

	Solo Universal Journal of Islamic Education and Multiculturalism E-ISSN: 2988-3520 Vol.3, No.3, 2025, pp. 425-438 DOI: https://doi.org/10.61455/suijem.v3i03.550	
Received June 01, 2025	Revised November 27, 2025	Accepted Desember 28, 2025

The Role of Islamic Education in Fostering Tolerance and Diversity in Indonesia's Pluralistic Society

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Abstract

Objective: This study examines the role of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and diversity in Indonesia's pluralistic society. It focuses on how Islamic educational practices promote mutual respect, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence across diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. **Theoretical framework:** The study is grounded in Islamic educational philosophy and Multicultural Education. Islamic education emphasizes moral values, social harmony, and the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy to all creation), while multicultural education promotes inclusivity, respect for diversity, and intercultural understanding. **Literature review:** Existing scholarship on Islamic education highlights its role in character formation, ethical development, and community cohesion. Meanwhile, studies on Multicultural Education emphasize the importance of inclusive curricula and pedagogies in fostering tolerance and addressing diversity in pluralistic societies. **Method:** This study employs a qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis in selected formal institutions such as schools and pesantren, as well as non-formal community-based learning environments. **Results:** The findings reveal that Islamic education significantly contributes to the development of tolerant attitudes when it integrates multicultural perspectives, emphasizes ethical teachings such as rahmatan lil 'alamin, and adopts participatory and dialogical pedagogies. However, challenges persist, including rigid curricula, limited teacher training in multicultural education, and the presence of exclusive interpretations of religious texts. **Implications:** The study suggests that strengthening Islamic education through inclusive curricula, teacher capacity building, and contextualized learning approaches can enhance its role in nurturing unity in diversity. It underscores the need for educational reforms that align religious teachings with contemporary societal demands. **Novelty:** This study offers a contextual analysis of Islamic education in Indonesia by integrating Multicultural Education principles, highlighting its potential as a transformative tool for promoting tolerance and diversity in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: islamic education, multicultural education, tolerance, diversity, pluralism.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the most culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse nations in the world. Comprising more than 17,000 islands and hundreds of ethnic groups, the country represents a complex social fabric shaped by centuries of historical interaction, migration, and cultural exchange [1]. This plurality is reflected not only in language and tradition but also in religious life, where Islam coexists with other faiths within a shared national identity. While such diversity is a source of richness and national pride, it also presents persistent challenges related to social cohesion, tolerance, and the peaceful management of differences. In this regard, the role of education becomes central in cultivating attitudes that support harmony and mutual respect among citizens [2].

Education functions not merely as a means of knowledge transmission but also as a powerful instrument for shaping values, character, and social responsibility. Within this broader framework, Islamic education occupies a particularly strategic position in Indonesia, given that Islam is the religion of the majority of the population [3]. Islamic educational institutions ranging from formal schools and universities to traditional pesantren and informal community-based learning spaces serve as key platforms for instilling ethical principles, moral discipline, and social awareness. These institutions are deeply embedded in Indonesian society and therefore have a significant influence on how individuals perceive and respond to diversity [4].

At its core, Islamic education is grounded in values that inherently support tolerance and inclusivity. Concepts such as *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* (mercy to all creation), *‘adl* (justice), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *shura* (consultation) emphasize compassion, fairness, and respect for others [5]. These principles align closely with the goals of Multicultural Education, which advocates for the recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity, as well as the development of inclusive learning environments. When effectively integrated into teaching practices, these values can contribute to the formation of individuals who are not only religiously grounded but also socially responsible and open-minded [6].

Despite this potential, the implementation of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and diversity is not without its complexities. In certain contexts, educational practices may remain dominated by traditional, teacher-centred approaches that limit critical engagement with issues of diversity and social justice [7]. Additionally, curricula may not sufficiently incorporate multicultural perspectives, resulting in a gap between normative religious teachings and their practical application in diverse social settings. The persistence of exclusive or literalist interpretations of religious texts can further challenge efforts to promote inclusivity, particularly when such interpretations are not balanced with contextual understanding and critical reflection [8].

Moreover, the rapid processes of globalization and digitalization have introduced new dynamics into the educational landscape. The widespread access to information through digital platforms has created learning opportunities but has also increased exposure to polarised views, misinformation, and, in some cases, intolerant ideologies. This situation underscores the need for Islamic education to evolve by incorporating pedagogical approaches that encourage critical thinking, dialogue, and intercultural competence. In this regard, insights from Multicultural Education become increasingly relevant, as they provide frameworks for addressing diversity in ways that are constructive and transformative [9].

Previous studies on Islamic education have highlighted its role in moral and character development, as well as its contribution to community cohesion and social stability. Similarly, research in multicultural education emphasizes the importance of inclusive curricula, participatory teaching methods, and culturally responsive pedagogy in fostering tolerance. However, there remains a need for more context-specific analyses that examine how these two domains intersect within the Indonesian setting. Understanding how Islamic

educational values can be operationalized to address contemporary challenges of diversity is essential for maximizing the transformative potential of education [10].

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the role of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and diversity within Indonesia's pluralistic society [11]. It examines how educational practices, both in formal and non-formal settings, contribute to the development of inclusive attitudes and identifies the challenges that may hinder this process. By doing so, the study aims to provide insights into how Islamic education can be strengthened and reoriented to better respond to the demands of a diverse and rapidly changing society [12].

Ultimately, this research aspires to contribute to broader academic and policy discussions on education, religion, and social harmony [13]. By highlighting the intersection between Islamic educational philosophy and Multicultural Education, it underscores the potential of education as a unifying force that not only preserves cultural and religious identity but also promotes peaceful coexistence. In a nation as diverse as Indonesia, such efforts are essential for sustaining unity in diversity and building a more inclusive and harmonious future [14].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the most culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse nations in the world. Comprising more than 17,000 islands and hundreds of ethnic groups, the country represents a complex social fabric shaped by centuries of historical interaction, migration, and cultural exchange. This plurality is reflected not only in language and tradition but also in religious life, where Islam coexists with other faiths within a shared national identity [15]. While such diversity is a source of richness and national pride, it also presents persistent challenges related to social cohesion, tolerance, and the peaceful management of differences. In this regard, the role of education becomes central in cultivating attitudes that support harmony and mutual respect among citizens [16].

Education functions not merely as a means of knowledge transmission but also as a powerful instrument for shaping values, character, and social responsibility. Within this broader framework, Islamic education occupies a particularly strategic position in Indonesia, given that Islam is the religion of the majority of the population [17]. Islamic educational institutions ranging from formal schools and universities to traditional pesantren and informal community-based learning spaces serve as key platforms for instilling ethical principles, moral discipline, and social awareness. These institutions are deeply embedded in Indonesian society and therefore have a significant influence on how individuals perceive and respond to diversity.

At its core, Islamic education is grounded in values that inherently support tolerance and inclusivity. Concepts such as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), *'adl* (justice), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *shura* (consultation) emphasize compassion, fairness, and respect for others. These principles align closely with the goals of Multicultural Education, which advocates for the recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity, as well as the development of inclusive learning environments. When effectively integrated into teaching practices, these values can contribute to the formation of individuals who are not only religiously grounded but also socially responsible and open-minded [18].

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promote inclusivity, particularly when such interpretations are not balanced with contextual understanding and critical reflection [19].

Moreover, the rapid processes of globalization and digitalization have introduced new dynamics into the educational landscape. The widespread access to information through digital platforms has created learning opportunities but has also increased exposure to polarised views, misinformation, and, in some cases, intolerant ideologies. This situation underscores the need for Islamic education to evolve by incorporating pedagogical approaches that encourage critical thinking, dialogue, and intercultural competence. In this regard, insights from Multicultural Education become increasingly relevant, as they provide frameworks for addressing diversity in ways that are constructive and transformative [20].

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Therefore, this study seeks to explore the role of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and diversity within Indonesia's pluralistic society. It examines how educational practices, both in formal and non-formal settings, contribute to the development of inclusive attitudes and identifies the challenges that may hinder this process. By doing so, the study aims to provide insights into how Islamic education can be strengthened and reoriented to better respond to the demands of a diverse and rapidly changing society [22].

Ultimately, this research aspires to contribute to broader academic and policy discussions on education, religion, and social harmony. By highlighting the intersection between Islamic educational philosophy and Multicultural Education, it underscores the potential of education as a unifying force that not only preserves cultural and religious identity but also promotes peaceful coexistence. In a nation as diverse as Indonesia, such efforts are essential for sustaining unity in diversity and building a more inclusive and harmonious future [23].

Table 1. Literature Review

Author(s) / Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
Banks (2008)	Multicultural Education	Emphasizes inclusive curriculum, cultural diversity, and equity in education	Provides a foundation for understanding how education fosters tolerance and diversity
Gay (2010)	Culturally responsive teaching	Highlights the importance of adapting teaching to students' cultural backgrounds	Supports the need for inclusive and participatory pedagogy in Islamic education
Al-Attas (1999)	Islamic educational philosophy	Stresses moral, spiritual, and intellectual development in Islam	Provides a theoretical basis for Islamic values such as tarbiyah and 'adl
Halstead (2004)	Values in Islamic education	Identifies justice, responsibility, and community as core Islamic educational values	Shows alignment between Islamic teachings and social harmony
Hefner (2009)	Islamic education in Indonesia	Demonstrates the role of Islamic schools in shaping	Contextualizes Islamic education within Indonesia's

		civic and democratic values	pluralistic society
Tan (2011)	Islamic education and modernization	Highlights tensions between traditional and modern educational approaches	Identifies challenges in integrating multicultural perspectives
Niyozov & Pluim (2009)	Muslim education in the global context	Explores diversity and identity in Islamic education systems	Supports the global relevance of tolerance and diversity in education
Tilaar (2012)	Education and multiculturalism in Indonesia	Emphasizes education as a tool for unity in diversity	Reinforces the importance of multicultural approaches in Indonesia
Azra (2015)	Indonesian Islam and education	Highlights moderate Islam and its role in promoting tolerance	Strengthens the argument for Islamic education as a force for inclusivity

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the role of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and diversity within Indonesia's pluralistic society. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate as it enables an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, particularly how educational values, practices, and interactions shape attitudes toward diversity in real-life contexts. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, allowing for a comprehensive interpretation of how Islamic educational principles are implemented across different learning environments. The research integrates perspectives from Islamic educational philosophy and Multicultural Education to analyze how values of tolerance, inclusivity, and mutual respect are embedded in educational practices. This combined framework provides a lens through which both religious teachings and contemporary educational approaches can be examined in relation to diversity and social cohesion [24].

Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to ensure richness and credibility. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and educational practitioners to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives on promoting tolerance through Islamic education. In addition, classroom observations were carried out in selected schools and pesantren to examine teaching methods, classroom dynamics, and student interactions, particularly in relation to the integration of multicultural values. Document analysis was also employed to review curricula, lesson plans, and institutional policies, to identify how inclusive and diversity-oriented values are formally incorporated into educational content [25].

The research was conducted in selected Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, including formal schools, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), and non-formal community-based learning environments. Participants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in educational processes, ensuring that the data collected reflected relevant and informed perspectives. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, involving the systematic coding and categorization of data to identify key patterns and themes related to tolerance, diversity, and educational practices. These themes were then interpreted in relation to Islamic educational values and the principles of Multicultural Education, allowing for a deeper understanding of how these frameworks interact in practice [26].

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed triangulation by comparing data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Member checking and peer review were also utilized to validate interpretations and reduce potential bias. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining anonymity.

Overall, this methodological approach provides a robust framework for examining the contribution of Islamic education to fostering tolerance and diversity, while maintaining academic rigour and contextual relevance [27].

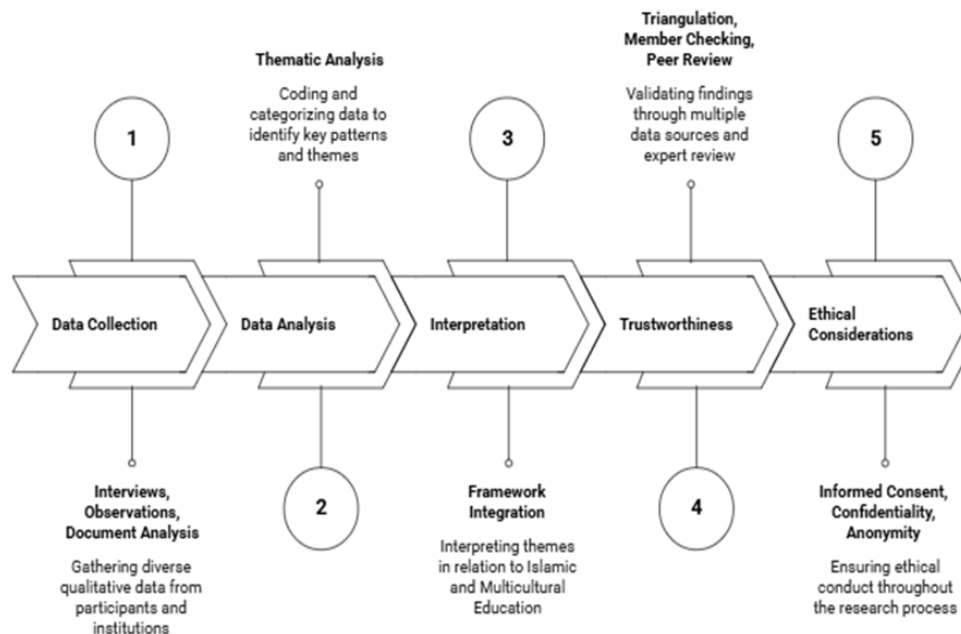


Figure 1. Qualitative Research Process for Islamic Education and Tolerance

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that Islamic education in Indonesia plays a significant role in fostering tolerance and diversity when its principles are effectively integrated with multicultural perspectives. Across the observed educational settings, including formal schools, pesantren, and community-based learning environments, Islamic teachings were found to contribute to the development of inclusive attitudes, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence among students from diverse backgrounds [28].

Integration of Islamic Values and Tolerance

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of core Islamic values, *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* (mercy to all creation), *‘adl* (justice), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *shura* (consultation) plays a central role in shaping students’ attitudes toward diversity and social coexistence. These values are not merely presented as abstract theological concepts but are actively embedded within everyday teaching and learning practices. Teachers consistently incorporate these principles into classroom discussions, moral guidance, and behavioural expectations, particularly within Islamic Religious Education subjects. Through this process, students are guided to internalize values that emphasize compassion, fairness, dialogue, and mutual respect [29].

Furthermore, the implementation of these values extends beyond formal instruction into the broader school culture. In many educational settings, especially in pesantren, these principles are reflected in daily interactions, communal activities, and institutional norms. For example, students are encouraged to engage in respectful dialogue, resolve conflicts through consultation (*shura*), and demonstrate empathy toward peers from different social, cultural, or religious backgrounds. Such practices contribute to the formation of a learning environment that nurtures inclusivity and social harmony.

Importantly, the concept of rahmatan lil ‘alamin serves as a foundational philosophical framework that reinforces the universal and compassionate nature of Islamic teachings. By emphasizing Islam as a mercy for all creation, educators promote an understanding of religion that transcends exclusivity and encourages openness toward others. Similarly, the principle of tasamuh fosters an attitude of acceptance and respect for differences, while ‘adl instills a sense of justice and fairness in social relations. Together, these values create a comprehensive ethical foundation that supports peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

In several pesantren observed in this study, students were not only taught to appreciate intra-religious diversity but were also exposed to interreligious understanding. Lessons and discussions often included themes of coexistence, respect for other faiths, and the importance of maintaining harmony within a diverse nation. This reflects an expanded interpretation of Islamic education that aligns with the realities of Indonesia’s multicultural context. As a result, students develop a broader worldview that enables them to navigate diversity with sensitivity and responsibility [30].

This finding is consistent with existing scholarship, which emphasizes that Islamic education is fundamentally oriented toward moral and ethical development. However, this study further highlights that the impact of Islamic education in fostering tolerance is significantly enhanced when these values are interpreted contextually and applied in inclusive ways. Rather than being limited to doctrinal instruction, Islamic teachings become dynamic tools for addressing contemporary social challenges [31].

Table 2. Integration of Core Islamic Values in Education and Their Impact on Students’ Attitudes toward Tolerance and Social Coexistence

Core Islamic Value	Meaning	Application in Education	Impact on Students
Rahmatan lil ‘alamin	Mercy to all creation	Integrated into teaching as a universal principle of compassion and inclusivity	Encourages openness, empathy, and respect for all people regardless of differences
‘Adl (Justice)	Fairness and justice	Applied in classroom rules, decision-making, and conflict resolution	Develops a strong sense of fairness and ethical responsibility
Tasamuh (Tolerance)	Acceptance and respect for diversity	Promoted through discussions on diversity, interfaith understanding, and social interaction	Builds attitudes of acceptance, respect, and peaceful coexistence
Shura (Consultation)	Mutual consultation and dialogue	Practiced in group discussions, decision-making, and resolving disagreements	Enhances communication skills, cooperation, and democratic values
Integration in Curriculum	Embedding values in formal teaching	Included in Islamic Religious Education and daily lessons	Helps students internalize moral values beyond theory
School Culture (Pesantren)	Values practiced in daily life	Reflected in communal activities, discipline, and peer interaction	Strengthens real-life application of tolerance and harmony
Interreligious Understanding	Awareness of other faiths	Lessons include coexistence, respect, and national diversity	Broadens worldview and promotes social responsibility
Contextual Application	Adapting values to modern society	Teachers connect teachings to contemporary social issues	Makes Islamic education dynamic and relevant

Role of Pedagogical Approaches

Another significant finding of this study highlights the crucial role of pedagogical approaches in shaping students’ attitudes toward diversity and tolerance. The data indicate that classrooms employing participatory and dialogical teaching methods, including group

discussions, collaborative learning, problem-based activities, and open dialogue, are considerably more effective in fostering inclusive mindsets among students. These approaches create interactive learning environments where students are not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the learning process [32].

Through participatory methods, students are given space to articulate their thoughts, share personal experiences, and engage with diverse viewpoints. This interaction not only enhances their communication skills but also encourages empathy and mutual understanding. For instance, during group discussions on social or religious topics, students are exposed to differing interpretations and perspectives, which challenge them to think critically and reflect on their own assumptions. Such engagement is essential in developing the capacity to navigate diversity respectfully and constructively [33].

Dialogical pedagogy, in particular, plays a transformative role by fostering a culture of openness and respect within the classroom. Teachers who facilitate dialogue rather than dominate instruction help cultivate an environment where differences are acknowledged and valued rather than suppressed. In this context, learning becomes a shared process, and students are encouraged to approach diversity as an opportunity for growth rather than a source of conflict. This aligns closely with the principles of both Islamic education and multicultural education, which emphasize consultation (shura), mutual respect, and the pursuit of knowledge through interaction [34].

In contrast, the study found that traditional, teacher-centred approaches tend to limit students' engagement with issues of diversity. In such classrooms, teaching is often characterized by one-way communication, where the teacher delivers content and students are expected to memorize and reproduce information. This method restricts opportunities for critical inquiry, discussion, and reflection, key components in the development of tolerant attitudes. As a result, students may understand the concept of tolerance at a theoretical level but struggle to apply it in real-life situations [35].

Influence of Multicultural Education

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of multicultural education principles significantly strengthens the role of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and diversity. Educational institutions that adopt culturally responsive pedagogy and implement inclusive curricula tend to produce students with a higher level of awareness, sensitivity, and appreciation toward cultural, ethnic, and religious differences. This suggests that multicultural education does not operate in isolation but rather complements and enriches the values embedded within Islamic educational teachings [36].

In practice, schools that effectively integrate multicultural perspectives go beyond the delivery of standard religious content. They actively incorporate themes such as interfaith harmony, cultural diversity, social justice, and global citizenship into their lessons. For instance, classroom discussions may explore how Islamic values relate to respecting people of different faiths, addressing social inequalities, or promoting peace within diverse communities. By connecting religious teachings to real-world social contexts, students are better able to understand the relevance of these values in their everyday lives [37].

Culturally responsive pedagogy also plays a vital role in this process by recognizing and valuing the diverse backgrounds of students. Teachers who adopt this approach tailor their teaching methods and materials to reflect students' cultural experiences, thereby making learning more meaningful and inclusive. This not only enhances student engagement but also fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect within the classroom. As students encounter diverse perspectives in a supportive environment, they are encouraged to develop empathy, challenge stereotypes, and appreciate the richness of pluralism [38].

Moreover, the integration of multicultural education enables students to move from a purely theoretical understanding of tolerance to a more practical and lived experience.

Through interactive activities such as group projects, case studies, and dialogue-based learning, students are exposed to real-life scenarios that require them to apply values of respect, cooperation, and inclusivity. This experiential learning process is essential in shaping attitudes and behaviours that align with the demands of a pluralistic society.

Importantly, this finding reinforces the theoretical framework of the study, which highlights the compatibility between Islamic educational philosophy and multicultural education. Both frameworks share fundamental principles that emphasize human dignity, justice, compassion, and peaceful coexistence. Islamic concepts such as *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* and *tasamuh* naturally align with the goals of multicultural education, creating a strong foundation for synergy between the two approaches [39].

Challenges in Implementation

Despite the significant contributions of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and diversity, this study identifies several critical challenges that hinder its full potential. These challenges are not only structural but also pedagogical and interpretative in nature, reflecting the complexity of implementing inclusive education within diverse institutional contexts.

First, the issue of rigid curricula emerged as a major constraint in several educational institutions. The standardized nature of many curricula often prioritizes the completion of prescribed content over deeper engagement with contemporary social realities. As a result, teachers have limited flexibility to introduce discussions on multiculturalism, interfaith relations, or social justice, even when such topics are highly relevant to students' lived experiences. This rigidity can reduce learning to a procedural activity, where the emphasis is placed on meeting academic requirements rather than fostering critical thinking and reflective understanding. Consequently, opportunities to connect Islamic teachings with real-world issues of diversity and inclusion may be overlooked or underdeveloped [40].

Second, limited teacher training in multicultural education presents a significant barrier to effective implementation. While many educators possess strong subject knowledge in Islamic studies, they may lack the pedagogical skills required to address diversity in a nuanced and inclusive manner. The absence of adequate professional development programs focused on multicultural competencies means that teachers may struggle to facilitate discussions on sensitive topics such as religious differences, cultural identity, and social inequality. This gap not only affects the quality of classroom instruction but also influences how students perceive and internalize values related to tolerance. Without proper guidance, even well-intentioned teaching may fail to fully promote inclusivity or may unintentionally reinforce existing biases [41].

Third, the presence of exclusive or literalist interpretations of religious texts in certain educational contexts poses a conceptual challenge. When Islamic teachings are presented in a rigid, decontextualized manner, students may develop narrow understandings that do not fully reflect the diversity and dynamism of Islamic intellectual traditions. Such interpretations can limit openness to alternative perspectives and reduce the capacity for critical engagement with complex social issues. This underscores the importance of adopting contextualized and balanced approaches to religious education that consider historical context, diversity of scholarly opinions, and the broader ethical objectives of Islam. By doing so, educators can present religious teachings in ways that are both authentic and relevant to contemporary pluralistic societies [42].

In addition to these primary challenges, the study also suggests that institutional culture and external influences may further complicate implementation. For instance, societal attitudes, community expectations, and exposure to polarized or intolerant narratives, especially through digital media, can shape how both teachers and students engage with

issues of diversity. These external factors may either support or undermine efforts to promote inclusive values within educational settings [43].

Analysis

This study provides a comprehensive and contextually grounded analysis of the role of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and diversity within Indonesia's pluralistic society. The findings confirm that Islamic education is not only a religious instruction system but also a socio-cultural instrument capable of shaping inclusive attitudes when aligned with multicultural education principles. The integration of core Islamic values—*rahmatan lil 'alamin*, *'adl*, *tasamuh*, and *shura*—emerges as a foundational element that strengthens students' moral orientation toward empathy, justice, and coexistence. These values, when operationalized through educational practices, move beyond doctrinal understanding and become lived ethical frameworks.

A key strength of the study lies in its emphasis on pedagogical approaches. The evidence shows that participatory and dialogical teaching methods significantly enhance students' engagement with diversity-related issues. Such approaches encourage critical thinking, open dialogue, and mutual respect, which are essential competencies in pluralistic societies. This aligns with contemporary educational theories that advocate student-centered learning as a means to develop higher-order cognitive and social skills. In contrast, traditional teacher-centered methods appear insufficient in cultivating these competencies, as they limit interaction and critical reflection. This pedagogical gap highlights the urgent need for methodological reform in Islamic educational settings.

Furthermore, the incorporation of multicultural education principles is identified as a critical factor in strengthening the effectiveness of Islamic education. By embedding themes such as cultural diversity, interfaith understanding, and social justice into the curriculum, educational institutions are better able to connect religious teachings with real-world contexts. This integration fosters not only cognitive awareness but also affective and behavioral dimensions of tolerance. Importantly, the study demonstrates that Islamic educational philosophy and multicultural education are not contradictory; rather, they are mutually reinforcing frameworks that share common ethical foundations. However, the analysis also reveals several structural and conceptual challenges. Rigid curricula limit the flexibility required to address contemporary social issues, while inadequate teacher training in multicultural pedagogy constrains the effective delivery of inclusive education. Additionally, the persistence of exclusive or literalist interpretations of religious texts poses a significant barrier, as it may lead to narrow perspectives that are less accommodating of diversity. These findings suggest that the challenges are systemic and require coordinated interventions at institutional and policy levels [43].

Another important dimension highlighted in this study is the influence of external factors, particularly globalization and digitalization. While digital platforms provide access to diverse knowledge, they also expose students to polarized and sometimes intolerant narratives. This dual impact underscores the need for Islamic education to incorporate digital literacy and critical media engagement as part of its broader mission. Overall, the study demonstrates that the transformative potential of Islamic education depends on its ability to adapt to changing social realities. Strengthening curriculum flexibility, enhancing teacher competencies, and promoting contextual interpretations of Islamic teachings are essential steps toward maximizing its role. When effectively implemented, Islamic education can serve as a powerful driver of social cohesion, contributing to sustainable peace and unity in Indonesia's diverse society.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Islamic education holds a strategic and transformative position in nurturing tolerance and diversity within Indonesia's pluralistic society. By embedding fundamental values such as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (universal compassion), *'adl* (justice), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *shura* (consultation), Islamic education can function as a moral and social foundation that encourages harmonious coexistence among diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic groups. These values are not merely doctrinal ideals but become meaningful when translated into inclusive and student-centered pedagogical practices. The findings demonstrate that participatory, dialogical, and reflective teaching approaches significantly contribute to shaping students' attitudes toward openness, empathy, and mutual respect. When learners are actively engaged in discussion, critical thinking, and collaborative learning, they are more likely to internalize inclusive values and apply them in real-life social interactions. In addition, the integration of multicultural education principles into Islamic education curricula strengthens students' awareness of diversity and enhances their ability to navigate differences constructively. Contextualizing religious teachings within contemporary societal realities further bridges the gap between theory and practice. Despite these positive contributions, several challenges remain evident. Rigid and standardized curricula often limit the flexibility needed to incorporate contextual and multicultural perspectives. Moreover, insufficient teacher training in inclusive pedagogy and the persistence of exclusive or literal interpretations of religious texts can restrict the transformative potential of Islamic education. These barriers indicate the need for systemic improvements in both curriculum design and teacher professional development. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of promoting adaptive curricula, strengthening educators' competencies, and encouraging contextual and moderate interpretations of Islamic teachings. Such efforts will enable Islamic education to respond effectively to the complexities of modern pluralistic societies. Ultimately, when aligned with inclusive values and contemporary educational demands, Islamic education can serve as a powerful instrument in fostering social harmony, reinforcing national unity, and contributing to the development of a peaceful and cohesive society.

Acknowledgments

The authors express sincere gratitude to King Faycal High School, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Aswan University, and Millat Umidi University for their academic support and resources.

Author Contribution

Mahmoud Abderaman Hassane conceptualized the study, conducted primary data collection, and drafted the manuscript. Aya Ragab contributed to research design, theoretical framework development, and critical revision of the article. Erkinov Farrukh performed data analysis, interpretation, and editing of the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI was employed solely to refine language, correct grammar, and enhance manuscript readability, under authors' supervision.

Funding

This research was supported by the authors' respective universities and institutions, according to their institutional funding arrangements.

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