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THE VIEWS OF THE MADURESE KIAI ON THE CONCEPT OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: HISTORICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL, AND PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACTS

This research departs from the dominant tendency in multicultural education studies, which is largely understood as part of modern policies and formal curriculum practices, resulting in models based on religious traditions often being overlooked. In the context of Islamic boarding schools in Madura, kiai not only play a role as teachers, but also as cultural figures, moral leaders, and authoritative sources in shaping attitudes towards diversity, although this dimension has not been widely studied in depth. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how kiai implement multicultural values in daily practice, as well as to uncover the philosophical, historical, and sociological foundations behind them. This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type to understand the kiai's experiences and views holistically. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with three kiai, and documentation studies. Then, they were analyzed using interactive thematic analysis with triangulation techniques to ensure data validity. The results show that multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools is not realized in the form of formal subjects, but is internalized through daily social practices mediated by the kiai's exemplary behavior. The implementation of values is carried out concretely through the application of equality in the dormitory system and discipline, the formation of solidarity through communal living across backgrounds, and the management of conflict in an educational manner through dialogue, advice, and educational sanctions. These practices have been proven to shape the students' tolerance, empathy, and ability to manage differences constructively, while strengthening social cohesion both within the Islamic boarding school environment and the surrounding community. This study concludes that Islamic boarding school-based multicultural education is practical, relational, and rooted in Islamic tradition, thus offering an alternative, contextual and sustainable educational model in building a moderate, inclusive, and harmonious society.

A. INTRODUCTION

Historically, the concept of multiculturalism stems from the "melting pot" idea often discussed by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, which emphasized the unification of immigrant cultures into a new culture, namely American culture dominated by White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP) (Junaidi et al., 2024). This theory was later criticized for erasing indigenous cultural identities. As an alternative, Horace Kallen introduced the concept of the "salad bowl," which emphasizes respect for diversity without eroding indigenous identities, allowing each ethnic group to maintain its culture in a pluralistic society. This idea evolved into the theory of cultural pluralism, which emphasizes the existence of public and private spaces for each culture, allowing differences to coexist harmoniously in a democratic society. In the context of globalization, which creates rapid cultural exchange, education is required to be able to manage diversity constructively. However, most studies still place multicultural education within the framework of modern policies and secular approaches, thus paying less attention to models based on religious traditions, particularly in the context of Islamic education (Nadya et al., 2024).

Islamic figures such as Prof. Azyumardi Azra stated that Islamic education has a normative responsibility in building an inclusive, tolerant, and welfare-oriented society. His thoughts are expressed in the concept of *Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which

is not only theological but also serves as a foundation for social ethics in community life. Values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'āruf* (mutual understanding), justice, and respect for differences are fundamental principles in Islamic education relevant to multicultural education (W. M. Hamzah et al., 2022). This is explained in QS. al-Hujurat [49]: 13 and QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 256, which emphasize the importance of recognizing diversity and religious freedom. Thus, multicultural education from an Islamic perspective is not merely a pedagogical strategy, but a theological mandate that integrates spiritual, moral, and social values in building a harmonious life. However, empirical studies specifically examining these principles and the leadership practices of Islamic scholars (*kiai*) in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are still limited (Shaleh et al., 2022).

The discourse on multicultural education has gained momentum in the era of globalization, where education is required not only to transmit knowledge but also to foster inclusive social awareness. Various studies have shown that multicultural education can increase empathy, tolerance, and students' ability to respond wisely to differences (Rizqiyati et al., 2024). However, most emerging approaches still focus on formal curricula and classroom pedagogical strategies. This situation highlights a gap between normative-theoretical approaches and socio-religious practices prevalent in society, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding school-based education, which places greater emphasis on character formation and internalizing values through life experiences.

Understanding this context, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are one of the educational institutions with significant potential for developing multicultural education based on Islamic values. They function not only as educational institutions but also as centers for *da'wah* (Islamic outreach), social outreach, and community empowerment (Agus et al., 2025). The uniqueness of Islamic boarding schools lies in the integration of religious values and social practices that are embedded in the daily lives of their students. In the Madurese context, social realities demonstrate interfaith harmony, such as the presence of the Pamekasan Grand Mosque adjacent to the Maria Ratu Para Rasul Catholic Church, separated by the Arek Lancor Park, a space for social interaction.

This phenomenon reflects values of tolerance that are not merely normative but have become a social practice in community life.

This phenomenon demonstrates that Madurese have long assumed that tolerance is inherent in Islamic values and local wisdom. Tolerance is not a modern construct, but rather part of a value system passed down through Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), families, and social traditions. In this context, *kiai* (Islamic scholars) play a central role as moral figures and religious authorities in instilling these values. Values such as *tasamuh* (compassion), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), and the principles of *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah* (the brotherhood of the Sunni community) serve as the foundation for shaping moderate and inclusive attitudes in society (Khoiriyah, 2023). However, despite the significant role of *kiai*, studies specifically examining how these values are constructed philosophically, historically, and sociologically within the context of multicultural education are still scarce.

Previous research shows that multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools needs to be developed through a multicultural approach and based on equality (Harweli et al., 2024). Other studies also confirm that the charismatic authority of *kiai*

has a significant influence in shaping moderate and tolerant attitudes in Islamic boarding schools (Al-ghifari et al., 2024). However, these studies tend to focus on implementation aspects and have not deeply examined the conceptual dimensions and epistemological foundations of multicultural education from the kiai's perspective, particularly in Madura, which has its own unique socio-cultural characteristics. Thus, there is a clear research gap: the lack of a comprehensive study that integrates historical, philosophical, and sociological perspectives to understand the kiai's views on multicultural education.

This indicates that the kiai's position as an epistemological subject in the discourse of multicultural education has received insufficient attention. In the Madurese context, kiai serve not only as educators but also as interpreters of values and mediators between Islamic teachings and social realities. Therefore, this research is crucial for in-depth examination of how the views of Madurese kiai shape the concept of multicultural education rooted in Islamic values, such as tolerance, justice, and respect for diversity. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the kiai's perspectives from historical, philosophical, and sociological perspectives, while also revealing how these values are implemented in Islamic boarding school educational practices. The results are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of contextual, inclusive, and sustainable Islam-based multicultural education.

B. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study to in-depth examine the role of kiai (Islamic scholars) in implementing multicultural educational values in Madurese Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a holistic, contextual, and in-depth understanding of the kiai's perspectives, experiences, and socio-religious practices in responding to the realities of cultural and social diversity (Ridlo, 2023). Meanwhile, the case study is used to explore in detail the dynamics of kiai leadership, the relationship between the *pesantren* and the community, and the process of integrating Islamic values with local Madurese culture within the context of multicultural education. The data sources for this research consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with three Islamic boarding school kiai: KH. Kholil Yasin, KH. Imam Sutaji, and KH. Muslih Adnan. Participant selection was conducted using purposive sampling, considering several criteria: (1) kiai who play an active role as caretakers of Islamic boarding schools, (2) have experience leading a heterogeneous community of students, and (3) are socially recognized as authoritative figures in their respective regions.

The three kiai were also selected because they represent different Islamic boarding school backgrounds in Madura, thus providing a richer variety of perspectives. In addition to interviews, primary data was also obtained through direct observation of religious, educational, and social activities within the Islamic boarding school environment. Observations focused on daily practices reflecting the values of tolerance, togetherness, and respect for differences, as well as the kiai's relationship with students and the community. Secondary data included Islamic boarding school documents, local historical archives, manuscripts of religious studies and kiai lectures,

and academic literature relevant to the study of Islamic boarding schools, kiai leadership, and multicultural education (Nafisatur, 2024).

Data collection was conducted through participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies (Judijanto et al., 2024). Observations were conducted systematically to capture the social context and actual practices of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools. Interviews aimed to explore the kiai's reflective perspectives on the meaning of diversity, the role of local culture, and strategies for internalizing Islamic values in Madurese society. Documentation studies were used to supplement and verify field data through relevant written and visual sources. The collected data were analyzed using interactive qualitative thematic analysis. The analysis process involved several stages: (1) open coding to identify units of meaning from the field data, (2) axial coding to group codes into conceptually related categories, and (3) selective coding to compile key themes for the study.

The data were then presented in the form of thematic narratives to identify patterns and relationships between categories, and conclusions were drawn through a continuous process of interpretation and verification. The analysis focused on the kiai's role as moral leaders, educators, and cultural mediators in integrating Islamic values with local Madurese culture. Data validity is guaranteed through triangulation of sources and techniques, by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the credibility and consistency of research findings (Ilhami et al., 2024).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Philosophical Views of Islamic Boarding School Kiai in Madura on the Concept of Multicultural Education

The research results show that the philosophical views of Madurese Islamic boarding school kiai on multicultural education are deeply rooted in normative Islamic teachings and the historically ingrained traditions of Islamic boarding school scholarship. Multicultural education is not understood as a new concept born from Western educational discourse or modern state policies, but rather as an intrinsic value in Islam that has long been practiced in Islamic boarding school life (M. Hamzah et al., 2025).

KH. Kholil Yasin firmly stated that multicultural education is part of Islamic teachings that are substantive and transhistorical. In an interview, he emphasized that Islam has, from its very beginning, provided ethical guidelines on how to address differences wisely and with dignity. According to him, the concept of multicultural education cannot be separated from the tradition of classical Islamic scholarship and the social practices of Islamic boarding schools, which view differences as a reality that must be managed, not eliminated. He referred to a very popular expression in Islamic boarding schools, *ikhtilāfu ummatī raḥmah*, which he understood as the theological legitimacy of the diversity of views, backgrounds, and social practices within the community. In his explanation, KH. Kholil Yasin emphasized that differences are not fundamentally the source of social problems. The main problem lies in how humans view and respond to these differences. When differences are understood as a threat to identity, they have the potential to give rise to suspicion, hostility, and social distance. Conversely, when differences are interpreted as God's grace and will, they enrich

human experience and broaden religious horizons. Therefore, multicultural education, in its perspective, is directed at forming inner awareness so that students are able to accept diversity as part of the sunnatullah (Tang et al., 2023).

This philosophical perspective is closely linked to KH. Kholil Yasin's understanding of the essence of education. He does not understand education narrowly as a process of transferring knowledge, but rather as a process of transmitting values, forming morals, and deepening spiritual awareness. In interviews, he refers to the hadith "ballighū 'annī Walau āyah" as the basis for understanding that education is essentially a moral mandate to convey the good values of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In this context, multicultural education is not taught through normative lectures or theoretical concepts alone, but is brought to life through role models, habits, and shared experiences within the Islamic boarding school environment.

A relatively similar view was also expressed by KH. Imam Sutaji. He views multicultural education as a manifestation of Islamic teachings that position humans as dignified beings living in diversity. In an interview, KH. Imam Sutaji emphasized that Islam has from the beginning recognized differences in ethnicity, language, culture, and even religious views as an unavoidable part of God's will. This principle, he said, is widely explained in the books of the Salaf, which serve as the primary reference for Islamic boarding schools. Difference, in the classical Islamic scholarly tradition, is not positioned as a deviation, but rather as a treasure that enriches religious understanding. Philosophically, KH. Imam Sutaji believes that social conflict is not a direct consequence of diversity, but rather from human failure to interpret differences maturely. When differences are understood as a threat to identity, conflict becomes difficult to avoid. Conversely, when differences are accepted as blessings, they become a source of social and spiritual richness. Therefore, multicultural education, from his perspective, is directed at developing ethical and spiritual awareness so that students are able to live side by side with mutual respect (Ekasari et al., 2025).

This view is connected to the educational concept adopted by KH. Imam Sutaji, who views education as an integral process encompassing intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions. Multicultural education, in this context, is not an additional agenda, but rather an inherent part of the mission of Islamic education itself. He emphasized basic Islamic values such as *at-tasāmuh* (tolerance), *at-ta'āwun* (cooperation in goodness), and *at-tawāṣī* (mutual admonition in righteousness) as the foundation of multicultural education that must be internalized through role models and habits, not simply taught cognitively. Meanwhile, KH. Muslih Adnan emphasized the humanitarian and social dimensions of multicultural education. In an interview, he stated that multicultural education is an effort to humanize humans in the context of social and cultural diversity that is the reality of Madurese society. He emphasized that Islam from the beginning has placed differences as a sunnatullah (God's will) that cannot be eliminated but must be managed wisely. Multicultural education, according to him, does not aim to standardize identities, but to build ethical awareness so that individuals are able to live side by side in peace and dignity (Sholihah et al., 2023).

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, KH. Muslih Adnan views education as a process of character building and social awareness. Educational success is not measured solely by mastery of religious knowledge, but by the students' ability to be

wise, humble, and respectful of others who are different. Therefore, multicultural education is not positioned as a separate subject, but rather integrated into the entire Islamic boarding school education system through the exemplary behavior of the kiai, a culture of communal living, and a scholarly tradition open to differing opinions. Philosophically, KH. Muslih Adnan also emphasizes the value of ukhuwwah in its universal meaning. Brotherhood is not limited by shared cultural or regional identity, but is understood as a bond of humanity that transcends primordial barriers. Islamic boarding schools, in his view, are a miniature of an ideal society that brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds and fosters them to live together in a spirit of mutual respect.

Historical Views of Madurese Kiai on the Background of the Concept of Multicultural Education in Madura

KH. Kholil Yasin emphasized that since the early stages of Islamic boarding school development in Madura, diversity has been an inherent part of Islamic boarding school life. He explained that the world of Islamic boarding schools has long been accustomed to coexisting with differences, whether in religious views, social backgrounds, or the origins of students. In an interview, he stated that Madurese Islamic boarding schools have grown as social spaces that naturally bring together various identities without losing their collective bonds as religious communities. According to KH. Kholil Yasin, the historical foundation of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools can be traced back to the tradition of classical Islamic scholarship, particularly through the teaching of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) books. The existence of four authoritative schools of fiqh, along with the diverse opinions of scholars, serves as the first entry point for students to recognize and accept differences. He emphasized that students are not directed to seek a single truth, but rather are trained to understand that Islamic law is born from a contextual process of ijtihad. This intellectual tradition has historically shaped the character of students who are accustomed to ikhtilaf and do not easily judge differences (Fauzi et al., 2025).

More broadly, KH. Kholil Yasin stated that Madurese Islamic boarding schools have long served as spaces for cross-regional and cross-cultural encounters. They have accepted students from various regions across the archipelago, even before the development of the modern education system. He cited a number of prominent Islamic scholars who studied in Madura before moving on to other regions, such as KH. Abdullah Mubarak in Tasikmalaya and KH. Munawwir in Yogyakarta. This historical fact demonstrates that Madurese Islamic boarding schools played a strategic role in building a network of Islamic scholarship across ethnic and geographical boundaries, while also serving as an initial medium for the internalization of multicultural values. This historical narrative is reinforced by prominent Madurese scholars, such as Shaykhona Muhammad Khalil Bangkalan. According to KH. Kholil Yasin, stories of Shaykhona Khalil's openness, wisdom, and spiritual depth continue to be passed down in the collective memory of Islamic boarding schools. These stories not only serve as historical memory but also serve as a source of cultural legitimacy for educational practices that respect diversity to this day. Thus, multicultural education has a historical and symbolic basis in the Madurese Islamic boarding school tradition (Chanifah, 2025).

A relatively similar historical perspective was expressed by KH. Imam Sutaji. He explained that multicultural education in Madura grew gradually alongside the

development of Islamic education in the region. In the early stages, religious education was informal and community-based, taking place in musholla (prayer rooms) or langghar (small mosques) led by village kiai (Islamic religious leaders). This model is known locally as nyantri musengan or nyulok (Islamic boarding school), where the learning process took place without strict social segregation and involved the wider local community. Over time, this informal education model transformed into a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) system with resident students. KH. Imam Sutaji views this phase as a crucial point in the history of Islamic education in Madura. Pesantren functioned not only as institutions for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as social spaces that brought together students from diverse cultural, social, and geographic backgrounds. Students came not only from Madura but also from various regions across the archipelago, and even from abroad. This condition made pesantren a multicultural space from the very beginning of their development. KH. Imam Sutaji emphasized that the ancient Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Madura, particularly those rooted in the tradition of Shaykhona Muhammad Khalil Bangkalan, have long been centers of Islamic scholarship across regions. Students from Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and even Southeast Asia live and study together in a unified environment. This communal life has historically fostered social solidarity that transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries. The students' identity and the bonds of their alma mater serve as unifying factors that suppress the potential for conflict based on primordial identity (Wala et al., 2025).

Furthermore, KH. Imam Sutaji noted that Madurese Islamic boarding schools have historically coexisted harmoniously with non-Muslim communities, particularly the Chinese ethnic group in the Bangkalan region. This social relationship demonstrates that tolerance is not an abstract concept, but rather a long-standing social practice. In the context of Madurese culture, which upholds the principles of Buppa', Babbu', Guru, and Rato, the position of the kiai as a central figure plays a crucial role in maintaining social balance and harmony across ethnicities and religions. Meanwhile, KH. Muslih Adnan placed the historical roots of Madurese multicultural education within a broader context, namely the history of the arrival and development of Islam in Madura. He explained that the process of Islamic da'wah in Madura from the beginning was carried out through an adaptive and dialogical cultural approach. Islam did not arrive by eliminating local culture, but rather integrated Islamic values with local community traditions. This approach, he argued, formed the initial foundation for the growth of an inclusive attitude in the religious life of the Madurese community. KH. Muslih Adnan emphasized that Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) grew out of local traditions such as langghar (houses) and surau (small mosques), which served as centers for religious and social activities. Since their inception, Islamic boarding schools have served as meeting places for people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Students come from diverse regions and social groups, thus historically shaping a pesantren culture that is open to diversity. This is reinforced by the involvement of Madurese kiai (Islamic scholars) in Indonesian and international scholarly networks (Estuningtyas, 2025).

According to KH. Muslih Adnan, many Madurese kiai studied at major Islamic boarding schools in Java, Sumatra, and even the Middle East, bringing home diverse scholarly traditions and educational practices. This exchange of knowledge gave rise to an intellectual and cultural dynamic that enriched the Madurese pesantren education

system. From this perspective, pesantren multiculturalism is the result of a long historical interaction between scholarly and cultural traditions. Furthermore, he highlighted that Madura has historically been a region with high social mobility due to trade, migration, and cross-regional economic relations. This social reality demands ethical mechanisms to manage interactions between groups. In this context, pesantren play a role as institutions that instill values of moderation and tolerance through education contextualized to societal realities.

The Role of Kiai of Madura Islamic Boarding Schools in the Implementation of Multicultural Education

Based on the interview results, KH. Kholil Yasin emphasized that the role of kiai in multicultural education cannot be reduced to merely teaching formal religious knowledge. Kiai, according to him, function simultaneously as moral leaders, directors of the social order of Islamic boarding schools, and guardians of harmonious relations among students. In Madura's social structure, which positions kiai as authoritative and respected figures, Islamic boarding schools are highly effective social spaces for instilling multicultural values through exemplary behavior, institutional policies, and daily life practices. The symbolic authority of kiai allows these values to be accepted and internalized more deeply by students. The implementation of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools, as explained by KH. Kholil Yasin, is realized concretely through the principles of equality and non-discrimination. All students are treated equally without distinction based on region of origin, ethnicity, language, or cultural or socioeconomic background. This principle extends beyond the normative level or written rules, but is evident in the daily practices of Islamic boarding schools, such as the allocation of dormitory rooms, the scheduling of activities, the fulfillment of students' rights and obligations, and the implementation of universally applicable discipline. This pattern of relationships creates a just and inclusive social climate, while simultaneously suppressing the potential for the emergence of a social hierarchy based on primordial identity (Abidin et al., 2025).

Communal life in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) serves as the primary medium for the socialization of multicultural values. Students from various regions live together in a single social space, sharing common routines, from studying and worshipping to working and resting (Andriyani & Zufahji, 2025). From the perspective of the sociology of education, this condition fosters social solidarity that grows from shared life experiences and the intensity of daily interactions. KH. Kholil Yasin emphasized that in this context, differences in background are not viewed as a threat, but rather as a natural part of the dynamics of Islamic boarding school life that enriches the students' social experiences. The process of adaptation and integration occurs naturally through ongoing interaction. Differences in language, customs, and cultural expressions are not forcibly eliminated but gradually merge into a collective identity as students and part of the Islamic boarding school community. Regional identities gradually lose their significance when confronted with a shared identity built through Islamic values, such as ukhuwah (brotherhood), human equality, and brotherhood across social boundaries. These values are consistently instilled by the kiai through teaching, advice, and exemplary attitudes in daily life.

In addressing internal social conflict, KH. Kholil Yasin acknowledged that conflict between students (santri) is an unavoidable reality, especially in

heterogeneous communities. However, conflict is not understood as an educational failure, but rather as part of the students' social maturation process. Conflict resolution is carried out through a gradual and educational approach, starting with personal counseling and moral development, and finally implementing educational sanctions (*ta'zir*) if the conflict has widespread impact. This approach demonstrates that multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools is not only oriented towards creating a false sense of harmony, but also towards fostering social responsibility and moral maturity. A relatively similar view was expressed by KH. Imam Sutaji. Based on interviews, he views the *kiai* as a key actor in managing diversity in Madura, both within the *pesantren* environment and within society. In Madura's social structure, which places the *kiai* as a central figure, the *kiai*'s views, attitudes, and policies have a significant influence in shaping how students and the community understand and respond to differences. Therefore, multicultural education does not run solely through the formal curriculum, but rather through social practices and power relations inherent in the figure of the *kiai* (Rozalina et al., 2022).

Within the Islamic boarding school environment, KH. Imam Sutaji emphasized the consistent application of the principle of equality. The *kiai* (Islamic scholars) do not discriminate against students based on their region of origin or social background. All students are treated equally before the boarding school's rules. This equality is manifested in dormitory management, activity schedules, and the enforcement of universally applicable discipline. This relationship pattern sociologically fosters a sense of justice and gradually erodes social barriers among students that could potentially trigger conflict. Dormitory life becomes the primary space for socialization and internalization of multicultural values. Through shared daily routines, a natural process of integration occurs. KH. Imam Sutaji acknowledged that social conflict, including that stemming from regional fanaticism, cannot be completely avoided. However, such conflict is managed persuasively and educationally to prevent it from developing into social segregation. The *kiai* plays an active role in preventing the formation of regional blocs and guiding students toward a collective awareness of being part of a single Islamic boarding school community.

Outside of Islamic boarding schools, KH. Imam Sutaji views *kiai* as having the moral legitimacy to guide the attitudes of Madurese society in facing social change. In the contemporary Madurese context, characterized by increasing social mobility and globalization, society is increasingly confronted with cultural, ethnic, and interest diversity. In this situation, *kiai* function as guardians of social balance to prevent change from developing into conflict or social disintegration. Meanwhile, the results of interviews with KH. Muslih Adnan reinforce the finding that *kiai* of Madurese Islamic boarding schools have a strategic role as managers of social relations in a multicultural context. According to him, Islamic boarding schools are essentially heterogeneous social spaces, where students come from various cultural backgrounds, languages, and socioeconomic conditions. In this context, *kiai* are responsible for ensuring that these differences do not develop into social segregation or latent conflict.

The primary strategy implemented is upholding the principles of equality and social justice. Islamic boarding school rules are universally enforced and enforced fairly for all students. This relationship pattern fosters a collective awareness that identity as students is more important than regional identity. Social integration is

reinforced through dormitory life, which requires students to share space, facilities, and daily routines. Intense interaction encourages natural adaptation and acculturation, allowing the values of tolerance and mutual respect to be internalized through shared life experiences. At the community level, KH. Muslih Adnan emphasized that kiai (Islamic scholars) are often the primary reference in addressing social issues related to cultural, religious, and group interests. Through lectures, role models, and direct involvement in social life, kiai convey the values of tolerance and moderation contextually. Multicultural education is not presented as an abstract theoretical concept, but rather as part of a living social ethic that is relevant to the realities of society (Bliuc et al., 2022).

Analysis/Discussion

1. Philosophical Views of Islamic Boarding School Kiai in Madura on the Concept of Multicultural Education

Based on the findings of the study above, it is clear that multicultural education, from the perspective of kiai in Madurese Islamic boarding schools, is not understood as a new conceptual construct born from Western educational discourse or modern state education policies, but rather as a normative value deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and the scholarly tradition of Islamic boarding schools. This philosophical perspective asserts that multiculturalism in the context of Islamic boarding schools is intrinsic, transhistorical, and has been internalized in Islamic educational practices since the early stages of their development. This finding challenges the dominant assumption in global literature, which often positions multicultural education as a modern response to the plurality of contemporary society (Riani et al., 2025). Compared with Western models of multicultural education, which tend to be based on formal policies and curricula, the Islamic boarding school approach demonstrates a more cultural and practical character, where multicultural values are embedded in the daily lives of educational communities.

Theoretically, this view aligns with the religion-based approach to multiculturalism, which positions religion not as a source of exclusivism but as an ethical framework for managing differences with dignity. Jalwis's study confirms that religious traditions possess strong normative resources to support the values of justice, equality, and respect for differences (Jalwis et al., 2019). In this context, Madurese Islamic boarding schools represent a model of multicultural education that grew organically from religious tradition, rather than through instrumental conceptual adoption. This aligns with several studies in other Islamic contexts, such as Islamic boarding schools in Java and madrasas in South Asia, which also emphasize the importance of the value of *ikhtilāf* as the basis for ethical diversity. However, the uniqueness of Madurese Islamic boarding schools lies in the strong integration of the authority of the kiai (Islamic cleric), local culture, and social practices, so that differences are understood as a divine law that must be managed ethically. This perspective reinforces the framework of a pluralistic theology of education, which views diversity as part of divine design (Ruslan, 2023).

In the international literature, multicultural education is often understood as a systematic effort to address identity-based structural injustices (Nashihin et al., 2019). However, the findings of this study add a dimension that has received less

attention: the spiritual and ethical dimensions. Compared to secular approaches that emphasize cognitive and policy aspects, Islamic boarding schools emphasize the formation of moral awareness through role models, habituation, and shared life experiences. This demonstrates that the effectiveness of multicultural education is determined not only by the curriculum, but also by the social environment and authoritative figures. Therefore, this model can be replicated in other Islamic educational institutions by strengthening the role of educators as moral role models, creating an inclusive school culture, and integrating multicultural values into daily activities, not just formal learning materials. (Pariyati, 2022).

Furthermore, this research shows that social conflict is not seen as a direct consequence of diversity, but rather as a result of a failure to interpret differences wisely. This perspective aligns with the conflict-sensitive education approach, which emphasizes the importance of reflective capacity in managing conflict (Mahmudah, 2021). Compared with the formal education system, which tends to avoid conflict, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) utilize it as a means of social and moral learning. This approach can be adapted to other contexts by developing dialogue-based conflict resolution mechanisms, character development, and restorative approaches. (Rohaenah et al., 2021). Furthermore, the humanitarian dimension of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools aligns with humanistic multicultural education theory, but with a strengthened theological aspect that links humanitarian values with spiritual responsibility to God.

These findings also demonstrate that multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools operates through the integration of the values of brotherhood and universal human awareness. Compared with global discourse on inclusive education, which often focuses on institutional policies, Islamic boarding schools offer a more contextual, values-based approach and social relations. In the context of globalization and increasing identity polarization, this model holds high relevance. Therefore, practically, the integration of multicultural values in Islamic education can be done through: (1) strengthening the role model of educational leaders, (2) creating a learning environment based on communal life, (3) managing conflicts in an educational manner, and (4) internalizing values through socio-religious practices. This finding confirms that Madurese Islamic boarding schools can be an alternative model of multicultural education that is not only inclusive and moderate, but also deeply rooted in religious traditions, while strengthening the finding that traditional Islamic educational institutions have great potential as agents of peace and social cohesion (Fahmi et al., 2025).

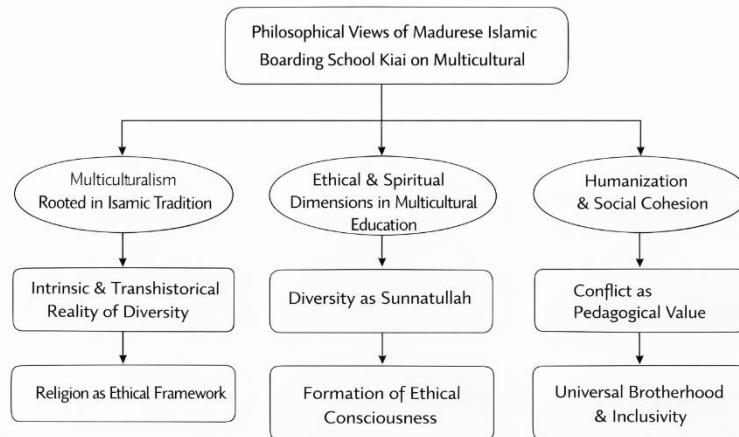


Figure 1 The views of Kiai Madura on the philosophy of the concept of multicultural education

The image illustrates how core values derived from Islamic teachings and Islamic boarding school traditions serve as the primary foundation for shaping the concept of multicultural education. Furthermore, the image demonstrates that multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools is not a stand-alone concept, but rather is integrally woven into philosophy, theology, and daily educational practices. Diversity is understood as divine law (sunnatullah) that must be wisely managed through ethical and spiritual approaches, and realized through exemplary behavior, habituation, and communal life within the Islamic boarding school environment. Therefore, this image is expected to strengthen readers' understanding and provide a more comprehensive picture of how Islamic boarding school kiai (Islamic scholars) build multicultural education that is inclusive, humanistic, and oriented toward social harmony.

2. Historical Views of Madurese Kiai on the Background of the Concept of Multicultural Education in Madura

Multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools in Madura has strong historical roots and is inseparable from the dynamics of classical Islamic education and social interactions within Madurese society since the early stages of Islamization. These findings demonstrate that diversity is not a new phenomenon arising from globalization or educational modernization, but rather has become an inherent part of Islamic boarding school life as religious, social, and cultural institutions. From their inception, Islamic boarding schools have functioned as social spaces that unite diverse ethnic, geographic, and academic backgrounds without diminishing the collective bond as a religious community. These findings align with studies in the context of Islamic boarding schools in Java and Islamic educational institutions in South Asia, which also demonstrate that the practice of living together across backgrounds has long been the foundation for fostering inclusive attitudes, even before the term multiculturalism was introduced into modern academic discourse.

heoretically, these findings align with the historical multiculturalism approach, which views multiculturalism not merely as a modern policy but as the result of a

long socio-historical process (Harsyah, 2023). In the context of Islamic boarding schools in Madura, multiculturalism grew organically through educational practices, scholarly networks, and the communal life of students. This expands the dominant understanding in international literature, which often positions multicultural education as an institutional response to contemporary plural societies, particularly in Western countries (Hunduma et al., 2024). Compared to Western models that tend to be based on formal policies and curricula, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) demonstrate a more contextual and sustainable model based on tradition and social experience.

One important finding of this study is the role of classical Islamic scholarly traditions, particularly the teaching of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), as the historical foundation of multicultural education. The existence of four recognized schools of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and the diverse views of scholars provide an initial medium for students to recognize, understand, and accept differences. This tradition of *ikhtilāf* (religious dialogue) forms a framework that rejects the absolutism of a single truth and emphasizes context, argumentation, and the ethics of difference. From a global educational perspective, this practice can be compared to the concept of epistemic pluralism in modern multicultural education, which emphasizes the recognition of multiple ways of understanding truth. Therefore, other Islamic educational institutions can replicate this practice by strengthening the teaching of comparative schools of thought or Islamic thought as a means of fostering pluralistic awareness.

These findings are relevant to a study in Educational Philosophy and Theory, which asserts that sustainable multicultural education must focus on developing students' epistemic capacity to live with differences, not simply recognizing diverse identities (Zarkasyi, 2021). Madurese Islamic boarding schools, through their traditions of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *ikhtilāf* (religious understanding), have historically developed these capacities long before the term multicultural education was introduced into modern academic discourse. Compared with modern formal education, which often emphasizes cognitive aspects, Islamic boarding schools demonstrate that internalizing values through scholarly traditions can produce a deeper and more reflective understanding of diversity.

Beyond the epistemic dimension, this study also shows that Madurese Islamic boarding schools have long served as spaces for cross-regional and cross-cultural encounters. The presence of students from various regions across the archipelago positions Islamic boarding schools as important nodes in the network of Islamic scholarship across ethnicities and geographies. This network not only strengthens the transmission of religious knowledge but also serves as a medium for the internalization of multicultural values through shared life experiences. These findings reinforce Alam's argument that traditional religious institutions in Southeast Asia play a crucial role in fostering locally based religious cosmopolitanism (Alam et al., 2021). Practically, this model can be adopted by other educational institutions by creating spaces for intensive cross-cultural interaction through dormitory systems or student exchange programs.

Historical narratives about great Madurese scholars also play a symbolic role in strengthening the legitimacy of multicultural education. Stories of the scholars' exemplary conduct serve not only as collective memory but also as moral capital

that frames educational practices to this day. In sociological educational theory, this kind of collective memory functions as a mechanism for the reproduction of values across generations (Короленка, 2024). Therefore, other Islamic educational institutions can integrate narratives of exemplary local figures as a pedagogical strategy to strengthen the values of tolerance and cultural inclusivity.

The findings of this study also indicate that the development of Islamic education in Madura occurred gradually, from an informal, community-based model to a *pesantren* system with resident students. This transformation marked a shift from individualized education to a more socially complex, communal education. During this phase, *pesantren* became multicultural social spaces that brought together diverse identities in everyday life. This perspective aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes that social values are learned through collective interaction and experience (Afkarina et al., 2025). This suggests that effective multicultural education needs to be designed based on social experiences, not simply through the transfer of knowledge in the classroom.

The communal life of students from diverse backgrounds has historically fostered social solidarity that transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries. The identities of students and their *pesantren* alumni serve as superordinate identities, suppressing potential conflicts based on primordial identities. These findings align with the theory of common in-group identity, which states that the formation of a collective identity can reduce intergroup prejudice (Senn et al., 2025). In a practical context, this approach can be replicated by building a collective identity based on shared values in other educational institutions, such as national, religious, or universal humanitarian values.

Another important aspect is the historical relationship between Madurese Islamic boarding schools and non-Muslim communities, particularly ethnic Chinese. These findings indicate that tolerance in Madura is not an abstract normative concept, but rather a long-standing social practice. The position of the *kiai* (Islamic cleric) as a central figure plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony. This aligns with Rahman's research, which shows that the moral authority of religious leaders plays a strategic role in managing diversity (Rahman et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening the role of religious leaders as social mediators is an important recommendation in the development of community-based multicultural education.

This research also places the historical roots of Madurese multicultural education within the context of adaptive and dialogical Islamic *da'wah*. The Islamization of Madura occurs through the integration of Islamic values with local culture, not through the rejection of tradition. This approach aligns with the concept of vernacular Islam (Manaf et al., 2025). In the educational context, this approach can be applied by integrating local values into the curriculum and educational practices, resulting in a multicultural education model that is contextual and readily accepted by the community.

The involvement of Madurese *kiai* (Islamic scholars) in national and international scientific networks contributes to the dynamics of Islamic boarding school education. This cross-regional exchange of knowledge fosters a plurality of educational practices and Islamic thought. This finding reinforces the importance of translocal Islamic networks in shaping moderate Islam in Southeast Asia

(Munandar, 2025). Practically, strengthening networks between Islamic educational institutions can be a strategy for broadening multicultural perspectives and enriching educational practices.

The high social mobility of Madurese society due to trade and migration is also a crucial factor in the development of multicultural education. This reality demands ethical mechanisms to manage interactions between groups. In this context, Islamic boarding schools function as institutions that instill values of moderation, tolerance, and social responsibility. This finding is relevant to the global discourse on education for social cohesion (Hughes et al., 2023). Therefore, the Islamic boarding school education model can be replicated by emphasizing values-based education, strengthening social interaction, and the active role of moral leaders in building harmony in an increasingly pluralistic society.

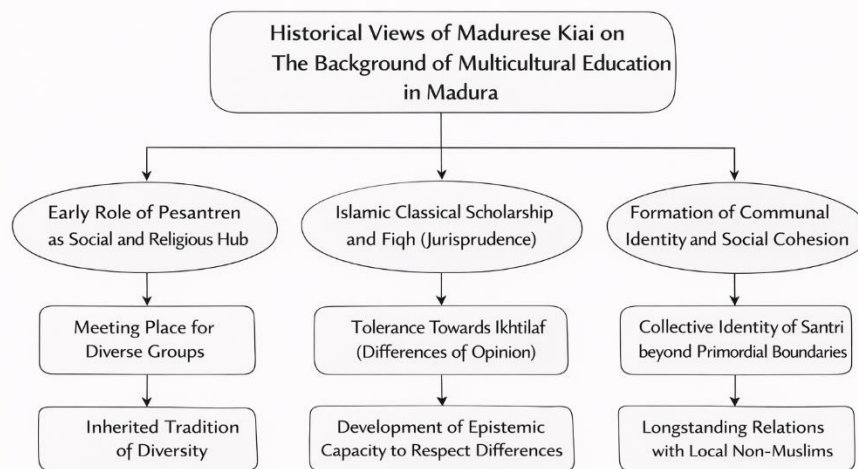


Figure 2 History of Multicultural Education According to Kiai Madura

Based on this image, this historical dimension is reinforced by the tradition of Islamic scholarship, particularly in the teaching of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), which introduces students to the diversity of schools of thought (mazhab) and the practice of ikhtilāf (discussion). This tradition indirectly shapes a perspective that is open to differences and rejects claims of a single truth. In this context, Islamic boarding schools can be understood as learning spaces that, from the outset, have developed an epistemic awareness of plurality, where differences are not only accepted but also used as a means to deepen religious understanding. Furthermore, the existence of Islamic boarding schools as centers of interregional scientific networks makes them meeting points for diverse cultures and social experiences, allowing multicultural values to be internalized through daily interactions among students from diverse backgrounds.

On a broader level, the historical perspective of the kiai also positions Islamic boarding schools as institutions that not only transmit knowledge but also foster social cohesion through communal experiences and collective memory. Living together in Islamic boarding schools fosters a collective identity as students capable of transcending primordial boundaries, while simultaneously strengthening social solidarity. On the other hand, the historical relationship between Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and the surrounding community,

including non-Muslim communities, demonstrates that the value of tolerance has long been practiced in social life. The adaptive and dialogical process of Islamization, along with the involvement of kiai (Islamic scholars) in extensive scholarly networks, further enriches this multicultural foundation. Thus, multicultural education in Madura can be understood as the result of a complex historical interaction between scholarly traditions, social dynamics, and religious values that have been continuously reproduced across generations.

3. **The Role of Kiai of Madura Islamic Boarding Schools in the Implementation of Multicultural Education**

The findings of this study indicate that the role of the kiai (Islamic scholars) in multicultural education in Madurese Islamic boarding schools is multidimensional and cannot be reduced solely to that of a formal religious teacher. The kiai functions simultaneously as a moral leader, a manager of the pesantren's social order, and a key actor in maintaining harmonious relationships between individuals within a heterogeneous community. Within Madurese's social structure, which positions the kiai as an authoritative figure with strong symbolic and cultural legitimacy, the pesantren serves as a highly effective social space for internalizing multicultural values through role models, institutional policies, and daily practices. This symbolic authority ensures that multicultural education is not only delivered cognitively but also enacted in concrete social relations. These findings align with studies of Islamic boarding schools in Java and Malaysia, which demonstrate that ulama (Islamic scholars) play a central role in shaping an inclusive culture through social practices, although in some other contexts, this role is more formalized in the curriculum (Gaus, 2021).

Theoretically, these findings align with the transformative multicultural education perspective, which emphasizes that effective multicultural education is not only realized through a formal curriculum but must be embedded in the power structures, social relations, and culture of educational institutions. In the context of Madurese Islamic boarding schools, the figure of the kiai (Islamic cleric) plays a role as a medium for value transformation due to his strategic position in shaping the norms, behavior, and moral orientation of students. These findings expand international literature, which has previously focused more on the role of formal state institutions in the implementation of multicultural education. This implementation is evident through the principles of equality and non-discrimination consistently applied in Islamic boarding school life. Compared with Western models of multicultural education, which tend to be policy- and curriculum-based, the Islamic boarding school approach is more about lived values, resulting in deeper internalization. To replicate this model, other Islamic educational institutions can adopt strategies such as strengthening exemplary moral leadership, developing inclusive institutional policies, and creating a social environment that allows for equal interaction among students.

From a sociological perspective, this relationship pattern reflects the principle of institutional equality, namely equality produced through institutional systems and policies. Communal life in Islamic boarding schools serves as the primary medium for the socialization of multicultural values, where students from diverse backgrounds live together and engage in similar activities (Martínez-abad et al., 2025). This intense interaction fosters social solidarity based on collective

experience, not uniformity of identity. This finding supports the contact hypothesis, which states that intensive interaction can reduce social prejudice. However, unlike modern formal schools where interaction is limited, Islamic boarding schools provide a sustainable, shared living space. Therefore, a practice that could be replicated is the development of a dormitory system or community-based program (boarding system) that allows for intensive and equal cross-cultural interaction

These findings support the contact hypothesis in multicultural studies, which states that intensive and equal interaction between individuals from different backgrounds can reduce prejudice and strengthen social cohesion (Mckeown et al., 2025). However, unlike the often fragmented context of modern formal education, Madurese Islamic boarding schools provide a sustainable shared living space, allowing for a deeper and more long-term internalization of tolerance. The students' regional identities gradually lose their significance when confronted with a shared identity built on Islamic values, such as brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*), human equality, and brotherhood across social boundaries. These values are consistently instilled by the *kiai* (Islamic scholars) through teaching, advice, and exemplary behavior. Within the framework of social identity theory, this process can be understood as the formation of a superordinate identity that can reduce the potential for intergroup conflict (Froehlich et al., 2024). Madurese Islamic boarding schools function as spaces for the production of collective identities that transcend ethnic and regional boundaries.

This research also shows that internal social conflict is not viewed as a failure of multicultural education, but rather as part of the social maturation process. The conflict resolution approach is educational, using advice, moral guidance, and even educational sanctions. This approach aligns with the restorative education paradigm, which positions conflict as a means of social learning. Unlike many modern education systems that tend to avoid conflict, Islamic boarding schools manage it as part of the educational process. The practical implication is that other educational institutions can develop value-based conflict resolution mechanisms, such as ethics-based mediation, reflective dialogue, and character building, rather than just an administrative punishment approach.

The role of the *kiai* also demonstrates the relevance of the theory of moral authority, in which religious leaders serve as sources of value legitimacy in society. In the Madurese context, *kiai* are not only educators but also social mediators, bridging traditional values with the challenges of modernity. This aligns with studies in various Muslim countries that show that local religious authorities play a crucial role in fostering moderation and tolerance (Nashrullah et al., 2023). However, the uniqueness of Madurese Islamic boarding schools lies in the strong integration of moral authority and daily educational practices. Therefore, other educational institutions can optimize the role of central figures (principals, senior teachers, or religious leaders) as role models in internalizing multicultural values, rather than simply acting as educational administrators

The *kiai*'s approach to multicultural education is not based on technical teaching, but on the internalization of values through social practice and direct interaction. Forums such as religious study groups, lectures, and social engagement serve as effective means of conveying values of tolerance and

harmony. These findings align with research on religious moderation in Indonesia, which emphasizes the importance of cultural and relational approaches in fostering inclusive attitudes. Compared with a solely curriculum-based approach, this model is more contextual and readily accepted by the community (Rahmat et al., 2025). Therefore, a strategy that can be replicated is the integration of multicultural education in non-formal activities such as community discussions, religious activities, and community service programs.

Outside of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), kiai play a strategic role as guardians of social balance in the face of changes caused by globalization and social mobility. Through exemplary behavior and direct involvement, the values of tolerance and moderation are transmitted contextually. These findings enrich the global discourse on community-based multicultural education, which emphasizes the importance of local actors in building social cohesion. Compared with educational models centered on formal institutions, community-based approaches, such as those in Madura, have proven more adaptive to social realities (Karim, 2026). Therefore, implementation in other contexts can be achieved through collaboration between educational institutions, religious leaders, and the community to make multicultural education a living social ethic, not merely an academic concept.

Tabel 1 The role of Madurese Kiai in multicultural education

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Role of Kiai</i>	<i>Implementation in Practice</i>	<i>Impact on Multicultural Education</i>
<i>Leadership & Authority</i>	Moral and spiritual leader with strong legitimacy	Guiding norms, values, and behavior of santri	Multicultural values are internalized as lived ethics
<i>Institutional Management</i>	Regulator of pesantren social system	Applying equality in rules, discipline, and daily life	Promotes fairness and prevents discrimination
<i>Value Internalization</i>	Agent of ethical and cultural transmission	Teaching through advice, sermons, and role modeling	Builds tolerance, inclusivity, and mutual respect
<i>Social Interaction & Identity</i>	Facilitator of communal life and identity formation	Encouraging shared living and Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwwah)	Strengthens social cohesion and reduces identity conflict
<i>Conflict Resolution & Social Role</i>	Mediator and community leader	Using restorative approaches and engaging with society	Develops conflict management skills and social harmony

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that multicultural education, from the perspective of Madurese kiai, is a values-based educational practice that grows out of Islamic traditions in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and is internalized through moral leadership and social relations within the community. Multicultural education is not positioned as a separate pedagogical tool or merely an institutional policy, but rather as a socio-religious ethos brought to life through the exemplary conduct of the kiai, the communal life of the *pesantren*, and the social practices of Madurese society. These findings demonstrate that the symbolic legitimacy and moral authority of the kiai play a key role in shaping inclusive, tolerant, and civilized attitudes, both within the *pesantren* environment and in broader social life. Practically, these findings suggest that strengthening multicultural education in Islamic educational institutions requires prioritizing exemplary leadership, an inclusive institutional culture, and equal social interactions as key strategies, rather than solely developing a formal curriculum.

Theoretically, this research contributes to enriching the discourse on multicultural education by presenting a non-Western, faith-based perspective that has been relatively marginalized in global literature. These findings emphasize that multicultural education cannot be reduced to curricular dimensions or state policy, but must be understood as a socio-cultural process involving local actors, religious values, and community traditions. In this context, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and Islamic religious teachers (*kyai*) can be positioned as models of community-based multicultural education deeply rooted in local wisdom and Islamic spirituality. The policy implications of these findings are the need to integrate community-based approaches into the broader Islamic education system, such as through strengthening boarding-based programs, involving religious leaders as agents of social education, and developing educational policies that encourage the practice of equality, dialogue, and religious moderation in students' daily lives.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations that open up opportunities for further research. First, future studies should develop a cross-regional comparative approach to examine the extent to which patterns of Islamic boarding school-based multicultural education in Madura are similar to or different from practices in other regions of Indonesia and within the context of the global Muslim community. Second, further research can combine qualitative approaches with quantitative or mixed methods to measure the long-term impact of multicultural education on alumni tolerance, social cohesion, and adaptability to diversity in society. Third, it is important to explore the dynamics of multicultural education in the context of digital transformation and globalization, particularly regarding how the authority of kiai adapts to changing patterns of authority in the digital space. Finally, future research is expected to be able to formulate an implementative model of *pesantren*-based multicultural education that can be replicated more widely in various Islamic educational institutions, so that its contribution is not only conceptual but also applicable in addressing the challenges of the plurality of contemporary society.

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