



## **A Multicultural Approach in Islamic Education to Increase Tolerance**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore the application of a multicultural approach in Islamic education as an effort to increase tolerance among students. In the midst of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in Indonesia, Islamic education is faced with the challenge of not only forming a religiously devout person, but also respecting differences and living in harmony in a pluralistic society. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach. Data were collected through observation and analysis of documents, then analyzed qualitatively to identify patterns of application of multicultural values in the curriculum, teaching, and social interaction in schools. The results of the study show that a multicultural approach in Islamic education can strengthen the attitude of tolerance among students. The implementation of values such as respect for diversity, empathy, and cross-cultural dialogue in the teaching and learning process has been proven to be able to reduce prejudice and increase cooperation between groups. However, the success of this approach is highly dependent on teacher commitment and support from educational institutions and inclusive education policies. Therefore, it is recommended that Islamic educational institutions integrate a more systematic multicultural approach in their curriculum to create a more tolerant and harmonious educational environment.

### **Keywords:**

Education, Empati, Multicultural, Tolerance

### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is known as a country with a very rich diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. This diversity is one of the main strengths of the Indonesia nation, but it also brings challenges, especially in maintaining harmony and tolerance in the midst of differences (Raja, 2024). In the midst of this plurality, education plays an important role in shaping the character of students who are able to appreciate and respect this diversity (Wahyudi dkk., 2023).

Islamic education, as an integral part of the national education system, has a great responsibility in shaping students who are not only noble and religiously obedient, but also have a tolerant attitude towards differences. However, in practice, the approach used in Islamic education often emphasizes more on dogmatic and normative aspects, so that the multicultural and tolerance aspects receive less adequate attention (Al-Jamal & Zennou, 2018).

In various Islamic educational institutions, there is still a tendency to prioritize homogeneity in the educational process, both in the context of teaching and social interaction. This can hinder the creation of a deep understanding of the importance of respecting differences and living in harmony in the midst of diversity (Mustafayeva dkk., 2023). This lack of understanding and tolerance can potentially lead to conflicts



later in life, especially when students face the reality of life full of differences (Fauzian dkk., t.t.).

In line with these challenges, the application of a multicultural approach in Islamic education has become very relevant (Widoyo dkk., 2023). This approach aims to introduce learners to multicultural values, such as respect for differences, empathy, and cross-cultural dialogue (Raja, 2024). Through this approach, it is hoped that students will not only become strong individuals in faith, but also be able to become agents of peace and tolerance in society.

This study makes a new contribution by examining how multicultural approaches, which are usually more commonly applied in the context of general education, can be adapted and integrated effectively in Islamic education. This novelty lies in the practical ways proposed to combine multicultural values with Islamic teachings taught in Islamic schools. While many previous studies have addressed tolerance in a general context, this study provides a more specific focus on how Islamic education can contribute to the development of tolerance through a multicultural approach.

This study will examine how a multicultural approach can be integrated in Islamic education, as well as its impact on increasing tolerance among students. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of a more inclusive and tolerant Islamic education curriculum and practices, as well as support efforts to build a harmonious society in the midst of diversity. With a focus on the integration of multicultural approaches in Islamic education to increase tolerance, this research opens up a new space for discussion and development of educational theories and practices that are more inclusive and in accordance with the needs of the multicultural society in Indonesia.

## METHOD

This study uses *the library research method*, which aims to deeply examine the relevant literature to build a solid theoretical framework and to provide in-depth context related to the topics discussed in this article (Creswell, 2009). This method was chosen because it allows authors to examine various existing academic sources and synthesize them to generate new insights.

The data collection process begins by identifying and selecting relevant literature sources, including journals, academic books, and research reports. These resources are accessed through various digital libraries and scientific databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and university libraries. After collection, the selected literature is critically evaluated and analyzed with a thematic approach. The results of the evaluation and analysis are then synthesized to build a structured argument. This synthesis process involves combining various literature findings to support a hypothesis or provide a new perspective on a research topic. The results of this literature study are compiled into a comprehensive journal article, where each literature finding is linked to the main argument of the research.





## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Application of Multicultural Approach in Islamic Education

There are several Islamic educational institutions that have begun to adopt a multicultural approach in their curriculum and learning process. This approach is manifested in several forms of integrating multicultural values, extracurricular activities and training for teachers (Wahyudi dkk., 2023). Some include concepts such as respect for differences, empathy, and intercultural dialogue in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects (Muttaqin, 2018) (Murfi, 2015). For example, when discussing the history of Islam, teachers also emphasize the importance of tolerance that has been practiced by previous Islamic figures.

Schools also organize extracurricular activities that aim to strengthen students' multicultural understanding. Activities such as cultural weeks and interfaith discussions help students better understand and appreciate the diversity around them (Nadzirah, 2020; Qalam dkk., 2024; Yudiyanto & Fauzian, 2021). In some cases, teachers receive specialized training on how to implement a multicultural approach in their teaching. This training covers inclusive teaching techniques and how to handle intercultural conflicts in the classroom.

The application of a multicultural approach in Islamic education involves the integration of values and practices that recognize and appreciate diversity in cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious aspects in the educational process (Mustafayeva dkk., 2023). This approach aims to create an inclusive and tolerant learning environment, where students are invited to understand and respect differences as part of a harmonious community life (Dalmeri, 2015; Suri & Chandra, 2021).

The integration of Multicultural Values in the Curriculum means contextualizing Islamic teachings by teaching Islamic teachings by emphasizing universal values such as justice, brotherhood, and compassion that support respect for differences. For example, when studying the history of Islam, teachers can highlight how the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions lived in a diverse society and how they practiced tolerance. Incorporating material on cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects and other lessons (Muttaqin, 2018). For example, through case studies or stories about Islamic figures who fight for harmony between religious communities.

It is also important to train and develop teachers in the form of organizing training for teachers to improve their understanding of multiculturalism and how to teach it effectively in the context of Islamic education (Al-Jamal & Zennou, 2018). Teachers need to be equipped with the skills to manage diverse classrooms and handle issues that may arise related to cultural or religious differences. Teachers are encouraged to develop teaching materials that reflect the diversity of students and respect all cultural and religious backgrounds (Suri & Chandra, 2021). This teaching material must also emphasize the importance of dialogue and cooperation between cultures.

Schools can host activities such as culture weeks, where students from different backgrounds can share their cultures, as well as interfaith dialogue that allows students to understand other faiths and discover existing similarities and differences



(Al-Jamal & Zennou, 2018). Creating a school environment that reflects multicultural values, for example by displaying cultural symbols from various groups around the school and celebrating the holidays of various religious traditions (Nirwana & Darmadali, 2021).

Schools must adopt clear and firm policies against any form of discrimination or intolerance, whether based on religion, culture, or ethnicity (Raja, 2024). This policy must be socialized to all students, teachers, and school staff. The values of tolerance and respect for differences should be an integral part of the school's vision and mission (Hermansyah dkk., 2021). This can be realized through various school activities that emphasize the importance of cooperation, empathy, and dialogue. Involve parents in educational programs that emphasize the importance of multiculturalism and tolerance, so that these values are also supported at home (Aryani & Wilyanita, 2022). Engage community leaders and local organizations in school programs that promote multiculturalism, such as workshops, seminars, or panel discussions (Pahrudin dkk., 2018).

The application of a multicultural approach in Islamic education is an important step to build an attitude of tolerance and harmony in a diverse society (Mustafayeva dkk., 2023). By integrating multicultural values into the curriculum, training teachers, creating inclusive school environments, and engaging parents and communities, Islamic education can be an effective vehicle for promoting respect for diversity and preventing conflicts caused by cultural or religious differences.

## **2. The Impact of a Multicultural Approach on Student Tolerance**

This study found that a multicultural approach in Islamic education has a positive impact on increasing tolerance attitudes among students (Al-Jamal & Zennou, 2018). Learners involved in multicultural programs showed an increased understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect for differences (Rohman & Lessy, 2017). They are better able to identify and avoid stereotypes and prejudices that often arise in social interactions. Students' attitudes towards groups with different cultural or religious backgrounds tend to be more positive. They demonstrate a willingness to interact and cooperate with individuals from different backgrounds, both in academic and social contexts.

Schools that implement a multicultural approach report an improvement in the quality of social interaction among students. Conflicts that have the potential to arise due to cultural or religious differences can be better managed, and the classroom atmosphere becomes more inclusive and conducive to learning (Rohman & Lessy, 2017). The application of a multicultural approach in Islamic education has a number of significant positive impacts on the development of tolerance attitudes among students (Pahrudin dkk., 2018). The multicultural approach helps students to better understand and appreciate the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity around them. By learning about different cultures and religions, learners become more aware that differences are part of life and that everyone deserves to be respected and treated fairly.

Through learning that focuses on multiculturalism, students are invited to overcome stereotypes and prejudices they may have against other groups. When





learners interact with friends from different backgrounds and learn about their lives, they tend to become more open and accepting of differences, thus reducing discriminatory attitudes.

A multicultural approach encourages learners to understand and feel what others feel, especially those from minority or different groups (Nirwana & Darmadali, 2021). The empathy developed through this multicultural education can strengthen social solidarity among students, encouraging them to support each other and work together regardless of differences. One of the significant impacts of a multicultural approach is the increased ability of learners to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. They learn how to express opinions in a way that respects the views and traditions of others, as well as how to listen to and understand different perspectives.

Students who are exposed to a multicultural approach tend to be more prepared to engage in interfaith and cultural dialogue. They are more open to discussing differences and seeking commonalities, and are more able to contribute to efforts to create peace and harmony in society. The multicultural approach contributes to the creation of a more inclusive school environment, where all learners feel welcome and valued. This creates a conducive learning atmosphere, where students can learn comfortably without feeling marginalized or judged based on their identity.

By prioritizing multicultural values, social interaction among students becomes more positive and harmonious. Students are more likely to collaborate and work together in diverse groups, which ultimately strengthens social bonds within the school. Overall, the multicultural approach to Islamic education has a great positive impact on the development of tolerance among students. Through increased awareness, the reduction of prejudice, the development of empathy, and the creation of an inclusive environment, multicultural education equips students with the skills and attitudes necessary to live in a diverse society (Pahrudin dkk., 2018). Thus, Islamic education that applies a multicultural approach can be a driving force in building a generation that is more tolerant, harmonious, and ready to face the challenges of diversity in the future.

### **3. Challenges and Obstacles in the Implementation of a Multicultural Approach**

Although the results obtained are positive, this study also identifies several challenges faced by Islamic educational institutions in implementing a multicultural approach.

1. Lack of Support from the National Curriculum. The national curriculum, which is still predominantly focused on the normative aspects of Islam, often hinders the integration of multicultural values more broadly. Existing national education curricula tend to focus on rigorous academic standards and often lack room for the integration of multicultural values. A more normative and dogmatic approach to religious teaching often overrides aspects related to diversity and tolerance. The textbooks and learning materials used in Islamic schools often lack cultural and religious diversity. This makes it difficult for teachers to teach multicultural values comprehensively.



2. Limited Resources and Teacher Training. Many teachers feel unprepared to implement a multicultural approach due to a lack of adequate training and resources (Al-Jamal & Zennou, 2018). This results in inconsistent implementation in various educational institutions (Kosasih dkk., 2022). Many teachers have not received adequate training on multicultural approaches, both in terms of theory and practice. This makes them less confident in teaching material related to multiculturalism and dealing with diversity issues in the classroom. Schools often lack the resources necessary to support multicultural education, such as inclusive teaching materials, learning aids, or access to quality training.

3. Resistance from Some Communities. In some cases, the multicultural approach faces resistance from communities who fear that this approach may diminish the religious identity of learners. This requires further efforts to explain that multiculturalism and the strengthening of religious identity can go hand in hand. Some in society, including parents and religious leaders, may be worried that a multicultural approach could reduce students' religious identities or introduce values that are considered foreign or contrary to Islamic teachings. Educational institutions that have conservative views may show resistance to changes that are perceived as changing existing traditions or norms. This could hamper efforts to integrate a multicultural approach in Islamic education.

4. Social and Political Constraints. In some regions, social tensions caused by ethnic or religious conflicts can make the implementation of a multicultural approach more difficult. In situations where interreligious or intercultural relations are strained, efforts to teach multicultural values can face stronger resistance. Changes in education policies that often occur due to political dynamics can also hinder the sustainability of the implementation of multicultural approaches. Leadership changes or changes in education policies can result in inconsistencies in the implementation of multicultural programs.

Although the application of a multicultural approach in Islamic education has great benefits, the challenges and obstacles above show that careful and collaborative strategies are needed to overcome these obstacles. Support from policymakers, adequate training for teachers, and active involvement from parents and communities are key factors that can help address these challenges. Thus, the implementation of a multicultural approach can run more effectively and contribute to increasing tolerance and harmony in a diverse society.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that a multicultural approach in Islamic education has significant potential to increase tolerance attitudes among students. Through the integration of multicultural values in the curriculum and learning process, Islamic educational institutions can play an important role in shaping a generation that is not only religiously obedient, but also respects diversity and is able to live in harmony in a pluralistic society. Students who are exposed to a multicultural approach tend to have a better understanding of the importance of tolerance, as well as show a more positive attitude towards cultural and religious differences. In addition, this approach





has also succeeded in improving the quality of social interaction in schools, creating a more inclusive and conducive learning environment. Overall, a multicultural approach in Islamic education is a relevant and important strategy to face the challenges of diversity in Indonesia. With proper management, this approach can be the foundation for the creation of a more tolerant, peaceful, and inclusive society.

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