The Impact of Integrating Multicultural Education and Islamic Values: Enhancing Tolerance and Social Skills in Elementary Schools

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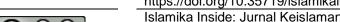*correspondence e-mail: ade.bagus.2101328@students.um.ac.id

| **Abstract** | Multicultural education in elementary schools plays a crucial role in creating an inclusive learning environment that values diversity. This education introduces students to various cultures while fostering tolerance and enhancing their social and emotional skills. Multicultural programs involving interactive activities such as discussions, role-playing, and collaborative projects have proven effective in reducing prejudice and stereotypes, as well as increasing appreciation for differences. Students engaged in these programs not only show greater understanding and respect for diversity but also experience a decrease in bullying behaviour within the school environment. The integration of Islamic values such as tolerance, justice, and compassion into the multicultural curriculum strengthens inclusive attitudes and reduces prejudice, helping students develop character with strong ethics and morals. This Islam-based approach not only enriches students' learning experiences but also supports their character development and social skills, creating a more harmonious and cohesive learning environment while reinforcing positive attitudes among students. Thus, multicultural education that combines cultural and religious values holds great potential for building a more inclusive and harmonious society. |

Introduction

Multicultural education in elementary schools has become a major focus in efforts to create an inclusive learning environment that values diversity. Multicultural education aims not only to provide an understanding of cultural differences but also to foster tolerance and improve students' social and emotional skills. In this context, multicultural education is an effective tool for promoting social harmony and reducing prejudice and discrimination.

Tolerance is one of the important aspects developed through multicultural learning. Tolerance in this context means respecting differences and recognising that every individual has the right to live their life according to their values and beliefs. According to Gay, students who receive multicultural education are better able to demonstrate tolerance in their daily interactions. This is evident in their ability to respect different views and beliefs, as well as

the inclusive attitude they display in the school environment. Multicultural education helps students understand and appreciate diversity, which in turn reduces the potential for conflict and enhances social harmony.[1]

Recent research also supports the importance of multicultural education in shaping attitudes of tolerance. For example, a study by Smith shows that multicultural education programs involving project-based learning and group discussions are effective in increasing students' attitudes of tolerance toward minority groups.[2] In addition, research by Lee and Kim found that integrating cultural values into the curriculum can strengthen mutual respect and minimise conflict in the school environment.[3]

In the context of multicultural education, the integration of Islamic values such as justice, compassion, and manners makes a significant contribution to shaping students' attitudes of tolerance. Al-Mutairi demonstrates that incorporating Islamic principles into the curriculum can foster inclusive attitudes and mitigate prejudice[4]. Similar findings were presented by Nurhadi, who highlighted that Islamic Values not only encourage respect for differences but also strengthen students' social character in diverse contexts[5]. Hasan's study confirms that a multicultural approach based on Islamic values directly improves mutual respect and social behaviour among students in their daily interactions. This reinforces the argument that this approach is not only cognitive, but also morally and socially transformative[6].

Islam, as a religion that upholds the values of brotherhood and humanity, provides a strong theological basis for multicultural learning. Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 emphasises the importance of recognising and respecting diversity as a form of devotion to Allah SWT. In practice, multicultural education that adopts Islamic values helps students develop social and emotional skills, such as empathy, communication, and emotional management. Howard also emphasises that education based on diversity and social interaction can enhance students' adaptability in both social and academic environments. Thus, Islamic-based multicultural education not only teaches values of tolerance but also fosters social-emotional competencies that support students' overall success[7].

Furthermore, Rahmah's research shows that implementing adab values in Islamic education can help students develop mutual respect and tolerance.[8] Values such as respecting parents, teachers, and peers are based on Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of good character in every aspect of life. The Manners of education are not limited to theory, but are also applied in daily practice through the examples and role models provided by teachers and parents. In Rahmah's research, it was found that students who received manners education exhibited more polite behaviour, respected differences, and were more easily adapted to diverse environments. It is these values of manners that are hoped to be

[1] Gay, G. Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice. New York: Teachers College Press, 2018

[2] Smith, J., Johnson, L., & Thompson, M. (2023). *The Impact of Multicultural Education on Student Tolerance: A Study of Project-Based Learning*. Journal of Educational Research, 15(3), 215-230.

[3] Lee, H., & Kim, J. (2024). *Cultural Integration in School Curriculum and Its Effect on Student Attitudes*. International Journal of Multicultural Education, 12(1), 45-60.

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[8] Rahmah, S. (2017). Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Adab dalam Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Perilaku Sosial Siswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(1), 95-110. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga

effectively integrated into multicultural education in schools.

The application of moral values in multicultural education can enhance the effectiveness of learning in various ways. First, students are taught to respect and appreciate differences, which is at the core of multicultural education. Second, moral values can help students develop better social and emotional skills, such as communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution constructively. Third, these values can also strengthen students' ethics and morals, which are important in shaping their character as individuals of integrity and responsibility.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Al-Hidayah found that education based on Islamic values can increase inclusive and tolerant attitudes among students.[9] Al-Hidayah showed that students who were involved in educational programs that emphasised values such as honesty, justice, and compassion were better able to accept and appreciate differences among themselves. This suggests that Islamic values taught in education can significantly contribute to the formation of positive attitudes toward diversity. In a multicultural learning context, education that emphasises these values can help students become more open to cultural and religious differences, and encourage them to interact with mutual respect and understanding.

In addition, Munir's research also confirms that integrating Islamic Values into the school curriculum can help reduce prejudice and negative stereotypes among students.[10] Munir found that students who received education using this approach showed a significant decrease in discriminatory attitudes and an increase in openness to various cultural and religious perspectives. This shows the importance of combining Islamic values with multicultural education to create a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment. Multicultural learning combined with Islamic values can create a learning environment that values diversity, where students feel safe and supported in expressing their cultural and religious identities.

The integration of Islamic values into multicultural learning also plays an important role in shaping students' character for the better. Values such as honesty, justice, and compassion not only foster inclusive and tolerant attitudes but also strengthen students' morals and ethics in interacting with others. Education that emphasises the importance of these values teaches students to be fair, respect the rights of others, and show empathy, all of which are essential elements in multicultural education. Thus, the integration of Islamic values not only supports the goals of multicultural education but also enriches students' learning experiences by adding a strong moral and spiritual dimension.

Furthermore, Fatimah's research emphasises that students involved in educational programs that combine Islamic values with a multicultural approach show improvement in their social and emotional skills.[11] Fatimah found that these students were better able to manage their emotions, showed greater empathy, and were more effective in communicating and cooperating with their peers from different backgrounds. This shows that multicultural learning integrated with Islamic values can help students develop skills that are important for their social lives, as well as strengthen relationships between students in a diverse school environment.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of multicultural learning on changes

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[9] Al-Hidayah, M. (2016). Pendidikan Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Islam dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Sikap Inklusif Siswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 9(1), 75-89. Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel.

[10] Munir, A. (2018). Integrasi Nilai-Nilai Keislaman dalam Kurikulum Sekolah dan Dampaknya terhadap Sikap Siswa. *Jurnal Studi Islam*, 12(2), 123-140. Bandung: UIN Sunan Gunung Djati.

[11] Fatimah, N. (2017). Pengaruh Pendidikan Multikultural Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Keislaman terhadap Kemampuan Sosial dan Emosional Siswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(2), 180-195. Malang: UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim.

in elementary school students' behavior, particularly in terms of tolerance, social skills, and emotional skills. This study will also look at how an Islamic-based approach can strengthen these results. By understanding this impact, it is hoped that recommendations can be made to improve the implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools, which will contribute to better character development in students.

Result and Discussion

This study was conducted at SD Brawijaya Smart School in Malang City, which has integrated multicultural learning with Islamic values in teaching and learning activities and school programs. Data was collected through direct observation of classroom learning activities and programs such as "Smart Religi," in-depth interviews with 4 teachers and 10 students from grades IV to VI, as well as documentation of the curriculum and school activities related to diversity.

Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the data were analysed using thematic analysis techniques to explore patterns of tolerance and students' social-emotional skills. The validity of the findings was strengthened through triangulation between methods and confirmation of results with participants (member checking). The findings are outlined in two main focuses: strengthening tolerance and developing students' social and emotional skills through multicultural learning based on Islamic values.

Attitude of Tolerance and Appreciation

Observations show that students who participate in multicultural learning programs exhibit more open and inclusive behavior. They respect their peers from different cultural and religious backgrounds. In an interview, a religious teacher said, "The children have started praying for and respecting each other when their friends are worshiping, and this has grown not because they were told to, but because it has become a habit". In addition, classroom teachers mentioned that students began to use more polite and empathetic language in their daily interactions, such as avoiding teasing or greeting others politely. These findings indicate that structured, hands-on experiences in multicultural learning play a role in fostering empathy and reducing social prejudice.

In addition to building tolerance, Islamic values-based multicultural learning encourages the internalisation of moral values through real interactions. Students showed improvement in their attitudes of respect, helping friends of different faiths, and actively participating in interfaith activities. One student said in an interview, "When my friend was fasting, I remembered not to eat in front of him and invited him to play during breaks." This indicates the emergence of cultural empathy that grew naturally from the practice of diversity at school.

These programs are designed within a thematic curriculum with integrated activities such as cross-cultural discussions, collaborative projects, and role-playing games. Teachers guide students to not only understand differences conceptually, but also experience them emotionally and socially. Gay's theory (2018) supports this approach by stating that concrete experience-based multicultural learning is more effective in shaping students' open and empathetic attitudes than passive learning.

The validity of these research findings is further reinforced by Rogers and Webb (2023), who show that curricula with an explicit emphasis on cultural diversity enhance inclusivity in the classroom. Khatib and Ramesh (2024) and Suh and Park (2022) state that the integration of religious and local cultural values can reduce conflict and strengthen social cohesion. On the other hand, Yusof and Ahmad (2023) and Hasan (2015) emphasize the importance of Islamic values such as justice and compassion in strengthening students'

ethical and moral foundations.

Islamic teachings as contained in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, which emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding among nations and ethnic groups as part of piety, serve as the primary principle in this educational approach. The teacher mentioned that this verse is used as open discussion material in Islamic Education (PAI) lessons, and its implementation is carried out in cross-cultural activities. This empirical finding indicates that the internalization of Islamic values in multicultural learning practices strengthens understanding of diversity and fosters responsible and tolerant social character among students.

Additionally, the success of multicultural education implementation is greatly influenced by the role of teachers as role models of values and facilitators of cross-cultural dialogue. Teachers who consistently apply inclusive approaches, such as providing space for dialogue, valuing cultural expressions in assignments, and encouraging students to use interfaith greetings, significantly contribute to a respectful classroom atmosphere. One teacher stated, "We agreed to start each lesson with a message of togetherness, and that made the children more open to dialogue even though they were of different religions or cultures." This finding reinforces the views of Howard (2010) and Gay (2018) that multicultural education requires a supportive school social system and inclusive teacher leadership.

In addition to classroom learning, observations were also conducted during extracurricular activities and religious celebrations held by the school. Activities such as cultural performances and sharing takjil during Ramadan were attended by all students regardless of their background. Teachers said that through these activities, students became more active in expressing empathy and social concern. A teacher stated, "Children of different religions help prepare for Ramadan activities, and conversely, during other religious holidays, they support one another." This reinforces the argument that multicultural education is effective when practised not only cognitively but also affectively and socially through direct involvement in the school environment.

In terms of evaluation, teachers used formative assessment techniques to observe changes in student behavior during interactions. Teachers' anecdotal records indicate an improvement in students' ability to resolve minor conflicts without confrontation, as well as an increased tendency for students to collaborate across groups. This approach aligns with Banks' (2009) perspective, which emphasises that successful multicultural education must address cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. In this context, the school does not merely present diversity as knowledge but transforms it into a living culture practised daily. Therefore, the approach adopted by SD Brawijaya Smart School can serve as a best practice example in integrating multicultural education and Islamic values into student character development.

Social and Emotional Skills

Multicultural learning in elementary schools has been proven to play an important role in the development of students' social and emotional skills. Based on observations and field interviews conducted at SD Brawijaya Smart School in Malang City, teachers reported that learning designed with a multicultural approach is able to create an inclusive learning environment, where students feel more comfortable interacting with peers from different backgrounds. Through interactive activities such as group discussions and role-playing games focused on diversity, students not only gain conceptual knowledge about cultural differences but also begin to internalise values such as empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility in their daily interactions. A classroom teacher remarked, "They started defending their classmates of different religions when they were teased, whereas before they would just stay

silent." This demonstrates a shift in attitude resulting from structured exposure.

This finding reinforces Howard's (2010) opinion, which states that systematically designed multicultural education programs can improve students' communication and social adaptation skills. Consistent support from teachers and parental involvement in the learning process also strengthen the learning environment that fosters social-emotional skills. In this context, continuous repetition of material and social practices is an important strategy for elementary school students. One subject teacher stated, "Values such as mutual aid and honesty are repeatedly emphasised, both through lessons and routine activities like ceremonies and religious events." This statement underscores that the internalisation of social values does not occur instantly but through a repetitive process directly linked to students' experiences.

In addition, the integration of Islamic values in multicultural learning provides a moral dimension that enriches the character building of students. The results of observations show that the habit of practising Islamic values, such as respecting teachers, empathising with friends, and watching one's words, has become part of routine activities at school. One class teacher stated that students are trained to greet all teachers, not just those of the same religion, as a form of respect across identities. Rahmah's (2017) research also supports this, showing that Islamic etiquette education can improve polite behaviour and adaptability in a diverse environment.

Further interviews revealed that students who are accustomed to the values of honesty, fairness, and compassion are better able to manage their emotions and work together in groups. This is in line with the findings of Fatimah (2017) and Al-Hidayah (2016), who emphasize that an Islamic values-based approach strengthens inclusive attitudes and improves the quality of interpersonal relationships among students. In practice, religion teachers at Brawijaya Smart School elementary school noted, "The children are accustomed to encouraging each other in fasting and prayer, even across religious lines. They become more caring toward one another." This demonstrates that spiritual values are not separate from social interaction but rather form the foundation of empathy developed in students' daily lives.

As emphasised by Gay (2018), effective multicultural education must provide space for students to practice social skills in real-life contexts. Field results indicate that this approach can synergistically align with Islamic values in creating an inclusive, harmonious school environment that supports students' emotional growth. Therefore, the integration of multicultural education and Islamic values holds great potential in shaping students who are not only academically intelligent but also socially and spiritually mature.

It is also important to note that the success of developing students' social and emotional skills is greatly influenced by the psychological atmosphere of the classroom and the reflective approach used by teachers. In several interviews, teachers stated that when students are given space to reflect on their experiences, such as through daily journals or post-activity cross-cultural discussion sessions, they tend to show higher emotional awareness. This aligns with Goleman's (2006) findings, which emphasise that education that systematically provides space for reflection can enhance students' emotional intelligence and social sensitivity.

Additionally, a supportive school community has also proven to be highly influential in the effectiveness of multicultural learning. At SD Brawijaya Smart School, the involvement of parents and interfaith leaders in school programs, such as "Culture Week" and "Morning Religion," creates concrete social models for students. Values such as syura (consultation), ukhuwah (brotherhood), and rahmah (compassion) are not only taught but also brought to life through shared activities. According to Banks (2009), holistic multicultural education

must address the school environment and policies to create sustainable value transformation within students.

In this way, Islamic values-based multicultural learning has proven to be not only a thematic approach, but also a transformative approach that penetrates the affective dimension of students. The integration of activities that touch on students' real experiences, spiritual values embedded in Islam, and consistent pedagogical practices by teachers all work together to create a learning space that fosters tolerance and strengthens children's social character from an early age. The practical implications of these findings are not only relevant for curriculum development but also provide important input for teacher training and the strengthening of a school culture rooted in values.

Conclusion

Multicultural learning in elementary schools has been proven to play an important role in developing attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for diversity among students. Field research findings at Brawijaya Smart School Elementary School in Malang City indicate that educational programs such as "Smart Religi," which are integrated with Islamic values, not only foster conceptual awareness of diversity but also encourage the development of inclusive attitudes in students' daily interactions. Through activities such as interfaith discussions, collaborative projects, and shared spiritual experiences, students demonstrate a reduction in bullying behaviour and an increase in their ability to understand and respect others' perspectives.

Furthermore, a multicultural education approach combined with Islamic principles of etiquette, such as justice, compassion, and respect for others, helps shape students' social-emotional character. Students demonstrate better ability to manage emotions, communicate politely, and build healthy social relationships in a diverse environment. The role of teachers and a school culture that supports diversity are important factors that strengthen the effectiveness of multicultural education in practice.

The practical implications of this study include the importance of teacher training in designing contextual and value-based multicultural learning. Schools need to develop familiarisation and school culture programs that encourage natural and sustainable interaction across backgrounds. Additionally, education policymakers at the local and national levels can use this model as a reference in formulating curriculum policies that support the development of tolerant, fair, and ethical character from the elementary education level onwards. This research also contributes to the development of instructional designs that integrate spiritual and social values synergistically to foster a generation capable of living in social harmony and diversity.

Author Contribution Statement

Ade Bagus Permana Putra as initiator, drafter data analyser, interpreter, collecting data and critically revising of the article. Yusi Putri Lailatul Musyarofah contributed validator of data and analysis results. All authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of this work.

Statement of Interest

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