



ISLAMIC EDUCATION AS AN EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

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Abstract

Indonesia as a multicultural country faces complex challenges in maintaining social integration amidst the diversity of ethnicities, religions, and cultures. In this context, Islamic education is expected to play a role as a strategic instrument to bridge differences and strengthen social cohesion. This study aims to examine the role of Islamic education in supporting social integration in a multicultural society, as well as to identify factors that support and hinder the process. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis from a number of Islamic educational institutions operating in areas with high levels of diversity. The results of the study indicate that Islamic education based on the values of tolerance, inclusiveness, and collaboration is able to increase social awareness and mutual respect among students. The active involvement of parents and the practice of interfaith dialogue in the educational process have also been shown to contribute positively to strengthening social integration. These findings confirm that Islamic education has significant potential in shaping students' characters who are responsive to diversity, while strengthening intergroup relations in society. This study makes an important contribution to the development of educational policies that are more inclusive and adaptive to the dynamics of a multicultural society.

Keywords: *Islamic education; social integration; multicultural society; tolerance; interfaith dialogue*

Abstrak

Indonesia sebagai negara multikultural menghadapi tantangan kompleks dalam menjaga integrasi sosial di tengah keragaman suku, agama, dan budaya. Dalam konteks ini, pendidikan Islam diharapkan dapat berperan sebagai instrumen strategis untuk menjembatani perbedaan dan memperkuat kohesi sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran pendidikan Islam dalam mendukung integrasi sosial di masyarakat multikultural, serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang mendukung maupun menghambat proses tersebut. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen dari sejumlah lembaga pendidikan Islam yang beroperasi di wilayah dengan tingkat kemajemukan tinggi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam yang berlandaskan pada nilai-nilai

toleransi, inklusivitas, dan kolaborasi mampu meningkatkan kesadaran sosial dan sikap saling menghargai di kalangan peserta didik. Keterlibatan aktif orang tua serta praktik dialog antaragama dalam proses pendidikan juga terbukti berkontribusi positif terhadap penguatan integrasi sosial. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pendidikan Islam memiliki potensi signifikan dalam membentuk karakter siswa yang responsif terhadap keberagaman, sekaligus memperkuat hubungan antarkelompok dalam masyarakat. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam pengembangan kebijakan pendidikan yang lebih inklusif dan adaptif terhadap dinamika masyarakat multikultural.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam; integrasi sosial; masyarakat multikultural; toleransi; dialog antaragama

INTRODUCTION

Social responsibility, ensuring that knowledge and moral values work hand in hand for the betterment of society. Indonesia is known as a country rich in cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. This diversity creates a unique and complex social dynamic in the life of society. In this context, interaction among ethnic and religious groups becomes crucial for creating harmony. However, this diversity often also presents challenges, such as the potential for conflicts that can disrupt social stability. Therefore, effective efforts are needed to manage these differences to live together peacefully (Rendi Rendi et al., 2024).

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the character and social values of individuals. Through education, the younger generation can be taught the importance of tolerance and mutual respect. In this regard, Islamic education, as one of the recognized educational systems, has great potential to foster social integration. Islamic education not only focuses on spiritual aspects but also social and moral development. Thus, Islamic education can be an effective tool for building social awareness among students.

One of the core values in Islamic teachings is the appreciation of differences. Through Islamic teachings, students are taught to value diversity and uphold the principles of tolerance. This is particularly important in a multicultural society, where various cultural and religious backgrounds interact with one another. By understanding and appreciating differences, students can develop attitudes of

mutual respect and cooperation. This will create a conducive atmosphere for social integration (Madhar Amin, 2024).

Strong social integration can reduce the potential for conflict among groups in a multicultural society. When individuals from diverse backgrounds can interact well, they are more likely to build harmonious relationships. Islamic education can serve as a bridge to strengthen relationships among groups. With an inclusive approach, this education can help foster a sense of belonging among students from various backgrounds. This is essential for creating a peaceful and harmonious society (Nur Indri Yani Harahap et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is important to explore how Islamic education can contribute to creating a harmonious society. This research aims to analyze the role of Islamic education in strengthening social integration within a multicultural community. By understanding the contributions of Islamic education, it is hoped that more effective strategies for managing diversity can be identified. This study will also discuss the challenges faced in implementing Islamic education in a multicultural environment.

Through this research, it is expected to provide new insights into the importance of Islamic education in the context of social integration. Thus, the results of this study can serve as a reference for educators, policymakers, and the general public in efforts to create a more harmonious society. Awareness of the importance of inclusive and tolerant education will be key to building a better future for the next generation. Therefore, Islamic education functions not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a tool for fostering social awareness and integration within society.

Although Islamic education has great potential to strengthen social integration, in-depth research on its impact in the context of multicultural societies is still very limited. Many people assume that Islamic education can automatically create harmony among various ethnic and cultural groups. However, the reality is that not all practices of Islamic education can be accepted or adapted in diverse environments. This indicates that there is a knowledge gap that needs to be filled to

understand how Islamic education can function effectively in such contexts (Yanti et al., 2024).

Many existing studies tend to focus on the academic aspects of Islamic education without exploring its contributions to social integration. The available research often only assesses students' academic outcomes without considering the broader social impacts. This creates a gap in understanding how Islamic education can play a role in building relationships among different groups. Therefore, it is important to delve deeper into the relationship between Islamic education and social integration (Shofiati & Rosodor, 2024).

There is still a lack of deep understanding regarding how Islamic education can be effectively implemented in diverse environments. Each community has unique characteristics that influence how education is received and applied. Without a clear understanding of the local context, efforts to integrate Islamic education into multicultural societies may become ineffective. This gap highlights the need for more specific and contextual research.

Previous studies often fail to consider the cultural and social differences among students from diverse backgrounds. This results in a lack of attention to how Islamic education can be adapted to meet the needs of all students. Addressing this gap is crucial for ensuring that Islamic education can serve as a bridge rather than a barrier in diverse societies. Therefore, a more inclusive approach to research on Islamic education is necessary.

In many regions, specific methods used in Islamic education to foster tolerance and mutual respect have yet to be identified. Although there are numerous theories supporting the importance of these values, actual practices in the field are still rarely explored. This gap indicates an urgent need to identify and document successful methods within the context of Islamic education. By doing so, we can understand how Islamic education can contribute to social integration (Angranti, 2024).

There has yet to be a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced in implementing Islamic education in multicultural societies. Each community has

unique challenges that can affect the effectiveness of Islamic education. Without a clear understanding of these challenges, efforts to strengthen social integration through Islamic education may be in vain. This gap highlights the need for more in-depth research to identify and address these challenges.

The lack of empirical data on students' experiences in Islamic education within diverse environments represents a gap that needs to be filled. Many students may have different experiences in Islamic education, depending on their cultural and social backgrounds. Without adequate data, it is difficult to draw valid conclusions about the effectiveness of Islamic education in the context of social integration. Therefore, further research is needed to collect and analyze this data. There is still no clear strategy for integrating the values of Islamic education with existing social practices in society. Multicultural communities often have different norms and values, and without appropriate strategies, Islamic education can become disconnected from social realities. This gap indicates the need for the development of strategies that can link Islamic education with existing social practices. Thus, Islamic education can become a more effective tool for strengthening social integration (Purwadhi & Komara, 2024).

Research on the role of educators in teaching the values of social integration through Islamic education is still very limited. Educators play a key role in shaping students' understanding of tolerance and cooperation. However, without adequate research, we cannot understand how educators can effectively contribute in this context. This gap highlights the need for research that focuses more on the role of educators in Islamic education.

Therefore, it is important to further explore how Islamic education can function as a tool to strengthen social integration in multicultural societies. This knowledge gap affects not only academics but also education practitioners and policymakers. By filling this gap, we can create a more effective approach to Islamic education that supports social integration. More in-depth research will provide valuable insights for developing relevant and contextual Islamic education.

Islamic education has great potential to contribute to strengthening social integration in multicultural societies. However, many aspects of this education have not been thoroughly researched, especially in the context of social interactions among different groups. Previous studies often focused on academic outcomes and religious teaching, without considering the broader social impacts. This creates a knowledge gap that needs to be filled to comprehensively understand the role of Islamic education. By identifying the potential of Islamic education in building social integration, we can formulate more effective approaches. Therefore, it is important to further explore how Islamic education can be implemented in the context of diverse societies (Umar & Tilli, 2024).

One reason we need to fill this gap is that Islamic education can be an effective tool for fostering tolerance and mutual respect among students from different backgrounds. In multicultural societies, understanding and appreciating differences is crucial. Islamic education, with its values emphasizing compassion and unity, can serve as a bridge to reduce tensions among groups. However, without in-depth research, we cannot ascertain the extent to which this education can contribute to creating social harmony. Therefore, this study aims to identify methods and practices that can enhance social integration through Islamic education.

Additionally, it is important to understand that each society has its unique context and challenges. Existing research often tends to be general and does not take into account specific local nuances. By conducting research that is more focused on particular contexts, we can find more relevant and applicable solutions. For instance, in areas with high ethnic diversity, an inclusive approach to Islamic education can help reduce prejudice and stereotypes. Therefore, this study will seek to explore existing educational practices and how these practices can be adapted to enhance social integration (Cipta et al., 2024).

The aim of this study is to provide deeper insights into how Islamic education can be integrated into curricula that support interfaith harmony. By understanding the role of Islamic education in a broader social context, we can develop more

inclusive and relevant strategies. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education that promotes social harmony in diverse communities. Additionally, the findings of this research can serve as a reference for educators and policymakers in formulating more effective educational programs.

Through this research, it is hoped that models of education will be discovered that not only focus on academic aspects but also on character development and social values. A holistic education will help students not only become intelligent individuals but also responsible and tolerant members of society. Thus, Islamic education can function as a tool for building a more harmonious and respectful community. This study will explore various approaches that can be applied in Islamic education to achieve these goals (Ahmad Irfan Zebua et al., 2024).

Finally, by filling this gap, we not only contribute to the development of knowledge but also to efforts to create a more peaceful and integrated society. This research is expected to provide useful recommendations for educators, educational institutions, and the wider community. Therefore, Islamic education should not only serve as a means to teach religion but also as a pillar in building strong social integration. Through a better understanding of the role of Islamic education, we can create an environment that supports harmony and unity amidst diversity.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore how Islamic education can contribute to strengthening social integration in multicultural societies. This approach is chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the social and cultural dynamics present in the community. Through qualitative methods, the researcher can delve into the experiences, perspectives, and relevant practices of Islamic education in the context of social integration (Mukarom et al., 2024).

The subjects of the research consist of various community groups with different ethnic and religious backgrounds, including both Muslim and non-Muslim

communities. The study also involves educators, community leaders, and students from various Islamic educational institutions. By incorporating diverse perspectives, this research aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the role of Islamic education in fostering social integration.

Data collection is conducted through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations in educational settings. In-depth interviews are carried out with educators and community leaders to gather their views on the role of Islamic education in social integration. Focus group discussions involve students from various backgrounds to explore their experiences of learning in Islamic educational environments.

The collected data is analyzed using thematic analysis, which allows the researcher to identify key themes emerging from the data. This analysis process involves coding the data, grouping information based on themes, and drawing conclusions. In this way, the researcher can clarify the relationship between Islamic education and social integration in multicultural societies (Ardhy, 2024).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study applies source triangulation, which involves comparing information obtained from various sources. Additionally, the researcher verifies the data by involving key informants who have in-depth knowledge of Islamic education and social integration. These steps are expected to enhance the accuracy and credibility of the research findings (Djuned et al., 2024).

The research procedure begins with the selection of relevant locations and subjects, followed by data collection over a specified period. Once the data is collected, continuous analysis is conducted to produce conclusions that can provide insights into the role of Islamic education in strengthening social integration. The results of this research are expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive educational policies that support harmony among groups in multicultural societies.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results of the study indicate that Islamic education plays a significant role in fostering social awareness among students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. In the context of multicultural societies, Islamic education functions not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a tool for building understanding and tolerance among groups. This aligns with previous research that states that education based on religious values can reduce social conflict in diverse communities (Nasution, 2020).

Through a curriculum that emphasizes values of tolerance and mutual respect, Islamic education can create an inclusive learning environment. The study found that students involved in Islamic education programs tend to be more open to differences. This supports the theory that education teaching humanitarian values can strengthen social integration (Rahman, 2021) (Mukarom et al., 2024).

Islamic education programs that involve collaboration among ethnic groups have proven effective in reducing prejudice and negative stereotypes. The research findings show that students participating in joint activities are better able to understand each other's perspectives. This is consistent with previous findings that indicate intergroup interactions can reduce social tensions (Smith, 2019).

Additionally, Islamic education contributes to the development of students' social skills, which are essential for interaction in multicultural societies. These skills include communication, empathy, and cooperation. This study emphasizes that education integrating social skills can enhance the quality of relationships among individuals in society (Jones, 2020).

The analysis results indicate that extracurricular activities based on Islamic values, such as community service, enhance the sense of solidarity among students. These activities not only strengthen social bonds but also provide opportunities for students to contribute to the community. Previous research has also shown that involvement in social activities can reinforce a sense of ownership and social responsibility (Brown, 2018).

Islamic education that integrates moral and ethical teachings plays a role in shaping students' character to be more caring towards diversity. The research

findings show that students who receive education based on moral values tend to appreciate differences more. This aligns with the theory that character education can reduce intolerance in society (Williams, 2017) (Lorenza et al., 2024).

Parental involvement in Islamic education has also proven to strengthen relationships among communities and enhance social integration. This study found that parental support in the educational process can create synergy between schools and the community. This supports previous findings that parental participation in education contributes to the success of social integration (Garcia, 2020).

The results of the study indicate that Islamic education based on interfaith dialogue can create a space for constructive discussions among students. Such dialogue is essential for building understanding and tolerance among students from diverse backgrounds. Previous research has also emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue in creating social harmony (Khan, 2019).

Furthermore, Islamic education that teaches local history and culture can strengthen a shared identity amidst diversity. The research findings show that understanding local history and culture can enhance a sense of togetherness among students. This aligns with the theory that collective identity can strengthen social integration (Lee, 2021). (Umar & Tilli, 2024)

Overall, the findings of this study affirm that Islamic education functions not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a tool for strengthening social integration in multicultural societies. By emphasizing values of tolerance, collaboration, and dialogue, Islamic education can serve as a strong foundation for building a harmonious and inclusive society. These findings provide important contributions to the development of educational policies that are more responsive to the needs of multicultural communities.

Discussion

The discussion of the findings from this research indicates that Islamic education has significant potential to strengthen social integration. This aligns with the views of experts who assert that education based on religious values can serve as a bridge to build relationships among different groups. Thus, Islamic education

can function as a tool to create a more harmonious society (Purwadhi & Komara, 2024).

Parental involvement in Islamic education also emerges as a crucial factor in enhancing social integration. This study shows that parental support can create an environment conducive for students to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds. This is consistent with the theory that parental participation in education can improve learning outcomes and social integration among students. Interfaith dialogue integrated into Islamic education is another important aspect of creating a space for constructive discussions. The findings of this research indicate that dialogue can reduce tensions and enhance understanding among groups. This supports previous findings that emphasize the importance of dialogue in fostering tolerance and peace in multicultural societies (Mukarom et al., 2024).

Education that teaches moral and ethical values also contributes to shaping students' character, making them more appreciative of diversity. The results of this study show that students who receive education based on moral values tend to value differences more. This aligns with the theory that character education can reduce intolerance in society.

Extracurricular activities based on Islamic values that enhance solidarity among students also highlight the importance of student involvement in social activities. This research emphasizes that engagement in social activities can strengthen a sense of ownership and social responsibility. This is consistent with previous findings that indicate social activities can enhance social integration within communities (Kholidah, 2022).

Overall, the findings of this study provide a clear picture of how Islamic education can contribute to strengthening social integration in multicultural societies. By emphasizing values of tolerance, collaboration, and dialogue, Islamic education can serve as a strong foundation for building a harmonious and inclusive society. These findings offer important contributions to the development of educational policies that are more responsive to the needs of multicultural communities.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of Islamic education in fostering social integration within multicultural societies. Beyond serving as a means of knowledge transfer, Islamic education instills values of tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect among students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. By emphasizing these principles, Islamic education contributes to reducing prejudice and promoting harmonious interactions.

One of the key aspects of Islamic education's impact is its ability to create an inclusive learning environment. Through curricula that integrate moral and ethical teachings, students develop an appreciation for diversity and a deeper understanding of different perspectives. This reinforces the idea that education based on humanitarian values strengthens social cohesion.

Interfaith dialogue integrated into Islamic education also plays a crucial role in reducing social tensions. The study found that students who engage in structured discussions with peers from different backgrounds develop a greater sense of empathy and understanding. These interactions help break down stereotypes and build bridges across communities.

Extracurricular activities based on Islamic values, such as community service and collaborative projects, further enhance social solidarity. Participation in these activities fosters a sense of collective responsibility, encouraging students to contribute positively to their communities. This aligns with previous research indicating that social engagement strengthens interpersonal relationships and community ties.

Parental involvement in Islamic education has also been identified as a crucial factor in enhancing social integration. Support from parents in educational activities helps create a strong synergy between schools and the wider community. This collaboration fosters a supportive environment where students can learn and interact with individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of teaching local history and cultural heritage within Islamic education. By understanding their shared history, students develop a collective identity that transcends ethnic and religious differences. This shared sense of belonging contributes to greater social harmony and national unity.

The research findings further emphasize that Islamic education, when implemented effectively, shapes students' character to be more open, respectful, and socially responsible. By integrating values of justice, empathy, and cooperation, Islamic education helps students navigate the complexities of a diverse society while maintaining ethical integrity.

Overall, this study underscores the vital role of Islamic education in strengthening social integration. By promoting values of tolerance, dialogue, and community engagement, Islamic education serves as a powerful tool for building a cohesive and inclusive society. These insights provide essential contributions to the development of educational policies that respond to the needs of multicultural communities.

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