environment, such as tension between students with different religious backgrounds or narrow views of other religions. Given that elementary school students are in a phase of cognitive development that is highly influenced by visual media, religious stereotypes in educational videos can reinforce prejudice and discrimination, which in turn has the potential to disrupt social harmony in the classroom. Therefore, a critical analysis of how this media content is presented is needed and how its impact can be minimized through appropriate educational interventions.

2. Literature Review

Research on the representation of religion in social media and education has become an important topic in recent years. Many studies have discussed how social media, especially YouTube, is used as a means of delivering religious education and how this platform indirectly shapes the perception of religion among students. Heim et al. (2018) showed that YouTube acts as an informal learning medium that offers a variety of educational videos, including religious topics. However, this study also underlines that religious content on social media is often not strictly monitored, which results in biased representations and stereotypes that are detrimental to certain religious groups. Another study by Groshek & Engelbert (2020) emphasized that although social media provides easy access to educational materials, unverified content often contains prejudice or narrow views about religion. This can reinforce stereotypes that exist in society, especially among students who do not yet have the critical ability to filter information properly. Therefore, it is important to review how the representation of religion in educational videos on YouTube can affect students' views, particularly in the context of the elementary school classroom.

Research on the impact of religious stereotypes in the media on students' perceptions suggests that biased representations of religion in digital media, including YouTube, can affect how students view other religions. Anderson (2017) found that religious stereotypes conveyed through social media tend to reinforce prejudice among students, especially at an early age, when their critical understanding of information is still limited. This imbalanced representation can create gaps in religious understanding and reinforce segregation between religious groups in the classroom.

Broader research on the impact of electronic media such as YouTube on learning in elementary schools suggests that the platform has great potential as a learning tool, but its use must be done with caution. Johnson and Roe (2019) examined the use of YouTube in elementary school learning and found that while the platform provides quick access to a variety of educational materials, uncontrolled content can spread misinformation. In the context of religious learning, this is even more risky because videos produced by third parties may not always present accurate or neutral information.

In a study examining religious stereotypes in educational content, Jones et al. (2020) noted that religious education videos often present religion in a simplistic and biased manner. They stated, "Many videos on platforms like YouTube present certain religions as more 'right' or 'good' than others, reinforcing stereotypes that already exist in society." This study highlights how religious stereotypes portrayed on social media can become entrenched in students' perceptions and undermine diversity and tolerance in the classroom.

However, the weakness of previous studies is that they tend to focus only on print or social media in general, without paying special attention to educational videos. While print or social media such as Facebook and Instagram have been widely studied, Dawson (2018) stated that the impact of educational video content on YouTube has received less attention. In fact, videos have a stronger visual effect than text or images, so their impact on students' perceptions, especially regarding religious stereotypes, can be more significant.

Thus, there is an urgent need for further research focusing on how to address the manipulation of religious information in video media, particularly in the context of elementary school education. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how educational videos on YouTube shape students' religious perceptions and how teachers can address their negative impacts in the classroom environment. Williams (2021) suggests that critical media education should be implemented to help students recognize and reject stereotypes presented in video content.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Topic Reason

This study chose YouTube as the platform to be analyzed because this media is one of the most popular learning resources among elementary school students. Religious education videos available on YouTube are often not strictly supervised, allowing religious stereotypes to occur. The focus on religious representation in YouTube educational videos was chosen because of its high relevance to the context of learning in elementary school classrooms, where children begin to build an understanding of religious concepts. In addition, elementary school classrooms are a crucial place in shaping children's views on religious diversity and tolerance.

3.2 Research Types and Data

This study uses a qualitative approach, which aims to understand in depth how religious representations in YouTube videos can affect students' perceptions in elementary schools. The data collected consists of secondary data in the form of video content analyzed through descriptive and interpretive approaches. Primary data was collected through interviews with religious education teachers and students in several elementary schools, to understand how religious stereotypes in the videos affect their learning experiences.

3.3 Resources

The main source of information in this study was YouTube videos used as religious education materials in elementary schools. The videos were selected based on their popularity among teachers and students. In addition, interviews with teachers who teach religious education in elementary schools served as an additional source of information to see how they utilize the videos in the classroom. Interviews with students were also conducted to understand how they receive and interpret the religious content they see on YouTube.

3.4 Research Process

This study began with the collection and selection of YouTube videos that were relevant to religious education materials in elementary schools. The videos were then analyzed using content analysis methods to identify possible religious stereotypes. Classroom observations were also conducted to see how the videos were used in the learning process. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with teachers and students to further understand the impact of video use on students' perceptions of religion.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted through three stages: first, data reduction, where irrelevant information was filtered out and focus was given to content related to religious stereotypes. Second, data display, where findings from video content analysis and interviews were presented in the form of tables and narratives. Third, verification, where the results of the analysis were reviewed to ensure the validity and accuracy of the findings. The analysis method used was descriptive to describe existing stereotypes, and interpretative to understand their impact on students' perceptions.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive

The study found that YouTube videos used in primary school religious education tend to present a variety of religious representations. Some videos present religion in an informative and educational way, but others portray religion in a biased way, reinforcing certain stereotypes. These videos are often taken from sources that are not academically verified, but are still used in classroom settings due to their popularity and widespread availability.

The findings show that some videos display religious stereotypes, such as depicting followers of certain religions as superior or inferior to other religions. For example, there are videos that indirectly imply that followers of certain religions are more "qualified" or "morally upright", while other religions are represented negatively or as minorities. A concrete example of this stereotype is seen in videos discussing interfaith conflict. Rather than discussing differences in a way that respects all beliefs, some videos tend to trigger negative perceptions of other religions in students. This raises concerns that the stereotypes shown in the videos could exacerbate interfaith tensions among elementary school students.

The data also shows that the use of videos containing religious stereotypes is often not balanced with critical discussions in the classroom. Teachers tend to use videos as a tool without realizing the negative implications that may arise. This puts students in a vulnerable position to adopt stereotypical views from the video.

4.2 Critical

Critical analysis shows that religious stereotypes in these YouTube videos have a significant impact on students' perceptions. Students who are exposed to these religious stereotypes begin to form biased views toward

classmates who practice different religions. These perceptions are not only limited to the religion shown in the videos, but also toward other religions that are not fairly represented.

In addition, the religious stereotypes in these YouTube videos also create manipulation in the learning process. Biased video content makes students think that a particular religion is more correct or more important than others, which can cause discomfort for students from different religious backgrounds. This manipulation leads to a misconception of religion and undermines educational efforts to promote tolerance and harmony between religious communities.

The study also found that this kind of manipulation tends to go unnoticed by teachers. They often do not examine the content of the videos they use in depth, so they do not realize that the videos promote religious stereotypes. This is a challenge in learning, because manipulation through stereotypes can continue without being realized.

4.3 Implicative

The implications of these findings are particularly relevant to the elementary school classroom environment. The religious stereotypes portrayed in the videos can influence how students interact with peers who hold different beliefs. This can create social distance between students and hinder the creation of an inclusive and tolerant classroom environment. If not addressed promptly, these stereotypes can influence children's thinking into adulthood.

Furthermore, the impact of religious stereotypes in these YouTube videos is not only limited to social interactions in the classroom, but also on students' views of religion in general. They may develop a narrow and biased understanding of religion, which could potentially form intolerant views of others. Therefore, it is important for schools to review the use of these types of videos in the learning process and ensure that the content used supports interfaith harmony.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of Research Results

This study found that religious stereotypes displayed in Educational YouTube videos have a significant impact on how elementary school students view religion. Biased representations in videos often create negative perceptions among students toward certain religions. These results suggest that the use of YouTube videos without proper selection can exacerbate inter-religious tensions in the classroom environment and affect students' social dynamics.

5.2 Reflection of Research Results

The results of this study are not only the end of observations about the impact of religious stereotypes in the classroom, but also open up opportunities for further study on how other digital media contribute to the formation of religious perceptions among students. Online educational content is not always strictly monitored, so this problem may also occur on other platforms. This indicates the need for better regulation of the content used in school learning.

5.3 Interpretation

In social and historical contexts, religious stereotypes have long been a tool used to control public narratives and perceptions. Educational videos on YouTube continue this trend by presenting certain religions within a biased narrative framework. The findings of this study show how unchecked religious stereotypes in digital media can exacerbate interfaith tensions, especially among children who are still in the process of forming social identities and beliefs.

5.4 Comparative

Compared to previous research, these findings are consistent with studies on religious representation in print and television media that have also shown bias in how religion is portrayed. However, this study offers new insights into how educational videos on platforms like YouTube influence perceptions of religion among elementary school students, something that has been under-explored in previous studies.

5.5 Now What?

Based on these findings, it is important for schools and educators to be more selective in choosing educational video content to use in the classroom. Recommendations that can be taken include the development of policies or guidelines that regulate YouTube content that is appropriate for use in learning, as well as training for teachers to be more critical of material that contains religious stereotypes. This could also include more open dialogue between teachers and students about the content they consume from digital media.

5.6 Research Limitations

This study has limitations, including its limited focus on YouTube videos and the absence of other platforms that may have similar effects. In addition, the study only focused on the classroom environment in elementary schools, so the results may not be generalizable to other levels of education. Further research is needed to explore how content from other platforms, such as TikTok or Instagram, also influences students' perceptions of religion.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Most Important Findings

The main findings of this study indicate that religious stereotypes in educational YouTube videos have a significant impact on elementary school students. Videos that present religion in a biased manner not only reinforce negative views among students towards other religions but also create social tension in the classroom environment. Stereotypes displayed in videos can affect students' understanding and interactions with their peers from different religious backgrounds.

6.2 Contribution

This study makes an important contribution to the academic understanding of how digital media, particularly YouTube, influences learning and the formation of religious perceptions among students. By highlighting the impact of religious stereotypes in educational videos, this study emphasizes the need for a more critical and selective approach to the use of digital media content in schools. It broadens the horizons of how biased content can influence the educational process and how policies can be adapted to address this issue.

6.3 Limitations and Recommendations

This study has limitations, such as focusing on YouTube videos and only one educational context. Further, more comprehensive research is needed to explore the impact of media content from other platforms, such as TikTok or Instagram, and how religious stereotypes may affect students from different backgrounds. In addition, further studies also need to consider the perspectives of teachers and students from different regions to gain a broader picture.

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