

Date Received : May 2026
Date Revised : August 2026
Date Accepted : August 2026
Date Published : August 2026

IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN PESANTREN IN POLEWALI MANDAR REGENCY

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Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
<p>Multicultural Education; Islamic Boarding Schools; Educational Model; Religious Moderation.</p>	<p>Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are Islamic educational institutions with significant potential for fostering tolerance within a multicultural society. However, studies on multicultural education in pesantren remain largely normative and confined to curricular aspects, without adequate empirical grounding. This study analyzes the model of multicultural education in pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency through three aspects: thought, content, and educational methods. A qualitative descriptive case study design was employed across three pesantren with distinct religious-organizational affiliations Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Parappe, Pondok Pesantren DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang, and Pondok Pesantren Al-Ikhlas Lampoko. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants (pesantren leaders and education-division managers), non-participant observation of student activities, documentation, and literature review over approximately six months of fieldwork. Data were analyzed using an interactive model of reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification, with validity established through source and method triangulation. The findings show that multicultural education in pesantren is not constructed as a separate subject but is internalized through three interrelated pathways: Islamic thought that regards diversity as a divine order (sunnatullah), curricular content that integrates pluralistic values into the teaching of creed, jurisprudence, and ethics, and classical teaching methods (sorogan, bandongan, halaqah, muqāranah) enriched by the exemplary conduct of kyai/ustadz and the collective life of students. These three aspects converge within the pesantren's social ecosystem, shaping a multicultural student character marked by tolerance, fairness, and inclusiveness. The findings affirm that the pesantren's multicultural education model is contextual and transformative, reinforcing its position as a strategic agent in strengthening religious moderation grounded in Islamic values.</p>

A. INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a fundamental characteristic of Indonesian society that requires an educational system capable of instilling values of tolerance and respect for difference. Within the context of Islamic education, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) occupy a strategic position because they not only carry out a pedagogical function but also shape the social and moral order of students (santri) who come from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds (Afista, Hawari, & Sumbulah, 2021). A bibliometric study of pesantren literature in the Scopus database confirms that the issues of religious moderation and multiculturalism constitute one of the fastest-growing research clusters over the past decade (Gazali & Budiana, 2023), indicating both the academic urgency of this topic and the space it opens for contextual studies at the level of specific pesantren.

A number of earlier studies have confirmed that pesantren embody values of pluralism and tolerance, albeit with differing emphases. Basnang Said (2011) focused his analysis on students' positive perceptions of the meaning of pluralism and the need to transmit moderate Islamic ideas into the secondary education curriculum. In line with this, Afifuddin (2013) found that pesantren in South Sulawesi respond to diversity in a positive and constructive manner as part of a strategy to prevent religious radicalism. St. Rodliyah (2022) affirmed pesantren as a national role model for multicultural education, while Burga and Damapolii (2022) showed that the strengthening of religious moderation in pesantren rooted in local culture takes place through everyday tradition rather than solely through the formal curriculum. Similar findings were reported by Maunah, Habibi, and Pratiwi (2024) at Pesantren Ulul Albab Yogyakarta, which identified the internalization of moderation values through the traditions of sorogan and communal work (roan) as the non-curricular pathway that is in fact most effective in shaping students' tolerant attitudes. At the institutional level, studies by Damapolii (2011) on Pesantren IMMIM Makassar and Rama (2003) on Pesantren As'adiyah Sengkang show that pesantren reform has generally focused on curriculum and management, without yet paying much attention to how thought, content, and educational method are interconnected to form a single, coherent model.

From this mapping, a fairly clear *research gap* emerges: most earlier studies remain partial in nature some emphasizing normative-ideological aspects (Said, 2011; Afifuddin, 2013), others focusing solely on curricular aspects (Niswatin Faoziah, 2016; Sappe, 2017), and others on institutional aspects (Damapolii, 2011; Rama, 2003) without integrating the three into a single model framework grounded in explicit field data. Research on pesantren in the West Sulawesi region, particularly Polewali Mandar Regency, an area with a high degree of ethnic diversity and religious-organizational affiliation (Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Hidayatullah, and Wahdah Islamiyah), also remains scarce (Nafiuddin & Maharani, 2024; Nabilla, 2025).

Based on this gap, this article aims to analyze the model of multicultural education in pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency by integrating three aspects, namely: (1) the multicultural thought underlying the implementation of pesantren education; (2) the educational content containing multicultural values; and (3) the educational methods used to internalize these values into students' daily lives. The novelty of this article lies in its presentation of empirical data drawn directly from the field interviews with pesantren leaders/caretakers, observation of student activities, and

curriculum documentation synthesized into a conceptual model of multicultural pesantren education that is contextual to the socio-religious character of West Sulawesi.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a *descriptive case study* design, intended to provide an in-depth picture of the multicultural education model as actually practiced in pesantren. The analysis was combined with pedagogical and sociological perspectives to understand how multicultural values are shaped through educational thought, content, and method.

The study was conducted in Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi Province, which is recorded as having 29 pesantren with diverse religious-organizational affiliations (Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Hidayatullah, and Wahdah Islamiyah). From this population, three pesantren were purposively selected as research loci, namely Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Parappe (Campalagian Subdistrict), Pondok Pesantren DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang (Binuang Subdistrict), and Pondok Pesantren Al-Ikhlas Lampoko (Campalagian Subdistrict). The three were selected based on the following criteria: (a) having students with heterogeneous regional backgrounds; (b) representing different variants of pesantren educational models (a combination of formal and salaf/traditional education); and (c) being willing to provide open research access. Field data collection took place over approximately six months, with an intensive interview period from 25–30 July 2023.

Key informants were selected purposively based on the criteria of holding a strategic position in the management of pesantren education and having a sufficient length of service to understand the dynamics of daily pesantren life. Table 1 summarizes the profiles of the four key informants whose data are used in this article.

No	Name & Position	Pesantren (Subdistrict)	Data Focus	Interview Date
1	Muhammad Zaky (Advisor)	Ponpes Salafiyah Parappe (Campalagian)	Policy on admitting students from various regions	25 July 2023
2	Irwan, S.Pd.I., M.Pd. (Caretaker)	Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang (Binuang)	Pesantren culture & teacher exemplary conduct	27 & 29 July 2023
3	Abd. Hamid, S.Hum., M.Pd. (Head of Education and Teaching Division)	Ponpes Al-Ikhlas Lampoko (Campalagian)	Curriculum & Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching materials	28 July 2023
4	Rusman Syam, S.Pd.I., M.H. (Chairman of the	Ponpes Salafiyah Parappe (Campalagian)	Institutional policy of the pesantren	30 July 2023

No	Name & Position	Pesantren (Subdistrict)	Data Focus	Interview Date
	Daily Management Board)			

Table 1. Profile of the Key Research Informants

In addition to interviews with these key informants, the researcher also conducted unsystematic, spontaneous observations of students' daily activities — such as independent study, congregational worship, khitobah (public-speaking) activities, sports-and-arts week (porseni), and dormitory interactions as supplementary data to strengthen triangulation. Primary data from a wider range of teachers (ustadz) and students also formed part of the umbrella research (dissertation), but the direct quotations presented in this article are limited to the four key informants above, together with field observation results whose sources can be traced.

The data collection techniques used in this study were as follows:

- a. *In-depth interviews* (semi-structured), directed at pesantren leaders/caretakers and education-division managers, to explore the multicultural educational thought, content, and methods applied.
- b. Unsystematic and spontaneous observation of student activities in the dormitory, mosque, classroom, and joint activities (khitobah, porseni, communal work).
- c. Documentation study of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, the textbooks/reference works (kitab) used, and the pesantren's institutional documents (bylaws/AD-ART).
- d. Literature study to strengthen the conceptual foundation and to compare field findings with previous research.

The data analysis technique followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman through three stages: (1) data reduction, i.e., classifying all interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents into three thematic categories (thought, content, method); (2) data display, i.e., organizing the findings of each category narratively and tabularly to identify patterns and interrelationships between aspects; and (3) conclusion drawing/verification, i.e., synthesizing the three thematic categories into a single conceptual model that is cross-verified across data sources and across pesantren (Sugiyono, 2013).

The validity of the data was tested through source triangulation (comparing accounts from informants across the three pesantren) and method triangulation (comparing interview results with observation and documentation). This study also satisfies the four criteria of qualitative data validity: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Multicultural Thought in Pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency

Multicultural thought in pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency stems from the awareness that pesantren function not only as institutions for transmitting Islamic knowledge, but also as social institutions living amid a plural society. From this perspective, the pesantren is understood as a miniature multicultural society that

demands the capacity for adaptation, dialogue, and cooperation among different individuals.

Field findings concretely confirm this thinking. At Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Parappe, students come not only from the area surrounding the pesantren but also from various regions across Sulawesi and Kalimantan, and even from Papua.

“Our students come not only from the area around the pesantren, but also from various regions Sulawesi and Kalimantan and some even from Papua.” (Muhammad Zaky, Advisor of Ponpes Salafiyah Parappe, interview 25 July 2023).

This principle of openness is further affirmed by the Chairman of the Daily Management Board of the same pesantren:

“Whoever comes to the pesantren, as long as they intend to study, the pesantren will open its doors as widely as possible for that student.” (Rusman Syam, Chairman of the Daily Management Board of Ponpes Salafiyah Parappe, interview 30 July 2023).

This inclusive recruitment policy applies without regard to a prospective student's region of origin, ethnicity, language, economic condition, or social background, so that the pesantren naturally becomes a space for cross-cultural encounter.

Nevertheless, multicultural thought in pesantren is generally not articulated as a formal concept explicitly taught to students, but is instead practiced implicitly in daily life, as explained by the caretaker of Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang:

“Even though the concept of multiculturalism is not taught directly to the students, they already practice it. Simply put, being multicultural means being able to respect existing rules and being conscious not to disturb others, as well as setting boundaries around openness and conduct.” (Irwan, Caretaker of Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang, interview 27 July 2023).

This statement reinforces the argument that multicultural thought in pesantren is practice-based rather than doctrinal-textual, in line with the findings of Maunah et al. (2024), who identified the non-curricular pathway as the most effective vehicle for instilling moderation values in pesantren. The implication is that pesantren strive not only to produce individually pious students, but also to cultivate social piety and the capacity to live together peacefully, fairly, and productively within a plural society.

2. Content of the Multicultural Education Model in Pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency

The content of multicultural education in pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency is designed and developed through the integration of the national curriculum, the pesantren's local curriculum, and the tradition of teaching both classical (salaf) and contemporary (khalaf) religious texts. This integration shows that pesantren do not position themselves as institutions isolated from developments in national education,

but instead seek to combine the distinctive traditions of the pesantren with the demands of the times.

The Head of the Education and Teaching Division of Ponpes Al-Ikhlas Lampoko explained in detail the values embedded in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum used:

“There are values such as equality and solidarity, flexibility in accepting differences, mutual understanding, mutual respect, mutual support, the principles of freedom, justice, equal rights and obligations, gentleness, virtue, peace, and a willingness to collaborate in various fields.” (Abd. Hamid, Head of Education and Teaching Division, Ponpes Al-Ikhlas Lampoko, interview 28 July 2023).

In the fields of fiqh and *usul fiqh*, students are introduced to the diversity of scholarly opinions, both within a single school of thought (*mazhab*) and across different schools. This approach trains students to understand difference as part of the dynamics of Islamic scholarship, which is expected to foster a scientific, open attitude that does not readily blame others merely because of differing opinions. Meanwhile, moral education (*akhlak*) occupies a central position in shaping students' character: honesty, fairness, empathy, social concern, and respect for others. Thus, the content of the multicultural education model in pesantren shows an orientation that focuses not only on cognitive achievement but also on the formation of attitudes and character, affirming that pesantren view education as a process of forming the whole human being.

3. Method of the Multicultural Education Model in Pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency

The methods of multicultural education in pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency are implemented through a combination of the pesantren's traditional teaching methods and a more dialogical pedagogical approach. Classical methods such as *sorogan* and *bandongan* (*wetonan*) are still maintained because they carry strong historical and pedagogical value in fostering closeness between teacher and student, as explained by one informant:

“Indeed, in bandongan there is very little discussion between the Kyai and the students, but this method alone is not enough; it is accompanied by sorogan, which spurs the students' active engagement.” (Interview with the Caretaker of Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang, 27 July 2023)

The pesantren does not stop at one-directional learning patterns. This method is enriched with a dialogical approach through *muqāranah* (comparative discussion of opinions), which opens space for students' active participation:

“Students individually study the classical texts (kitab kuning) that address these religious questions, after which the discussion is guided by a discussion leader acting as moderator.” (Interview with the Caretaker of Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang, 27 July 2023).

The exemplary conduct and fairness of teachers (*ustadz*) are key factors in internalizing multicultural values through teaching methods. The informant

emphasized the importance of teachers' fair treatment across the dimensions of language, age, and gender:

“A teacher must have an attitude of respecting linguistic diversity and must practice these values within the educational environment, in order to cultivate in students a spirit of always respecting others, even those who speak a different language or dialect.” (Interview with the Caretaker of Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang, 27 July 2023).

Beyond classroom interaction, pesantren life as a whole is designed as a space for learning by doing. This is observable in the khitobah activities and sports-and-arts week (porseni) at Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang, where students from various regions perform the traditional arts of their respective home regions:

“Among the performances most frequently staged are regional dances and dramas based on regional folk stories. Everything is prepared over several days so that the performance is flawless, and the costumes used closely resemble the originals.” (Observation of khitobah/porseni activities, Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang)

Daily interactions among students from diverse backgrounds in the dormitory, mosque, and classroom become an effective social laboratory for cultivating tolerant attitudes, empathy, and cooperation. Thus, the methods of multicultural education in pesantren aim not only to transfer knowledge, but also to shape inclusive and moderate student personalities through sustained collective experience.

4. Multicultural Education Model: Integration of Thought, Content, and Method

The three aspects presented above thought, content, and method do not stand alone, but are interconnected and converge into a single social ecosystem of the pesantren that collectively shapes students' multicultural character. Table 2 summarizes the integration of these three aspects based on the field findings, before they are synthesized into the conceptual model in Figure 1.

Model Aspect	Multicultural Value	Field Implementation Form	Data Source
Thought	Equality of origin; non-discrimination; diversity as sunnatullah (divine order)	Admission of students from various regions (Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Papua) without regard to ethnicity, language, or economic condition	Interviews with the Advisor & Chairman of the Daily Management Board, Ponpes Salafiyah Parappe

Model Aspect	Multicultural Value	Field Implementation Form	Data Source
Content	Pluralism, equality, solidarity, and justice within the PAI curriculum	Creed (akidah), fiqh (diversity of scholarly opinion), and ethics (akhlak) content emphasizing respect for difference	Interview with the Head of Education Division, Ponpes Al-Ikhlās Lampoko
Method	Exemplary conduct & fairness of teachers; dialogical openness	Bandongan combined with sorogan; muqāranah with a discussion moderator; teachers acting fairly across language, age, and gender	Interview with the Caretaker, Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang
Ecosystem / Culture	Collective symbolic space; social solidarity	Dormitory, mosque, and classroom function as both physical and cultural spaces; khitobah and porseni activities showcase arts from across regions	Observation of activities at Ponpes DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang

Table 2. Integration of Multicultural Values in the Pesantren Education Model

The synthesis of these three aspects produces the pesantren multicultural education model illustrated in Figure 1. This model shows that multicultural thought, content, and method converge in the pesantren's social ecosystem and symbolic spaces namely the dormitory, mosque, classroom, and the kyai's residence which function simultaneously as physical and cultural spaces. It is through this ecosystem that multicultural values are continuously internalized into students' character, making them tolerant, fair, inclusive, and moderate.

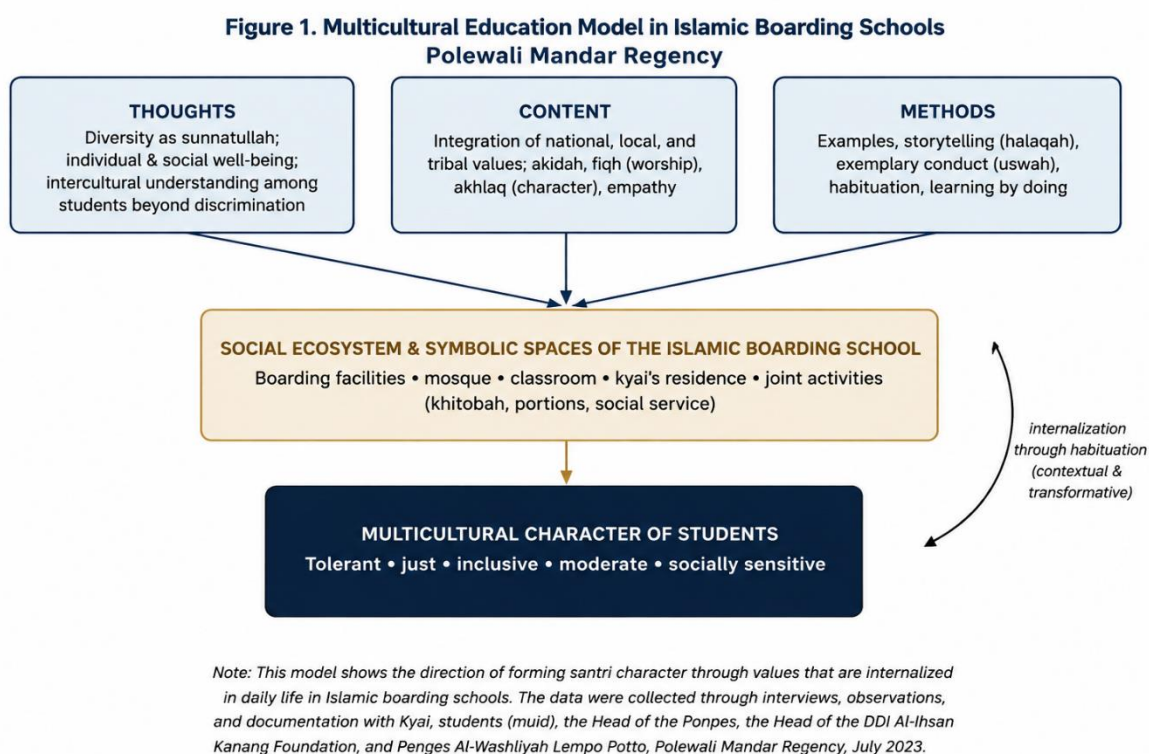


Figure 1. Multicultural Education Model in Pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency

This model is contextual because it is shaped by the distinctive socio-religious configuration of West Sulawesi (the diversity of religious-organizational affiliations among NU, Muhammadiyah, Hidayatullah, and Wahdah Islamiyah), and it is transformative because multicultural values are not taught in a static, doctrinal manner, but are continually reshaped through students' ongoing social experience within pesantren life.

5. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study both reinforce and enrich a number of previous studies. In line with Aly Abdullah (2011), who asserted that multicultural education in pesantren is realized through everyday practice rather than the formal curriculum, this study shows a similar pattern in the West Sulawesi context, with the additional evidence that this pattern is consistent across three pesantren with different organizational affiliations. In contrast to Afifuddin (2013), who focused on the narrative of radicalism prevention, this study finds that the acceptance of diversity in pesantren in Polewali Mandar is driven more by the practical needs of managing students from various regions than by security motives alone.

The finding regarding the central role of the exemplary conduct of the kyai/ustadz is consistent with Burga and Damopolii (2022) and Maunah et al. (2024), who likewise position the figure of the kyai as the main node in the transmission of religious moderation values. However, this study goes further by integrating the three aspects thought, content, and method into a single conceptual model (Figure 1), a contribution not yet widely found in the West Sulawesi pesantren literature as mapped in the bibliometric study by Gazali and Budiana (2023). This comparison affirms the position of this article as both a complement to and a reinforcement of existing studies

on multicultural pesantren education, with a distinctive contribution in the aspects of model integration and a contextual empirical data basis.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, there are three main conclusions that answer the objectives of this study.

First, multicultural thought in pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency is rooted in an Islamic worldview that regards diversity as *sunnatullah* (a divine order). This thinking is concretely realized in an inclusive student-recruitment policy that does not discriminate based on region of origin, ethnicity, language, or economic condition, as practiced at Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Parappe, Al-Ikhlas Lampoko, and DDI Al-Ihsan Kanang.

Second, multicultural education content is integrated into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, particularly in the areas of creed (*akidah*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and ethics (*akhlak*), emphasizing the values of equality, solidarity, flexibility in accepting differences, and respect for human rights not as a separate subject, but integrated into the overall educational process.

Third, the methods of multicultural education in pesantren combine classical methods (*sorogan*, *bandongan*, *halaqah*) with dialogical approaches (*muqāranah*, discussion) and the principle of learning by doing through students' collective life in the dormitory, mosque, and other symbolic spaces, with the exemplary conduct of the *kyai/ustadz* as a key factor in the successful internalization of values.

These three aspects are interconnected and converge into a single multicultural education model that is both contextual and transformative (Figure 1): multicultural values are not taught doctrinally, but are formed through sustained social experience within the pesantren ecosystem. This model affirms the contribution of pesantren as strategic agents in strengthening multicultural education and religious moderation grounded in Islamic values. This study has limitations in its locus coverage (three out of the 29 pesantren in Polewali Mandar Regency) and in its focus on key informants at the level of education leaders/managers. Further research is recommended to broaden triangulation by directly incorporating students' perspectives and to test the applicability of this model in pesantren contexts in other regions in order to assess its degree of generalizability.

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