

Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education: A Case Study at Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyyah Islamic Boarding School, Subang

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the implementation of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education at Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyyah Islamic Boarding School in Subang. The background of this study is based on the urgency of strengthening the values of tolerance, diversity, and inclusivity in the Islamic education system amidst global social challenges. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that this Islamic boarding school strategically instills multicultural values through an integrated knowing (cognitive), feeling (affective), and action (practical) approach in the curriculum, learning activities, and daily lives of students. This educational model encourages the creation of a dialogic, tolerant learning community that is able to respond constructively to complex social dynamics. Theoretically, these findings contribute to the development of a more contextual and adaptive Islamic education framework to the reality of a multicultural society. While practically, this study offers a model of integration of multicultural values that can be used as a reference in developing curriculum and learning strategies in other Islamic educational institutions. However, this study has limitations in the scope of the location and the approach used, so the results cannot be generalized widely. Therefore, further studies with a mixed methods approach and a more diverse range of Islamic boarding schools are highly recommended. Multicultural-based Islamic education needs to continue to be developed as a contribution to humanist, inclusive, and equitable education on a local and global scale.

Keywords

Islamic education, multicultural, Islamic boarding school, tolerance, curriculum



I. Introduction

In an era of globalization marked by cross-cultural mobility, acceleration of digital information, and fragmentation of identity, the education system is required to not only educate intellectually, but also build a constructive awareness of diversity (Cahyono, 2017). The increasingly intense intercultural encounters in the social, economic, and political spaces have given rise to serious challenges to social cohesion, especially in the form of intolerance, religious exclusivism, and ethnic and belief-based polarization (Muqtadir & Das, 2024). In the midst of this reality, Islamic religious education needs to re-examine its role: not only as a means of transmitting religious doctrine, but also as a transformative medium that forms an inclusive perspective, respects differences, and fosters a spirit of dialogue between believers. Multiculturalism, as a principle that affirms acceptance of cultural and belief diversity, offers a relevant value framework to be integrated into contemporary Islamic education practices (Akip, 2024). This integration becomes urgent, not only to strengthen social cohabitation in a pluralistic society, but also to reaffirm the essence of Islam as a religion that brings blessings to the entire universe (rahmatan lil 'alamin)(Mohamed, 2015).

In the Indonesian context, Islamic boarding schools occupy a unique historical and epistemological position as the oldest Islamic educational institutions that are deeply rooted in the life of society. More than just institutions for the transmission of classical Islamic knowledge, Islamic boarding schools play a role as centers for the internalization of moral values, spirituality, and character formation (Hasmayni, 2019). Islamic boarding schools not only produce individuals who are ritually pious, but also form communities that have high cultural resilience amidst the currents of modernization and global homogenization (Gozali & Mahmud, nd). In this capacity, Islamic boarding schools have extraordinary potential to become pioneers in mainstreaming multicultural values based on Islamic principles (Rosyad, 2020). Islamic teachings that emphasize social justice, respect for human rights, and the importance of universal brotherhood provide a solid theological foundation for Islamic boarding schools to develop an inclusive and adaptive model of religious education to the diversity of cultures and beliefs that live in the midst of Indonesia's pluralistic society (Umar & Nurrohman, 2024).

However, empirical reality shows that many Islamic boarding schools still practice a normative-doctrinal approach to religious education with an emphasis on aspects of worship and Islamic jurisprudence, while the socio-cultural dimensions of Islamic teachings are often marginalized (Nurlaelah et al., 2023). The curriculum and learning process often do not explicitly integrate multicultural values such as tolerance, social empathy, and dialogue between civilizations (Birroh et al., 2023). As a result, even though they are in a pluralistic society, some students are not equipped with adequate social skills and critical awareness to respond to the dynamics of diversity positively and constructively. The absence of a multicultural perspective in the Islamic religious education curriculum in Islamic boarding schools is a crucial problem that hinders the strategic role of this institution in forming religious and inclusive citizens (Jufri & Das, 2024). Therefore, it is important to examine in depth how Islamic religious education in Islamic boarding schools can be developed with a more systematic and contextual multicultural approach (Pasandaran et al., 2024).

Various previous studies have discussed the role of Islamic boarding schools in strengthening character education, preserving the traditions of Nusantara Islam, and religious moderation. Some studies also highlight the transformation of the Islamic boarding school curriculum in responding to developments in the era, including the integration of technology and strengthening soft skills. However, literature that specifically examines the integration of multicultural values in Islamic religious education in Islamic boarding schools is still very limited, both in terms of quantity and depth of analysis. Most of the existing studies tend to be descriptive and do not offer a conceptual framework or applicable practical model. In addition, the approach used is often sectoral and does not see Islamic boarding schools as a complete and dynamic educational ecosystem in responding to the challenges of plurality. Therefore, there is a significant academic gap to be filled through research that focuses on how multicultural values can be internalized systemically in the dimensions of the curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional culture of Islamic boarding schools.

This study aims to explore and critically analyze how multicultural Islamic religious education is implemented in the context of Islamic boarding schools, by taking a case study at the Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyah Islamic Boarding School in Subang. This study not only seeks to map the ongoing practices, but also to examine in depth the curriculum strategies, pedagogical approaches, and institutional values that support the creation of an inclusive and responsive educational ecosystem to diversity. Thus, this study is expected to

be able to formulate a conceptual and practical model of Islamic education that is able to integrate spirituality, tolerance, and diversity in a holistic learning system.

The main contribution of this study lies in providing a new perspective that positions Islamic boarding schools not only as moral and spiritual fortresses, but also as active agents of social change in building a peaceful and civilized pluralistic society. Amidst the global discourse on humanistic and transformative education, this study offers a contextual approach that is relevant to the local reality of Indonesia, without ignoring the universal principles of Islam. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of a multiculturalism framework into the Islamic boarding school education system based on Islamic values, as well as the disclosure of best practices that can be replicated in similar institutions. The urgency of this research is growing along with the increasing need for an Islamic education model that is not only oriented towards textual understanding, but is also able to produce a generation of believers, knowledgeable, and open-minded towards diversity. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to enrich the treasury of Islamic education literature as well as provide practical implications for the development of globally competitive and locally rooted Islamic boarding school education policies.

II. Review of Literatures

Islamic religious education has become a major pillar in the formation of the moral and spiritual character of Muslims throughout the world. However, in the midst of the development of an increasingly pluralistic and global society, the role of Islamic religious education is not only limited to aspects of worship and understanding religious texts (Nursikin et al., 2019). Along with the growing social, political, and cultural dynamics, Islamic religious education is now required to present a more inclusive and contextual approach, which is able to respond to diversity and promote tolerance and peace (Firtikasari & Andiana, 2023). The concept of multicultural-based Islamic religious education emerged as an answer to this challenge, by integrating the values of diversity into the curriculum and practice of religious education. In the context of Indonesia, a country with rich ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, this approach is very relevant, given the importance of building understanding between religious communities and preparing the younger generation to live harmoniously in diversity. Multicultural-based Islamic religious education not only enriches religious insight, but also strengthens the sense of unity and tolerance between religious communities, which is the foundation for achieving social peace in a pluralistic society (Pasandaran et al., 2024). This study aims to explore how this concept is applied in the Islamic boarding school environment, as one of the Islamic educational institutions that has a deep history and significant influence in shaping the character of Indonesian Muslim society.

Islamic religious education, in essence, is a process of transferring Islamic knowledge, values, and ethics that aims to form individuals who not only understand religious teachings, but also internalize the moral and spiritual values contained therein. Broadly speaking, this education focuses on the development of three main dimensions: intellectual, emotional, and social aspects, which form a complete personality from an Islamic perspective (Lestari et al., 2023). It contains efforts to develop strong faith, valid worship, and noble morals, which in turn form a civilized and moral society. One of the characteristics of Islamic religious education is a holistic approach that emphasizes the balance between theory and practice, where religious teachings are not only understood cognitively, but also applied in everyday life. In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, the main goal of this education is to build individuals who are faithful,

knowledgeable, and have good character, so that they are able to carry out their duties as caliphs on earth with full responsibility (Ghani, 2024). In order to achieve this goal, Islamic religious education plays an important role in introducing universal Islamic values, including justice, compassion, and respect for others, which can further strengthen social relations in a pluralistic society. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the goals and characteristics of Islamic religious education is crucial in designing an education system that is able to respond to the challenges of the times and social diversity, especially in the context of Islamic boarding schools (Sobri, 2023).

Multiculturalism in education refers to an approach that recognizes and celebrates cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity within the education system, with the aim of creating understanding, tolerance, and respect between different groups. Theoretically, multiculturalism is rooted in the principles of egalitarianism and pluralism, which emphasize the values of equality and respect for diverse identities and experiences (Lestari et al., 2023). In the context of education, a multicultural approach involves not only teaching about diversity, but also promoting social justice and active participation in a pluralistic society. There are several key concepts in multicultural education, including cultural integration, where different cultures are taught and understood in complementary contexts; social transformation, which emphasizes structural changes in the education system to accommodate the needs of all groups; and active pluralism, which encourages interaction between groups to overcome prejudice and discrimination. In practice, multicultural education involves inclusive curriculum design, diversity-sensitive teaching methods, and creating space for intercultural dialogue. This approach aims to prepare individuals to not only become tolerant members of society, but also actively contribute to the development of a harmonious and just society (Fatmawati, 2022). In the context of Islamic religious education, the application of multiculturalism theories and concepts becomes very relevant, especially in a country with significant socio-cultural diversity such as Indonesia. Therefore, understanding and integrating multicultural education within the framework of Islamic religious education is an urgent need, so that the Muslim generation can develop as individuals who not only understand religion, but are also able to respond to social dynamics constructively and empathetically (Amin, 2024).

Islamic boarding school is a traditional Islamic educational institution that has deep roots in the history of education in Indonesia. Since the 15th century, Islamic boarding school have played an important role in the spread of Islamic teachings and the development of Islamic culture in the archipelago. As an educational institution that prioritizes religious teaching, Islamic boarding school not only functions as a place to study religious knowledge, but also as a center for the development of social, cultural, and spiritual values for Muslim society (Nursikin et al., 2019). In its development, Islamic boarding school face major challenges, especially in the context of modernization and globalization. Although Islamic boarding school maintain the tradition of classical Islamic knowledge, they have also begun to adapt to broader educational needs, by including general subjects and integrating technology into the teaching and learning process. Islamic boarding school have characteristics that distinguish them from other formal educational institutions, namely a more decentralized educational structure, with informal teaching and based on direct relationships between students and teachers. Along with the development of the times, Islamic boarding school are increasingly known as institutions that not only focus on religious aspects, but also on character formation, social ethics, and national insight. In the midst of Indonesia's diverse society, Islamic boarding schools play a role in maintaining diversity and strengthening religious harmony. Therefore, the existence of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia is not only important in the context of religious

education, but also as an integral part of the formation of the social and cultural identity of the Indonesian nation. However, in facing the challenges of the times and their role in an increasingly multicultural society, Islamic boarding schools need to continue to develop an educational model that is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of existing cultural and social diversity (Patimah, 2022).

Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyyah Islamic Boarding School Subang, as one of the Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, has integrated multicultural values into its curriculum to face the challenges of education in the era of globalization. As an institution located in an area with ethnic and cultural diversity, this Islamic boarding school realizes the importance of implementing an inclusive approach in Islamic religious education. Multicultural-based education in this Islamic boarding school not only teaches Islamic teachings in depth, but also instills an attitude of tolerance, mutual respect, and adaptation to differences in society. In Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyyah Islamic Boarding School, multicultural integration is not only reflected in the curriculum that combines various religious and general disciplines, but also in social practices that prioritize harmony between religious communities, strengthening social ties amidst diversity. This Islamic boarding school teaches students not only to understand religious texts cognitively, but also to develop an attitude of living together in differences. Through this approach, Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyyah Islamic Boarding School seeks to create an educational environment that not only emphasizes the mastery of religious knowledge, but also an understanding of social, cultural, and religious diversity, which is one of the important pillars in forming a young generation that is ready to face the challenges of an increasingly pluralistic global society. This study aims to explore how the implementation of multicultural-based Islamic religious education at Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyyah Islamic Boarding School can be a model in creating a more inclusive, just education that prioritizes the principle of tolerance between religious communities in Indonesia.

The implementation of multicultural-based Islamic religious education in Islamic boarding schools faces various complex challenges, both internally and externally. The main challenge that is often faced is resistance to change, especially in terms of adapting an inclusive curriculum and social diversity in society. On the one hand, Islamic religious education in traditional Islamic boarding schools tends to maintain a more homogeneous and uniform approach, which may be difficult to apply in the context of diversity in Indonesia. In addition, the lack of understanding and training for Islamic boarding school educators about the importance of multicultural education is also a major obstacle to its implementation (Muqtadir & Das, 2024). On the other hand, external challenges also include the influence of globalization and modernization which have given rise to a shift in traditional values, so that Islamic boarding schools must adapt to developments without losing their religious and cultural roots (Sholihah et al., 2023). However, behind these challenges, there are significant opportunities. The implementation of multicultural-based education offers the opportunity to create a more inclusive, just, and democratic educational environment, which is able to prepare students to live in a pluralistic society. In addition, Islamic boarding schools as institutions that have strong ties with local communities have the potential to become effective agents of social change, by utilizing educational models that are able to integrate various cultural, religious, and social values (Djamiluddin et al., 2024). By utilizing the power of community networks, a multicultural approach in Islamic boarding schools will not only enrich the learning experience of students but also strengthen the foundation of diversity in a pluralistic Indonesian society. Therefore, despite the challenges in its implementation, the opportunity to create

multicultural-based Islamic religious education in Islamic boarding schools remains wide open and very relevant to the needs of contemporary education in Indonesia.

The methodology used in this study is a qualitative approach with a case study design, which allows for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of multicultural-based Islamic religious education at the Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyyah Islamic Boarding School, Subang. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its flexible nature in exploring the experiences, perspectives, and meanings held by various stakeholders in the Islamic boarding school, such as educators, students, and the surrounding community. This case study provides space to explore the implementation of multicultural education contextually, taking into account the local dynamics in the Islamic boarding school. Data were collected through various techniques, including in-depth interviews with Islamic boarding school caretakers, teachers, and students, as well as participatory observation in daily educational activities at the Islamic boarding school. In addition, documentation in the form of curriculum, teaching materials, and socio-cultural activities were also analyzed to provide a more comprehensive picture of how multicultural-based education is implemented. The data analysis technique uses an inductive approach, where the main patterns and themes that emerge from the qualitative data will be analyzed systematically to gain a broader understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and impacts of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools. Thus, this study aims to make a significant contribution to the development of an Islamic religious education model that can accommodate cultural and religious diversity in Indonesian society, as well as enrich the literature on Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools with a multicultural perspective.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Key Findings

The results of this study identified that the process of instilling multicultural values at the Al-Syifa Al-Khoiriyyah Islamic Boarding School, Subang is structured in three main components: multicultural knowing, multicultural feeling, and multicultural action. These three components form a multicultural-based Islamic education model that is not only theoretical, but also applicable in the social life of students. These findings were obtained from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation of students' activities at the Islamic boarding school.

a. Multicultural Knowing

It is the initial stage in the internalization of multicultural values, marked by the delivery of teaching materials and learning resources that contain multicultural narratives. For example, in teaching interpretation and hadith, teachers insert stories of cross-cultural figures in Islamic history. This forms the cognitive foundation of students towards diversity.

b. Multicultural Feeling

This stage is related to the affective aspect, namely strengthening feelings of empathy and acceptance of differences transmitted through the exemplary behavior of teachers and the Islamic boarding school environment. Students observe and emulate the inclusive attitude of the ustadz who are consistent in treating all students fairly regardless of background.

c. Multicultural Action

It is a real manifestation of the instillation of these values in the form of daily social practices. Habitual activities such as cross-dormitory community service, cross-regional discussions, and student deliberation forums show that multicultural values have been embedded in the behavior of students.

3.2 Supporting Data

Qualitative data shows that 85% of students felt a significant change in their attitudes towards differences after participating in the habituation program for more than six months. A quote from an interview with one of the students stated:

“At first I felt awkward socializing with friends from outside Java, but after interacting frequently in Islamic boarding school activities, I actually learned a lot from their culture.” (Interview, 3rd grade student, 2024)

Table 1. Summary of students' perceptions of multicultural aspects:

Multicultural Aspects	Percentage of Students Who Agree
Multicultural Knowing	90%
Multicultural Feeling	87%
Multicultural Action	82%

3.3 Critical Discussion

This finding is in line with previous studies by Banks (2015) which emphasizes the importance of integrating multicultural values into the curriculum as an effort to form a harmonious plural society. However, the Islamic boarding school approach shows uniqueness in its role model-based implementation and intensive habituation, which are not emphasized in the context of formal Western education.

Compared to Azra's (2021) research on pluralism in modern Islamic boarding schools, Al-Syifa's approach emphasizes more on emotional and spiritual involvement in building multicultural awareness. This explains why the santri's attitude towards differences is more positive and concrete in social practice.

Contextual factors that influence this success include: a) a boarding system that encourages intensive cross-cultural interaction, b) the geographical diversity of students, and c) an institutional vision that supports multicultural education based on Islamic values.

3.4 Theorization and Interpretation

This finding can be explained through the Transformative Learning Theory framework (Mezirow, 2000) which emphasizes changes in perspective through reflective experiences. The three stages in the Islamic boarding school model of knowing, feeling, and action are representations of this transformative process. In addition, this approach affirms Freire's Critical Pedagogy theory (1970) which positions students as active subjects in building social meaning.

The theoretical contribution of this research is the development of a model for instilling multicultural values in the context of Islamic education based on Islamic boarding schools, which has not been widely explained conceptually in international literature. Practically, this model can be adapted by other educational institutions facing the challenges of diversity.

3.5 Global Relevance

In a global context, the results of this study are relevant for cross-cultural education discourse in countries with ethnic and religious diversity. Islamic boarding school, as a traditional Islamic institution, offers an alternative approach based on spiritual values and social practices that can strengthen social cohesion without sacrificing cultural identity.

This model can also contribute to the renewal of Islamic education curricula in other Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, or Nigeria, where the integration of multicultural values is still a serious challenge.

3.6 Limitations and Implications

The limitation of this study lies in the scope of the case study which is limited to one Islamic boarding school. Therefore, generalization of the findings must be done with caution. In addition, the qualitative approach used has not fully described the quantitative dimension of the effectiveness of multicultural programs.

The policy implication of this finding is the need to review the Islamic boarding school curriculum to include multicultural dimensions as part of character education. The good practices found in this study can be used as a basis for compiling teacher training modules, student activity guides, and strengthening extracurricular programs based on social inclusion.

For further research, it is recommended to conduct comparative studies across Islamic boarding schools in various regions and use a mixed methods approach to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the impact of multicultural education in the context of Islamic education.

IV. Conclusion

This study confirms that the instillation of multicultural values in Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools plays a strategic role in shaping the awareness of diversity and the practice of inclusive social life of students. The multicultural model developed through the knowing, feeling, and action approach not only provides a cognitive foundation for the values of pluralism, but also internalizes its affective and practical dimensions concretely in the daily interactions of students. By integrating multicultural values into the curriculum and learning practices, Islamic boarding schools contribute significantly to building an educational community that is tolerant, dialogical, and responsive to complex social realities.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a more contextual and adaptive Islamic education framework to the dynamics of a multicultural global society. The proposed multicultural integration model enriches the discourse of Islamic education with an approach that is not only normative-theological, but also sociocultural and pedagogical. While practically, these findings provide a new direction for Islamic educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools, to strengthen curriculum policies and teaching strategies based on multicultural values. This is very relevant in the context of increasing identity tensions, intolerance, and social fragmentation in various parts of the world, including Indonesia.

However, this study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the study's focus, which is limited to one type of Islamic boarding school with a qualitative approach, makes the generalization of findings limited. Second, time and resource constraints have resulted in the quantitative aspects that can strengthen the validity of the

data not being explored in depth. These limitations also open up opportunities for more comprehensive follow-up research.

For future research directions, it is suggested that there be an exploration of variations in the multicultural internalization model in various types of Islamic boarding schools, both salafiyah and khalafiyah, using a mixed methods approach. Comparative studies across cultures and countries can also be conducted to examine the effectiveness of this model in a global context. In addition, the involvement of other actors such as parents, the surrounding community, and policy makers needs to be expanded to view the value ecosystem holistically.

With the spirit of openness and inclusivity, Islamic education based on multicultural values must continue to be developed so that it is not only locally relevant, but also able to contribute to the global discourse on humanistic, tolerant, and equitable education.

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