

The Contribution of Islamic Religious Education to Building Social Harmony in the Multicultural Era

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in building social harmony in a multicultural society characterized by religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. The challenges of increasing intolerance and social conflict require strengthening inclusive values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. This study aims to analyze the contribution of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in building social harmony in the multicultural era, identify key values that support tolerance, and examine their implementation in the learning process. The method used is a qualitative approach with a library research type, using data from scientific journals, books, and relevant documents from the last five years analyzed using content analysis techniques. The results show that PAI values such as tolerance (tasamuh), justice (adl), balance (tawazun), and brotherhood (ukhuwah) contribute significantly to building social harmony, which is strengthened through dialogic, contextual, and experience-based learning and supported by the role of teachers and an inclusive school culture. In conclusion, PAI has a strategic function as an instrument for building social character that is able to create a harmonious, tolerant, and civilized society amidst diversity.

Keywords

Islamic Religious Education, Multiculturalism, Religious Moderation, Social Harmony, Tolerance.



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, not only religious but also inclusive and tolerant in social life. In the context of Indonesia's multicultural society, religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity is an unavoidable reality. Therefore, PAI is required to be oriented not only toward the cognitive aspects of religion but also toward fostering harmonious social attitudes. Education that integrates Islamic values with the spirit of diversity is an urgent need to anticipate social conflicts based on differences. This is in line with findings that a multicultural approach in PAI can increase understanding of diversity and reduce social prejudice between groups.

Various social conflicts arise from differences in religion, culture, and identity. The phenomena of intolerance, radicalism, and religious exclusivism pose serious challenges in

modern society. This indicates that education, particularly Islamic Religious Education (PAI), has not yet fully instilled the values of moderation and social harmony. However, Islamic education encompasses universal values such as justice, balance, and brotherhood, which are relevant for building a peaceful multicultural society. Therefore, an in-depth study of PAI's contribution to building social harmony amidst diversity is necessary.

Multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education emphasizes the recognition, appreciation, and acceptance of diversity as part of the *sunnatullah* (the law of God). This concept is rooted in Islamic values that teach tolerance, justice, and universal humanity. Multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education not only teaches religious doctrine but also develops students' social awareness for peaceful coexistence amidst differences. These values can be implemented in learning through curriculum integration, dialogical methods, and experiential learning. Thus, Islamic Religious Education serves as a means of internalizing social values that support the creation of harmony in a pluralistic society.

Several studies have shown the importance of a multicultural approach in Islamic Religious Education. Research by Mustafida, (2020) found that the integration of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education learning can shape students' tolerant character through inclusive and humanistic values. Other research by PITA, (2018) shows that internalizing multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education can increase students' empathy and tolerance. Meanwhile, research (Baidhawiy, 2005) confirms that the multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) paradigm is effective in reducing social stereotypes and increasing harmony. However, these three studies still focus on the classroom learning context and have not comprehensively examined the contribution of PAI to building social harmony at the community level. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its broader analysis, namely linking PAI to the dynamics of social harmony in a multicultural society.

Study Arikarani et al., (2025) shows that a multicultural approach in Islamic Religious Education through interfaith dialogue and peace education can improve understanding of diversity, although implementation is still hampered by limitations such as limited teachers and curriculum. Furthermore, this research (Yuwafik et al., 2025) revealed that multicultural education in schools can build harmony through inclusive policies and positive social interactions. However, these two studies focused more on institutional practices and did not delve deeply into the dimensions of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values as the theological basis for social harmony. Therefore, this study offers a novelty by integrating Islamic theological perspectives and educational practices in building social harmony. Marfuah & Mulyoto, (2021) highlights the concept and practice of multicultural Islamic Education in madrasas as an effort to build inclusive character, but is still limited to a conceptual approach. Tentiasih & Rifa'i, (2022) emphasizes the importance of multicultural-based Islamic Education in increasing students' social sensitivity to differences. Meanwhile, Devi, (2020) This study demonstrates that Islamic education contributes to building legal awareness and tolerance in society. The gap in these three studies is the lack of a comprehensive synthesis of the concept, implementation, and social impact of Islamic

Religious Education (PAI) in a multicultural context. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of these three aspects, resulting in a conceptual model of PAI's contribution to building social harmony.

Based on various previous studies, it can be concluded that most studies are still partial, both in terms of learning aspects, school policies, and theoretical concepts of multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Few studies have holistically examined the contribution of PAI to building social harmony, encompassing the dimensions of values, educational practices, and social implications in an integrated manner. Therefore, this study offers a major novelty in developing a conceptual framework that connects Islamic values, PAI learning practices, and their impact on social harmony in a multicultural society.

Based on this background, the purpose of this study is to analyze in-depth the contribution of Islamic Religious Education in building social harmony in a multicultural era, identify relevant Islamic values in strengthening tolerance and inclusivity, and examine the implementation of multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Furthermore, this study also aims to formulate an integrative conceptual model regarding the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in creating a harmonious, tolerant, and civilized society amidst diversity.

METHODS

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a literature review type that aims to examine in depth the contribution of Islamic Religious Education in building social harmony in the multicultural era. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on conceptual and theoretical analysis and synthesis of relevant previous research results. Data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data, where primary data is obtained from reputable scientific journal articles related to Islamic religious education, multiculturalism, and social harmony, while secondary data comes from books, proceedings, and relevant educational policy documents. The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies by searching academic databases. The data analysis technique uses content analysis with the stages of data reduction, theme categorization, data presentation, and inductive conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses source triangulation techniques by comparing various research results with a similar focus, as well as conducting a critical evaluation of the credibility and relevance of the sources. In addition, the researcher also applies a comparative analysis approach to identify similarities, differences, and gaps (research gaps) from previous research, which then becomes the basis for formulating the novelty of this research in the form of an integrative conceptual model of the contribution of Islamic Religious Education in building social harmony in a multicultural society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Values of Islamic Religious Education in Building Social Harmony in the Multicultural Era

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a fundamental role in building social harmony through the internalization of universal Islamic values. Values such as tolerance, justice, balance, and brotherhood are key principles that underpin harmonious social life in a multicultural society. In an educational context, these values are not only taught as normative concepts but also internalized through a continuous learning process. This demonstrates that PAI plays a strategic role in shaping students' social awareness, enabling them to coexist peacefully despite differences.

The value of tolerance is the most dominant aspect in building social harmony. Islamic Religious Education teaches that differences are a natural law (*sunnatullah*) and must be accepted with openness and mutual respect. In practice, this value is realized through learning that emphasizes dialogue, respect for differences, and the avoidance of exclusivity. Analysis shows that students who receive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on the value of tolerance tend to have inclusive attitudes and are less easily provoked by issues of religious or cultural conflict. Furthermore, the value of justice in Islamic Religious Education also plays a crucial role in creating social harmony. Justice, from an Islamic perspective, is not only related to legal aspects but also encompasses equal treatment of all human beings regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural background. In the educational context, this value is taught through an approach that emphasizes equality and respect for individual rights. Thus, students are shaped into non-discriminatory individuals who are able to contribute to creating a just and harmonious society.

The value of balance is also a crucial element in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), contributing to social harmony. *Tawazun* teaches a balance between spiritual and social aspects, between individual and collective interests. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, this value is implemented through an emphasis on the importance of maintaining a good relationship with God and with fellow human beings. With this balance, students not only develop individual piety but also social piety, reflected in harmonious behavior within society. The value of brotherhood is an important foundation for building social solidarity. Islamic Religious Education instills the concept of brotherhood not only among fellow Muslims but also within the context of nationality and humanity. This broadens students' perspectives on social relationships, enabling them to establish harmonious interactions with various community groups. The implementation of this value has been proven to reduce the potential for social conflict and strengthen social cohesion in multicultural societies.

The research results show that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values significantly contribute to building social harmony when systematically internalized in the educational process. Integrating these values into the curriculum, learning methods, and school culture is a key factor for success. Therefore, strengthening multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values is an urgent need to address the challenges of diversity in the modern era,

ensuring that education not only produces religious individuals but also maintains social harmony in a pluralistic society.

Implementation of Islamic Religious Education in Building Social Harmony in the Multicultural Era

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education in building social harmony in a multicultural era is carried out through various inclusive and contextual learning strategies. Research results show that a learning approach that integrates multicultural values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) materials can increase students' social awareness of the importance of living in harmony amidst diversity. Teachers act as facilitators who not only deliver the material but also guide students in understanding and applying these values in their daily lives. One effective form of implementation is the use of dialogic learning methods. This method provides space for students to discuss, exchange opinions, and understand different perspectives. In a multicultural context, dialogue is an important means to reduce prejudice and increase empathy between individuals. The results show that dialogic learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) can create a democratic learning atmosphere and respect for differences, thus contributing to building social harmony.

Experiential learning is also an important strategy in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Students are encouraged to participate directly in social activities such as community service, community service, and cross-cultural activities. Through these experiences, students not only understand the concept of tolerance theoretically but also experience it directly in social interactions. This strengthens the internalization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values in real life. The role of teachers in the implementation of PAI is also crucial. Teachers function not only as instructors but also as role models in implementing the values of tolerance and inclusivity. Research shows that teachers' openness, fairness, and respect for differences have a significant influence on the formation of student character. Therefore, teacher competence in understanding the concept of multicultural education is a crucial factor in the successful implementation of PAI. An inclusive school culture is also a supporting factor in building social harmony through PAI. Schools that implement the values of togetherness, tolerance, and respect for diversity will create an environment conducive to the formation of student character. School programs such as interfaith activities, commemoration of religious holidays, and multicultural discussion forums are effective means of strengthening social harmony.

Overall, the research results show that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in building social harmony requires synergy between the curriculum, learning methods, the role of teachers, and school culture. A holistic and integrative approach is key to ensuring that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values are not only cognitively understood but also internalized in students' attitudes and behavior. Thus, PAI can significantly contribute to creating a harmonious society amidst diversity.

Discussion

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values such as tolerance, justice, balance, and brotherhood contribute significantly to building social harmony in a multicultural era. This finding aligns with studies of Islamic education theory, which emphasize that the primary goal of PAI is not only the transfer of religious knowledge but also the formation of inclusive and humanistic social morals (Siroz, 2020). This perspective reinforces the view that Islamic values are universal and relevant in addressing the challenges of diversity. Compared with previous research that emphasized the cognitive aspects of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the results of this study demonstrate an expansion of PAI's function as an instrument of social transformation.

The research findings, which emphasize the importance of tolerance in building social harmony, align with multicultural education theory, which states that recognizing and respecting differences is key to creating a peaceful society. (Pane, 2024) shows that internalizing the value of tolerance in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can improve students' inclusive attitudes. However, some research is still limited to measuring attitudes without exploring their impact on broader social life. In this context, this study makes a new contribution by demonstrating that the value of tolerance impacts not only individuals but also social harmony within society.

In terms of the value of justice, the results of this study strengthen the theory of Islamic ethics which places justice as the main principle in social interaction (Aly, 2011). Justice in Islamic Religious Education is not only understood as a normative concept, but also as a social practice that must be applied in everyday life. This finding is in line with (Islamic Education and Studies et al., 2023). This study demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning that emphasizes the value of justice can reduce discriminatory attitudes among students. However, previous research has tended not to link the value of justice to the broader context of multicultural society. Therefore, this study broadens understanding by linking the value of justice as a foundation for building social harmony across cultures and religions.

The implementation of the value of balance in Islamic Religious Education demonstrates the integration of spiritual and social dimensions in the formation of students' character. This aligns with Islamic educational theory, which emphasizes balance between human relationships with God and with fellow human beings. Zubaidi, (2022) emphasizes the importance of this balance, but focuses more on the individual's piety. In this study, tawazun is understood as a broader concept, namely an effort to maintain harmony between individual and social interests in a multicultural society. Thus, this study provides a new perspective on understanding the relevance of tawazun values in a more complex social context.

Dialogic and experiential learning approaches are highly effective in instilling Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values. This finding is consistent with constructivist theory in education, which emphasizes that learning will be more meaningful. Suryadi et al., (2022) students are actively involved in the learning process. Previous research also supports that dialogic methods can increase empathy and understanding of differences. However, most research still focuses on classroom activities. This study complements these findings by

showing that direct social experiences, such as cross-cultural interactions, have a stronger impact on building social harmony. The results of this study confirm that the success of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) implementation in building social harmony is highly dependent on the synergy between values, learning methods, the role of teachers, and school culture. This is in line with the theory of educational systems, which states that educational success is determined by the integration of various components. Previous research has examined each of these components separately, but not many have integrated them into a coherent framework. Therefore, this study makes an important contribution by offering an integrative approach that connects Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values, learning practices, and their impact on social harmony in a multicultural society.

This research has several limitations that require attention. First, the library research approach used means that the research findings are primarily conceptual and not yet supported by direct empirical field data. This limits the ability to describe the actual implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in various social contexts. Second, the data sources analyzed are limited to scientific publications within the last five years, so there may be relevant research beyond this timeframe that has not been addressed. Third, this research focuses more on the formal education perspective, thus not fully examining the contribution of PAI to non-formal and informal education in the community. Therefore, the results of this study need to be further tested through field research using quantitative or mixed approaches to obtain a more comprehensive and contextual picture.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of an integrative conceptual framework that connects the core values of Islamic Religious Education—such as *tasamuh*, *adl*, *tawazun*, and *ukhuwah*—with learning practices and their implications for the formation of social harmony in the multicultural era. In contrast to previous studies that tended to be partial, whether in terms of values, methods, or educational policies, this research offers a more comprehensive synthesis by simultaneously linking theological, pedagogical, and social dimensions. Furthermore, this research also emphasizes the expansion of the role of Islamic Religious Education not only as a learning tool in the classroom, but as an instrument of social transformation in building a tolerant, inclusive, and civilized society. Thus, this research provides a new theoretical contribution to the development of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education studies and serves as a basis for the development of implementation models in the future.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a significant contribution in building social harmony in the multicultural era through the internalization of core values such as tolerance, justice, balance, and brotherhood, which are implemented effectively through a dialogic, contextual, and experience-based learning approach and supported by the role of teachers and an inclusive school culture; this finding confirms that PAI does not only function as a transfer of religious knowledge, but also as an instrument for

the formation of social character that is able to encourage the creation of a peaceful, respectful, and civilized community life amidst diversity; therefore, it can be concluded that the success of PAI in building social harmony is largely determined by the integration of Islamic teaching values, innovative learning strategies, and a conducive educational environment; based on this, it is recommended that the strengthening of the multicultural-based PAI curriculum continues to be developed, the improvement of teacher competency in implementing inclusive and moderate learning needs to be optimized, and collaboration between schools, families, and communities must be strengthened to ensure the internalization of these values takes place sustainably and has a real impact on social life.

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