

Multicultural Education in Islamic Boarding Schools: Implementing Islamic Values in Addressing Social Diversity in Indonesia

Arizqi Ihsan Pratama¹, Anas Fauzi², Achmad Farouq Abdullah³

Darunnajah University, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: arizqi@darunnajah.ac.id

Abstract: Indonesia, as a highly diverse country socially, faces challenges in building a harmonious and inclusive life. Multicultural education becomes a strategic approach to instill attitudes of tolerance and appreciation for differences. Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution, has great potential in implementing multicultural education based on Islamic values. This article examines how pesantren internalize Islamic values such as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, justice, compassion, and brotherhood in facing social diversity in Indonesia. The research method uses a literature review with descriptive analysis. The study results show that the pesantren integrates multicultural education thru an inclusive curriculum, dialogical teaching methods, a social life that supports interaction among students, and the role of teachers as moral exemplars. However, challenges such as limited resources and resistance to curriculum changes still need to be addressed. Multicultural education in pesantren plays an important role in shaping a generation that is tolerant and capable of living peacefully in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: Multicultural education, pesantren, Islamic values, social diversity, tolerance, *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country with highly complex social diversity, encompassing various ethnic groups, religions, languages, and cultures. That diversity becomes both a wealth and a challenge in building a harmonious and inclusive social life. In this context, education plays a strategic role as a medium to cultivate attitudes of tolerance, appreciation for differences, and social solidarity (Banks, 2015). Multicultural education has emerged as a relevant approach in preparing the younger generation to face the reality of social plurality, especially in the context of Indonesia's diverse society.

Pesantren, as one of the traditional Islamic educational institutions, has long been a center for religious teaching as well as character formation in Indonesian Muslim society. In addition to transferring religious knowledge, pesantren also function as a medium for socializing moral and social values based on Islamic teachings (Azra, 2004). In facing the challenges of social diversity, pesantren have great potential to integrate multicultural education with Islamic values as a solid ethical and philosophical foundation. The concept of

rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy for all beings) and the principles of justice, compassion, and brotherhood (ukhuwwah) serve as the main foundation for internalizing tolerant and inclusive attitudes among students (Nasr, 2006).

However, the implementation of multicultural education in pesantren is not without various dynamics and challenges, both in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and the socio-cultural context of the pesantren itself. Therefore, an in-depth study on how pesantren implement Islamic values in multicultural education is very important to provide a comprehensive picture of the role of pesantren in responding to social diversity in Indonesia. This article aims to thoroughly elaborate on the concept of multicultural education in pesantren and how Islamic values are internalized as social capital in addressing existing social diversity.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative study with a literature review approach; the data sources for this research come from various documents relevant to the topic. The data analysis technique used is descriptive analysis, which is a research technique used to thoroughly and detailedly describe important findings in the research data sources (Raco, 2010; Sugiyono, 2014; Sukmadinata, 2006; Yusuf, 2017). The steps of descriptive analysis in this study first describe the concept of multicultural education in pesantren, and then explain descriptively

the application of Islamic values in addressing social diversity in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Foundation of Multicultural Education and Islam

Multicultural education, according to James A. Banks (2015), is an educational approach that recognizes, appreciates, and celebrates cultural diversity while striving to address social injustices arising from discrimination and prejudice. Banks explains that multicultural education is not just about incorporating different cultural content into the curriculum, but also involves changing the structure and processes of education to support equality and social justice. Banks outlines four main components of multicultural education: integrative content, knowledge about various cultural groups, attitudes of respect for differences, and critical thinking skills to address injustice (Banks, 2015). This approach aims to equip learners with the ability to live in a pluralistic society and simultaneously become agents of progressive social change.

In addition to Banks, Gay (2002) emphasizes the importance of a pedagogical approach that is responsive to the culture of learners, where teachers must understand students' cultural backgrounds and adjust teaching methods to be more effective and inclusive. This approach not only enhances academic achievement but also builds a sense of identity and self-esteem.

In Islam, education is not only oriented toward cognitive aspects but also spiritual and moral, aiming to shape a kamil person (perfect human) with noble character. The concept of rahmatan lil 'alamin contained in the Qur'an illustrates Islam's mission as a religion that brings mercy and goodness to the entire universe, without discrimination (Nasr, 2006).

The value of adl (justice) serves as the main foundation in social interaction and Islamic education. The Qur'an explicitly commands Muslims to act justly even toward those of different religions (QS. An-Nisa: 135). This principle is highly relevant in the context of multicultural education that emphasizes social justice and respect for differences.

Furthermore, the value of *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) teaches the importance of harmonious social relationships and mutual respect among humans without distinguishing between ethnicity, race, or religion (Al-Attas, 1995). Islamic education emphasizes the integrated aspects of spirituality and sociality, thereby capable of shaping students who are tolerant, empathetic, and socially responsible.

The theory of multicultural education and Islamic principles have a strong convergence in building an inclusive and harmonious society. Both perspectives instill an awareness of the importance of respecting diversity and social justice (Azra, 2004).

Islamic education in a multicultural context not only teaches tolerance normatively but also internalizes fundamental ethical values so that inclusive behavior becomes part of the character and identity of the learners (Rahman, 2017). Thus, multicultural education based on Islam can present an educational model that is not only adaptive to diversity but also transformational in building a civilized society.

Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution, has a unique approach to teaching Islamic values comprehensively. According to Kholil (2019), pesantren not only transfer religious knowledge but also shape the character and social attitudes of students thru daily interactions and a scholarly tradition that is open to pluralism.

Implementation of Multicultural Education in Islamic Boarding Schools

The implementation of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools can be seen from several aspects, including:

a. Curriculum and Learning Materials

The implementation of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools is evident in the development of a curriculum that not only focuses on religious studies but also includes materials on the importance of tolerance, human rights, and appreciation of cultural and religious differences (Hadi, 2020). This curriculum adopts the

principles of inclusive education by integrating universal Islamic values that emphasize the importance of respecting differences and maintaining social peace (Rahman, 2017).

b. Teaching Methods and Pedagogical Approaches

In the learning process, the pesantren applies a dialogical and participatory approach that allows students to actively discuss and express their opinions on issues of diversity and tolerance (Gay, 2002). This method encourages the development of critical thinking and empathy skills, so that students not only understand the theory but are also able to apply multicultural values in their daily lives.

c. Islamic Values as the Basis of Education

Values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *sabr* (patience), and *ihsan* (doing good) are taught intensively in pesantren to foster a positive attitude toward differences. Islam-based character education serves as a solid foundation in fostering harmony among religious communities and cultures (Rahman, 2017).

d. Social Life and Interaction Among Students

The pesantren, as a community living together, provides a broad social space for students to interact with friends from different backgrounds. Daily activities such as joint study sessions, community service, and other social

activities serve as effective media for practicing values of tolerance and brotherhood (Fauzi, 2021). This interaction helps build solidarity and erode prejudices that may arise due to cultural or ethnic differences.

e. The Role of Teachers and Caretakers in Islamic Boarding Schools

Teachers and caretakers in Islamic boarding schools play a key role in implementing multicultural education. They are not only teachers but also moral exemplars who demonstrate fairness, openness, and respect for differences (Sulaiman, 2018). Inclusive and communicative leadership in pesantren is very important to create a conducive learning environment for the development of multicultural values.

f. Challenges and Development Efforts

Although pesantren have great potential in multicultural education, there are several challenges such as limited resources, resistance to curriculum changes, and a lack of specialized training for educators related to multiculturalism (Hadi, 2020). Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity and developing a responsive curriculum are essential to optimize the implementation of multicultural education in pesantren.

Multicultural education in pesantren shows that Islam, as a religion of mercy, can be a source of solutions in facing social diversity. By instilling universal Islamic values, pesantren shape

a generation that is not only strong in faith but also capable of living harmoniously in a pluralistic society (Azra, 2004; Nasr, 2006). However, challenges remain, especially regarding the adaptation of modern curricula and the enhancement of teachers' capacity to manage diversity more systematically.

CONCLUSIONS

Multicultural education in pesantren is a tangible implementation of universal and relevant Islamic values in addressing social diversity in Indonesia. Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution, not only transfers religious knowledge but also shapes the character and social attitudes of students thru the internalization of values such as rahmatan lil 'alamin, justice (adl), compassion (rahmah), and brotherhood (ukhuwwah). The implementation is evident in aspects such as an inclusive curriculum, dialogical and participatory teaching methods, a social life that supports interactions among students from various backgrounds, and the role of teachers and caregivers as moral exemplars.

Nevertheless, pesantren face significant challenges in optimally adopting multicultural education, particularly related to limited resources, resistance to curriculum changes, and the need to enhance educators' capacity in managing diversity. Therefore, the development of a responsive curriculum and ongoing teacher training have become urgent needs so that pesantren can play a more effective role as agents of

creating an inclusive, harmonious, and civilized society.

Thus, multicultural education based on Islamic values in pesantren not only strengthens the faith of the students but also equips them with a tolerant attitude and the ability to live peacefully alongside a pluralistic Indonesian society.

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