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## INTERNALIZING MULTICULTURAL VALUES IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT BOARDING SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Indonesia's social, cultural, and religious diversity requires Islamic education to promote tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony. **Purpose:** This study aims to examine the internalization of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at MA Terpadu Tunas Cendekia Babakan Ciwaringin, Cirebon Regency. **Method:** Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving PAI teachers, dormitory supervisors, and students, and analyzed through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. **Result:** The findings indicate that multicultural values are internalized through three stages: value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization, with key values including tolerance, equality, justice, harmony, and social responsibility. The boarding school system reinforces these values through habituation, role modeling, and integrated socio-religious activities. **Conclusion:** This study demonstrates that PAI grounded in universal Islamic values can effectively cultivate inclusive and harmonious student character and offers a practical model that may be adapted in other schools, particularly those implementing integrated or boarding-based educational systems.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the most socio-culturally diverse countries in the world. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicate that Indonesia is home to more than 1,340 ethnic groups and nearly 700 regional languages spread across the archipelago. While this diversity constitutes a valuable national asset, it also presents significant challenges to social cohesion if values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony are not systematically cultivated through education (Kosim, 2020; Muna, 2020).

In this pluralistic context, Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) plays a strategic role in nurturing multicultural awareness. As a subject that shapes students' moral, spiritual, and social character, PAI is expected not only to transmit doctrinal knowledge but also to internalize universal Islamic values such as justice, equality, tolerance, and brotherhood that enable learners to live harmoniously within a diverse society (Anshor, 2020). Thus, PAI serves as a crucial medium for fostering multicultural values grounded in Islamic teachings.

However, empirical realities show that the implementation of multicultural-oriented PAI still faces considerable challenges. In many Islamic schools, PAI learning tends to emphasize cognitive mastery and normative religious instruction, while the affective and social dimensions remain underdeveloped. This condition often results in a textual and exclusive understanding of religious teachings, limiting students' ability to contextualize Islamic values in multicultural social interactions (Anshor, 2020). Additionally, concerns about religious identity preservation, doctrinal rigidity, and limited pedagogical innovation further complicate the integration of multicultural perspectives into Islamic education.

Multicultural education, as conceptualized by Banks (2008), is an educational reform movement aimed at providing equal learning opportunities for all students regardless of cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds. Beyond cognitive development, it emphasizes social awareness, democratic values, and mutual respect. (Bennett, 2001) further highlights that acceptance of diversity and recognition of human dignity constitute the core principles of multicultural education principles that resonate strongly with Islamic teachings on human equality before God.

From an Islamic perspective, multicultural values are deeply rooted in the Qur'anic worldview (Husna & Thohir, 2020). Islam upholds the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all creation) and affirms that human dignity is determined by piety rather than ethnicity or social status, as stated in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13). These theological foundations position Islamic education as a natural platform for cultivating tolerance, justice, and respect for diversity (Banks, 2008; Bennett, 2001).

(Tilaar, 2004) views multicultural education as a "politics of recognition," emphasizing the importance of acknowledging cultural identities and ensuring equal participation in social life. In line with this view, Rachman (2015) argues that multicultural Islamic education should promote pluralism as a social reality and a divine blessing, encouraging attitudes of mutual respect, social justice, and interreligious coexistence. Consequently, the integration of multicultural values into PAI represents a concrete expression of Islam's moderate, humanistic, and inclusive character.

Similarly, (Rachman, 2023) emphasizes that multicultural Islamic education requires a learning process that appreciates differences and views pluralism as a

blessing rather than a threat. PAI thus serves to instill attitudes of mutual respect, social justice, and interreligious tolerance as part of Islam's universal mission.

Among various educational models, the boarding school system offers a particularly conducive environment for internalizing multicultural values. Through continuous interaction, habituation, role modeling, and structured religious activities, boarding schools provide a holistic educational space where character formation extends beyond classroom learning (Suharto, 2017; Suryana & Rusdiana, 2015). The diverse backgrounds of students living together further create daily opportunities for practicing tolerance, empathy, and cooperation.

Therefore, the implementation of multicultural values in PAI learning represents a concrete manifestation of Islamic principles that are moderate, humanistic, and tolerant. This is consistent with the goals of Indonesia's national education to develop citizens who are faithful, pious, morally upright, and capable of living peacefully within a pluralistic society (Rachman, 2023; Tilaar, 2004).

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how multicultural values are internalized in Islamic Religious Education within a boarding school context and to analyze the roles of teachers, dormitory systems, and institutional policies in supporting this process. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the discourse on multicultural Islamic education and practically to the development of a contextual and applicable model of PAI learning for diverse educational settings in Indonesia.

In recent years, empirical studies highlight that boarding schools not only serve as religious educational institutions but also as dynamic social contexts in which multicultural values are internalized through layered pedagogical, social, and cultural processes. For example, Nabilla's (2025) qualitative study on multicultural education in Indonesian boarding school finds that multicultural values are integrated into daily life not only through formal curriculum but also through communal interaction, role modeling by religious leaders, and shared responsibilities, underscoring the boarding school's unique capacity to foster inclusive attitudes and social cohesion.

This aligns with research at different boarding school contexts, where educators and institutional culture work synergistically to embed multicultural values into school life. Suyono and Wiyanto's (2023) investigation into multicultural value internalization in boarding schools indicates that the process typically starts with socialization, assignment, and habituation before culminating in sustained practice and assessment, suggesting that repeated and intentional engagements with multicultural content support deeper value internalization.

The internalization process is also reflected in studies examining attitudinal outcomes among students. Halim (2023) reports that values such as honesty, democracy, equality, tolerance, and respect for cultural diversity are integrated into the everyday life of santri (students) through learning structures and boarding routines, which contribute to the development of multicultural attitudes that are tolerant, open, and appreciative of differences.

Moreover, Muhajir et al., (2025) case study on the management of multicultural education within pesantren environments highlights how inclusive institutional policies, curriculum alignment, and pedagogical practices collectively create an environment conducive to internalizing values of inclusivity and mutual respect among diverse santri. Their findings reveal that structured management approaches reinforce not just learning outcomes but also everyday social interactions that embody multicultural principles.

These modern studies reinforce the view that internalization is not a passive absorption of values but rather an active, iterative, and socially mediated process that depends on the intersecting roles of curriculum design, social routines, and relational dynamics among educators and students. They support the theoretical assertion that successful value internalization in education involves not only cognitive understanding but also affective engagement and habitual practice, consistent with value transformation, transaction, and transinternalization frameworks.

By anchoring researcher's investigation at MA Terpadu Tunas Cendekia Babakan Ciwaringin Cirebon, this study situates itself within a growing scholarly recognition that boarding school contexts serve as significant sites for fostering multicultural literacy and social harmony in Indonesia's pluralistic society. In doing so, it contributes not only locally but also to the broader field of multicultural Islamic education research, offering evidence-based insights and models for educator roles, institutional policies, and pedagogical strategies that others can adapt in diverse educational contexts.

## **B. METHOD**

In this study, interview techniques were divided into structured and unstructured interviews to obtain comprehensive and balanced data. Structured interviews were conducted with key informants, particularly school leaders at MA Terpadu Tunas Cendekia Babakan Ciwaringin Cirebon, who possess strategic knowledge regarding the implementation of multicultural education. Meanwhile, unstructured interviews were carried out with male and female teachers (*ustadz* and *ustadzah*) to explore their practical experiences and daily practices in actualizing multicultural values. This combination allowed the researcher to capture both formal policy perspectives and contextual classroom realities.

In addition, observations and document analysis were employed to examine institutional programs, learning strategies, student activities, and socio-religious practices within the boarding school environment. All collected data were analyzed through systematic stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, following established qualitative analysis procedures (Azungah, 2018). To ensure data credibility, source and method triangulation were applied. The research site was selected due to the strategic role of boarding schools in shaping students' religious and multicultural character (Nabilla, 2025).

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the process of internalizing multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) within a boarding school environment. This approach was selected to obtain an in-depth and contextual understanding of how values such as tolerance, equality, and social harmony are embedded in both classroom learning and dormitory life at MA Terpadu Tunas Cendekia Babakan Ciwaringin, Cirebon.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on clear and relevant criteria. Five PAI teachers were chosen because they were directly involved in curriculum planning and classroom instruction and had a minimum of three years of teaching experience, ensuring sustained engagement in character and value education. Two dormitory supervisors were selected due to their daily responsibility for mentoring students and enforcing dormitory regulations related to socio-religious practices. Five students were included as participants because they had resided in the dormitory for at least one year, allowing them to reflect on the internalization of multicultural values through sustained participation in learning and daily activities.

Data were collected through 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews, 3 classroom observations, and 10 observations of socio-religious activities in the dormitory. In addition, document analysis was conducted on lesson plans (RPP), dormitory guidelines, institutional policies, and records of religious and social activities. Interviews focused on participants' experiences and perceptions of multicultural value integration in PAI learning, while observations were used to capture actual practices of habituation, interaction, and role modeling.

Data analysis followed (Creswell, 2014) qualitative analysis procedures. First, all interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were organized and read repeatedly to gain a holistic understanding of the data. Second, data reduction was carried out through open coding to identify meaningful units related to multicultural values. Third, the coded data were categorized and presented in thematic narratives and tables to illustrate patterns of value internalization. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting these patterns to explain the stages and dynamics of multicultural value internalization in PAI learning.

To ensure data validity, source and method triangulation were applied by comparing information obtained from teachers, dormitory supervisors, and students with observational and documentary evidence (Horowitz & Strack, 2011). The findings were interpreted using (Hakam, 2011) theory of value internalization encompassing value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization and supported by multicultural education perspectives from (Tilaar, 2004) and (Banks, 2008) to explain how instructional strategies and habituation processes in the boarding school foster tolerance, inclusiveness, and social justice among students.

### C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study highlights five main indicators in the process of internalizing multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning: the communication attitudes of teachers and students, the use of language in classroom interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication styles, and personality traits that reflect consistency between words and actions in dormitory life. The research findings are presented according to these five indicators.

#### **Multicultural Values Developed**

The findings reveal several multicultural values consistently developed at MA Terpadu Tunas Cendekia Babakan Ciwaringin, namely tolerance, equality, justice, harmony, and social responsibility. These values are integrated throughout all educational activities, both in classroom instruction and in dormitory life.

PAI teachers serve as central figures in this value formation process. In every lesson, they relate Islamic teachings to the context of a plural society. For instance, during lessons on *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), teachers emphasize the importance of respecting differences among schools of thought and ethnic backgrounds. Tolerance is explained not merely as passive acceptance of differences but as an active effort to build social harmony, as taught in *Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13*.

Equality is also a key concern. All students are treated equally, regardless of their region of origin, social status, or academic ability. This aligns with (Banks, 2008) view that multicultural education must ensure equal opportunities for all learners to develop according to their potential. Teachers act as facilitators who encourage participation from every student, creating a democratic and inclusive learning atmosphere.

### **Stages of Multicultural Value Internalization in PAI Learning**

The process of internalizing multicultural values at *MA Terpadu Tunas Cendekia* follows three stages as proposed by (Hakam, 2011): value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization.

First, value transformation refers to the initial stage where teachers convey multicultural values conceptually. At this stage, teachers emphasize the importance of respecting diversity, social justice, and cooperation. Subjects such as Islamic ethics (*akhlak*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and Islamic cultural history are utilized to embed these values. Teachers also employ contextual examples, such as the Prophet Muhammad's tolerance in Medina and his acceptance of non-Muslim communities.

Second, value transaction occurs when a two-way interaction takes place between teachers and students. In this stage, values are not merely memorized but discussed critically. Teachers create spaces for dialogue through *halaqah* sessions, classroom discussions, and book studies (*kajian kitab*), allowing students to express their views on cultural differences, social habits, and ethical behavior. This interaction fosters an egalitarian communication pattern between teachers and students. Such an approach aligns with (Paulo, 2000) principle of *education as dialogue*, which emphasizes that genuine education fosters critical consciousness through liberating, two-way communication.

Third, value transinternalization occurs when the taught values have been deeply internalized and become part of students' personalities. This stage is reflected in students' behavior within the dormitory environment such as discipline in worship, cooperation, respect toward peers from different regions, and participation in social activities. These values are no longer mere knowledge but have transformed into living habits that shape the school's moral and social atmosphere.

### **The Role of Boarding Schools in Strengthening Multicultural Values**

The boarding school environment serves as a key factor in the successful internalization of multicultural values. The residential education system enables continuous character formation, allowing supervision and habituation of values to take place on a 24-hour basis.

Social interactions within the dormitory bring together students from diverse regional, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. This situation becomes a natural medium for developing mutual respect and empathy. Teachers and dormitory mentors act as role models who demonstrate tolerant and fair behavior. Activities such as communal service (*ro'an*), student deliberation forums (*bahtsul masail*), congregational prayers, and shared meals strengthen the values of solidarity and social equality.

These findings align with (Suryana & Rusdiana, 2015) argument that the boarding school system provides an ideal educational environment for character building, as the intensity of social interaction accelerates the habituation of moral and social values. Thus, dormitory life at *MA Terpadu Tunas Cendekia* functions not merely as a place of residence but as a living laboratory for social and multicultural values.

### **School Strategies for Internalizing Multicultural Values**

The school implements several concrete strategies to instill multicultural values. First, multicultural principles are integrated into the curriculum and lesson plans (*RPP*) of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), where aspects of tolerance, justice, and brotherhood are embedded in the learning objectives and attitudinal indicators. Second, religious and social activities such as *istighasah* (collective prayer), communal

iftar meals, social service, and interregional *pengajian* (religious study) foster solidarity and social empathy among students. Third, teachers and dormitory mentors serve as exemplary figures who consistently demonstrate openness, fairness, and inclusivity in every interaction (Larassati et al., 2015).

In addition, the school promotes an inclusive institutional culture by emphasizing brotherhood and tolerance in all school regulations and mottos. For example, the principle “*different to unite*” is used as an internal slogan, instilled through various reflective and collaborative activities. This approach is consistent with (Tilaar, 2004) theory, which states that multicultural education requires the formation of a school culture that views diversity as a source of strength rather than a threat.

### **Teacher Competence and Role Modeling**

Teacher competence remains a foundational element in the successful internalization of multicultural values within educational settings. Teachers who are well-equipped with multicultural knowledge, skills, and sensitivity are more capable of creating inclusive classroom environments that respect and value diversity. Research indicates that teacher professional development specifically targeted at multicultural education enhances teachers’ abilities to implement inclusive instructional strategies, facilitate open dialogue, and mediate classroom interactions that reflect mutual respect and equity (Lestari, 2025).

Beyond formal training, teachers serve as behavioral models for students in both verbal and nonverbal contexts. In Islamic educational environments, educators who consistently demonstrate empathy, fairness, and respect for diverse student backgrounds provide powerful role modeling that students observe and emulate during both classroom and dormitory interactions. Studies have shown that when teachers embody values like acceptance and equitable treatment, students are more likely to internalize these attitudes and translate them into everyday behavior (Fatmaya & Hanif, 2025).

Additionally, teacher competence is not static but evolves through reflective practice, continuing professional development, and engagement with diverse communities. Teachers who engage in self-reflection, peer collaboration, and contextual adaptation of curricula are better positioned to recognize and address implicit biases, design culturally responsive learning activities, and support students’ multicultural identity formation. Such dynamic teacher competence contributes to a school environment where respect for diversity is enacted consistently, promoting not only cognitive understanding but also affective and behavioral embodiment of multicultural values (Fatmaya & Hanif, 2025; Lestari, 2025).

### **Integration of Multicultural Values into Institutional Policy**

Institutional policy plays a crucial role in shaping the educational environment and reinforcing multicultural values beyond individual classrooms. Clear, well-articulated policies that integrate multicultural principles into school regulations, student conduct guidelines, and program objectives provide a structural foundation for consistent practice. Research suggests that schools with explicit multicultural policies create a culture of inclusivity, where diversity is recognized as an asset rather than a challenge (Wahfiuddin Al Musyarrofi & Mohammad Rofiq, 2025).

Such policies are most effective when they align with curriculum design, assessment frameworks, and extracurricular activities that collectively reinforce respect for diversity. In contexts where multicultural values are embedded in institutional documents and operational guidelines, educators and students receive

consistent signals that inclusive behavior and equitable treatment are prioritized. This alignment helps normalize multicultural practices and ensures that institutional expectations are reflected in everyday school life, from classroom interactions to communal activities (Wahfiuddin Al Musyarrofi & Mohammad Rofiq, 2025).

Importantly, policy integration also involves monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess effectiveness and inform continuous improvement. Schools that regularly review the implementation of multicultural policies through observation, feedback from school stakeholders, and analysis of student outcomes can adjust strategies to better support internalization processes. This systemic approach not only demonstrates institutional commitment but also reinforces the sustainability of multicultural values across time and contexts. Such institutionalization ensures that respect, tolerance, and equality become embedded in the school's ethos and operational practices, contributing to long-term character formation.

### **The Impact of Multicultural Value Internalization on Student Behavior**

The tangible impact of multicultural value internalization is reflected in noticeable changes in students' behavior they become more open-minded, disciplined, and respectful toward differences. Based on observations and interviews, students demonstrate adaptability and cooperation with peers from various regions without significant conflict. In daily dormitory life, a culture of mutual assistance, knowledge sharing, and respect for collective religious schedules has emerged.

Socially, students are more active in religious and community service activities, displaying empathy toward their environment. This indicates that the internalization process extends beyond the cognitive domain and reaches the affective and behavioral dimensions. Thus, the integration of multicultural values within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has proven effective in shaping students' religious, humanistic, and tolerant character an ideal reflection of Islamic education as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation).

### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that the internalization of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at MA Terpadu Tunas Cendekia Babakan Ciwaringin is carried out in a systematic and continuous manner through the stages of value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization. Core values such as tolerance, equality, justice, harmony, and social responsibility are effectively integrated into both classroom instruction and daily life within the boarding school environment. The findings confirm that PAI, when grounded in universal Islamic principles, can function not only as a medium for religious instruction but also as a powerful instrument for fostering inclusive and harmonious character in a pluralistic society.

To strengthen the implementation of multicultural values in other educational settings, this study offers several practical recommendations. First, schools should integrate multicultural perspectives explicitly into PAI curricula by linking Qur'anic teachings and prophetic traditions with contemporary social realities of diversity. Second, teachers should be equipped with multicultural pedagogical competencies through continuous professional development, emphasizing dialogical learning, reflective discussion, and contextual interpretation of Islamic values. Third, schools particularly those with boarding systems should institutionalize habituation-based programs such as collaborative service activities, mixed-group learning, and inclusive dormitory regulations that reinforce equality and mutual respect. These strategies can



be adapted by both boarding and non-boarding schools to support character formation beyond cognitive learning. (Anshor, 2020)

Finally, future research is encouraged to explore the long-term impact of multicultural value internalization on students' attitudes and social behavior after graduation, including their participation in broader community life. Further studies could also compare the effectiveness of multicultural-oriented PAI in different educational models or regions to enrich the development of contextual and sustainable Islamic education practices in Indonesia.

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