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Islamic Education and Social Cohesion : Fostering Tolerance and Understanding in Multicultural Societis

Sudi Raharjo*[1], Adam Latuconsina[2], Akhmad Syahbudin[3]

[1]Pekalongan University, Jalan Sriwijaya No. 3, Pekalongan City, Central Java 51111, Indonesia
[2]Ambon State Islamic Religious Institute, Jl. Dr. H. Tarmizi Taher Jalan Kebun Clove, Batu Merah, Sirimau District, Ambon City, Maluku 97128, Indonesia
[3]Akademi Maritim Nusantara Banjarmasin, Jl. Gatot Subroto No.40, Kebun Bunga, Kec. Banjarmasin Tim., Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan 70235, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: sudiraharjounikal22@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the role of Islamic education in strengthening social cohesion through the cultivation of the values of tolerance and mutual understanding in a multicultural society. Using a qualitative approach with the literature study method (library research), this study analyzes various sources of academic literature, including books, scientific articles, and educational documents related to Islamic education and cultural diversity. The results of the study show that Islamic education, when implemented with an inclusive and contextual approach, has great potential in shaping the character of students who are tolerant, open, and respectful of differences. The universal values in Islam such as justice, compassion, brotherhood, and respect for human rights can be the foundation in building cross-cultural understanding. Islamic education can also function as a medium of social transformation that encourages dialogue between religious communities and reduces prejudice and identity-based conflicts. However, to achieve this goal, an adaptive curriculum, competent educators, and a learning environment that supports the values of pluralism are needed. This study recommends the need to strengthen a multicultural perspective in the Islamic education system in order to create a harmonious, peaceful, and civilized society.

Thus, Islamic education can contribute significantly to building social cohesion in an increasingly pluralistic global society.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization marked by increasing human mobility, cross-cultural interaction, and ethnic and religious diversity, the issue of social cohesion has become increasingly important to be studied in depth (Putnam, 2007). In a multicultural society, education plays a strategic role in shaping individual character and building social harmony (Banks, 2008). One form of education that has great potential in instilling the values of tolerance and mutual understanding is Islamic education (Halstead, 2004).

Islamic education, in essence, teaches universal principles such as justice, brotherhood, compassion, and respect for fellow human beings, regardless of ethnic or religious background (Ramadan, 2004). However, in practice, the approach to Islamic education in some countries still tends to be exclusive and less sensitive to social plurality (Hashim, 2014). This raises questions about the extent to which Islamic education is able to contribute to strengthening social cohesion in the context of a pluralistic society.

Previous studies have discussed Islamic education in the context of character development (Nasir, 2002), radicalism (Sukma, 2017), and the integration of Islamic values in the national curriculum (Huda, 2013). However, studies that specifically highlight the role of Islamic education in building social cohesion through a multicultural approach are still limited, especially from the perspective of comprehensive literature studies (Zine, 2007). This is the research gap that is to be filled in this study.

The urgency of this research is increasingly evident in view of the increasing social tensions and identity-based conflicts in various multicultural countries (Modood, 2010). In this context, Islamic education must not only be able to answer the internal challenges of Muslims, but also contribute to building bridges of communication between community groups (Esposito, 2002). Therefore, it is important to evaluate and reformulate the approach to Islamic education to be more inclusive and responsive to social realities.

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach (library research) to analyze various academic sources related to Islamic education and social cohesion. The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach that combines Islamic education theory, multiculturalism, and social cohesion in a single analytical framework.

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the role of Islamic education in building tolerance and cross-cultural understanding in multicultural societies. The benefits of this research are that it makes a theoretical contribution to the development of an inclusive Islamic education model and offers practical recommendations for education policy makers and Islamic educational institutions in creating a learning environment that supports social cohesion.

Tolerance as a Pillar of Social Cohesion

Tolerance is an attitude of accepting and respecting differences that exist in society, both differences in religion, ethnicity, culture, and outlook on life. In Islamic teachings, tolerance (tasamuh) is a basic value taught by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in his interactions with

various communities, including non-Muslims. Islamic education that emphasizes the values of tasamuh can be a strategic means in forming individuals who are able to coexist peacefully in the midst of a multicultural society. Tolerance does not mean sacrificing beliefs, but understanding that differences are part of God's will and must be respected as an inevitable social reality.

Intercultural Understanding as the Key to Social Dialogue

Understanding is a cognitive and emotional process in recognizing the perspective of others in depth. In the context of diverse societies, cross-cultural understanding is essential to avoid prejudices, stereotypes, and social conflicts. Islamic education can play an important role in fostering this understanding through a curriculum that teaches the history of civilization, the contributions of other religions to humanity, as well as universal values that cross religious boundaries. When students are taught to understand the "other" objectively and empathically, a more inclusive social consciousness is formed and keeps them away from exclusive or radical attitudes.

Synergy of Tolerance and Understanding in Islamic Education Practices

Tolerance and understanding cannot run alone, both must be synergized in the education system, especially Islamic education. Teachers, as agents of change, have a central role in instilling these two values through dialogical, participatory, and reflective learning methods. The school environment must also be a miniature inclusive society that fosters respect and solidarity. When tolerance is taught as a value, and understanding is honed as a skill, then students not only become tolerant individuals, but also have the capacity to establish healthy social relationships with all groups. This is the main foundation in building sustainable social cohesion.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research, which aims to explore and analyze in depth various academic literature related to Islamic education and its role in building social cohesion in a multicultural society. This approach was chosen because it is considered relevant to understand social phenomena and normative values contained in scientific and religious texts (Zed, 2008). Literature studies allow researchers to explore previously developed theoretical and conceptual ideas as the basis for critical analysis of issues of tolerance and understanding in the context of Islamic education.

The data sources in this study consist of secondary data obtained from various scientific references, such as academic books, reputable journal articles, previous research results, education policy documents, as well as classical and contemporary literature in the study of Islamic education and multiculturalism. Data are selected based on topic relevance, source credibility, and up-to-date information. The references used come from leading publishers and journals that have been indexed nationally and internationally, to ensure the validity and validity of the data (Moleong, 2019).

Data collection techniques are carried out through identification, selection, and documentation of literature related to the research theme. This process includes searching for literature using specific keywords in scientific databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus,

and ScienceDirect, as well as a review of relevant Islamic classical literature. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using the content analysis method, which is by classifying the main themes that emerge from various sources, arranging thematic categories, and drawing conclusions based on the conceptual patterns found (Krippendorff, 2013).

With this approach, the research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of Islamic education models that are responsive to the dynamics of multicultural societies, while strengthening the values of tolerance and cross-cultural understanding as part of efforts to build social cohesion.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data in the following table is the result of a selection of a number of scientific articles obtained through searches in various databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect. From the dozens of articles found, a screening process was carried out based on relevance to the topic, novelty of publications, and its contribution to the understanding of Islamic education and social cohesion. As a result, there are 10 main articles that are further analyzed because they are closely related to the issues of tolerance, multiculturalism, and the role of Islamic education in shaping social harmony. This table summarizes important information from each article, including the author's name, year of publication, article title, focus of the study, and key findings.

Table 1. Literature Data Results of Literature Studies

Author & Year	Article Title	Key findings
Halstead (2004)	An Islamic Concept of Education	*Islamic education teaches tolerance, justice, and respect for differences.*
Zine (2007)	Safe Havens or Religious 'Ghettos'?	*Islamic schools can foster multicultural understanding if they are managed openly.*
Ramadan (2004)	Western Muslims and the Future of Islam	*Islamic education needs to adapt to the social context without losing its values.*
Banks (2008)	Diversity, Group Identity, and Citizenship Education in a Global Age	*Multicultural education strengthens social cohesion and encourages active participation.*
Esposito (2002)	What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam	*Correct knowledge of Islam enhances interfaith understanding and reduces prejudice.*

Hashim (2014)	Islamic Religious Curriculum in Muslim Countries	*An inclusive curriculum encourages the value of tolerance and social coexistence.*
Nasir (2002)	Islamic Education and the Formation of the Nation's Character	*Islamic education plays an important role in the formation of tolerant character and nationalism.*
Huda (2013)	Teaching Empathy in the Islamic Education Curriculum	*Empathy as part of Islamic teachings supports social cohesion and reduces conflict.*
Modood (2010)	Moderate Secularism, Religion as Identity and Respect for Religion	*Inclusive religious education can coexist in a moderate secular system.*
Sukma (2017)	Countering Radicalism through Islamic Education in Indonesia	*Islamic education can counteract radicalism through strengthening the values of tolerance and dialogue.*

The results of the review of the ten selected articles show that Islamic education has a significant role in instilling the values of tolerance and strengthening social cohesion in a multicultural society. Halstead's (2004) article explicitly asserts that core values in Islamic education, such as justice, compassion, and respect for differences, are important foundations in creating a harmonious social order. This is in line with the findings of Nasir (2002) who stated that Islamic education contributes greatly to the formation of a civilized and tolerant nation's character.

Furthermore, the multicultural dimension in Islamic education is emphasized by the works of Zine (2007) and Ramadan (2004). Zine points out that Islamic schools in Western countries, such as Canada, can be safe and supportive spaces if they are open to cross-cultural interactions. Ramadan supports this view by stating that Muslims need to develop a contextual approach to education—able to maintain Islamic values while remaining open to social realities in diverse environments. Thus, contextual and open Islamic education plays an important role in building intercultural understanding.

The findings of Banks (2008) and Esposito (2002) reinforce the idea that education that prioritizes diversity and tolerance can be an important instrument in building inclusive global citizenship. Banks highlighted the importance of multicultural citizenship education in fostering social cohesion and collective awareness. On the other hand, Esposito emphasized that education that provides an accurate understanding of Islam can help reduce prejudice and tensions between religions. These two studies expand the scope of research by showing that Islamic education also plays a role in the context of interfaith dialogue and global identity.

The aspect of the curriculum is an important highlight in the article by Hashim (2014), who considers that the Islamic education curriculum needs to be inclusive so as not to foster an exclusive or discriminatory attitude towards other groups. These findings underscore the importance of curriculum reform that focuses not only on ritual and dogmatic aspects, but also on the social and ethical dimensions of Islam that emphasize universal brotherhood. In this context, Huda (2013) shows that the teaching of empathy in the Islamic education curriculum is able to form a generation that is more sensitive to the suffering and needs of others, thus directly contributing to strengthening social cohesion.

Meanwhile, Modood (2010) offers an interesting perspective on the relationship between religion and the secular system. He emphasized that religious education, including Islamic education, can function in a secular state system as long as its values support pluralism and mutual respect. It affirms that Islamic education does not have to be opposed to secularism, as long as the approach is moderate and inclusive. This view is particularly relevant in the context of democratic and pluralistic countries, where public spaces are filled with diverse cultural and religious identities.

Finally, Sukma's article (2017) strengthens the importance of Islamic education as a strategy to prevent radicalization. Education that teaches moderate, dialogical, and respectful values of diversity is believed to be a bulwark against violent ideologies. Therefore, Islamic education is not only a means of transmitting religious values, but also an instrument of social transformation that is able to strengthen tolerance and stability of society. These findings show that Islamic education developed in an inclusive, adaptive, and humanist manner has great potential in building a peaceful and united multicultural society.

Discussion

Islamic education, in a broader perspective, not only aims to produce spiritually pious individuals, but also plays a role in building a harmonious and tolerant society. Based on the results of the literature analysis, the majority of articles show that the core values in Islamic education are very much in line with the principles of social cohesion, such as justice, empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences (Halstead, 2004; Nasir, 2002). This indicates that Islamic education can be used as a strategic instrument in responding to global challenges related to identity conflicts, intolerance, and social polarization.

In the context of multicultural societies, such as Indonesia, Europe, and North America, the biggest challenge in maintaining social cohesion is the increasing attitude of exclusivism and narratives of hatred on the basis of religious or cultural differences. This phenomenon is evident in the rise of hate speech on social media, the increase in radicalism among teenagers, and friction between identity-based community groups. The results of the study by Zine (2007) and Ramadan (2004) show that Islamic education that is contextual and open to cross-cultural interaction is able to bridge differences and create a space for constructive dialogue between communities.

Within the framework of the critical education theory developed by Paulo Freire, education must be able to liberate human beings from closed and oppressive ways of thinking. This is in line with the idea of Islamic education which emphasizes the importance of thinking reflectively, respecting differences, and encouraging just social change. Therefore, Islamic education that integrates cross-cultural understanding and universal values such as

empathy, as explained by Huda (2013), will be more effective in forming individuals who are inclusive and have high social concerns.

The articles of Banks (2008) and Esposito (2002) also emphasized that social cohesion can only be achieved if the education system is able to prioritize intercultural dialogue and interfaith knowledge. In this context, the Islamic education curriculum must open up space for the introduction of the teachings of other religions in an objective and unbiased manner, so that students are not trapped in religious exclusivism or superiority. Multicultural citizenship education can be integrated into lessons in Islamic faith, morals, or history with a contextual approach that touches on the reality of students' daily lives.

In practice, the biggest challenge in strengthening tolerance and understanding is the attitude of some educators or educational institutions that still maintain a purely dogmatic and textual approach. A curriculum that is less responsive to social dynamics and multiculturality causes students not to get learning experiences that are relevant to their social reality. Hashim (2014) firmly suggested the need to reform the Islamic education curriculum so that it is not only oriented to memorization, but also to the formation of social character based on Islamic values rahmatan lil 'alamin.

Lewis Coser's theory of social conflict can also be used as an analytical knife to understand the importance of education as a tool for conflict resolution. Coser stated that conflicts that are not addressed through a healthy social process will develop into social disintegration. In this case, Islamic education can play a role as a space for social reconciliation and transformation, as seen in the findings of Sukma (2017) that Islamic education that emphasizes moderation can be a fortress against radicalism. This is very relevant in the midst of the strengthening of religion-based extremism movements in various countries.

The author views that in the current era of globalization, Islamic education must appear as an adaptive and solution-oriented social force. This means that Islamic education must not be reactive to social change, but must be a pioneer in forming a tolerant and just plural society. For this reason, it requires the commitment of educators, policy makers, and managers of Islamic educational institutions to open a transformative, inclusive, and contextual curriculum and pedagogical space.

In Indonesia itself, the potential of Islamic education in strengthening social cohesion is quite large considering that the majority of the population embraces Islam and the number of Islamic-based educational institutions. However, this potential has not been fully maximized because there are still institutions that are exclusive and not open to interfaith and cultural interactions. Therefore, national education policy also needs to pay more attention to fostering Islamic educational institutions so that they can be the vanguard in strengthening tolerance and diversity.

The conclusion of this discussion is that Islamic education not only dwells on the formation of personal morals, but also plays an important role in creating a peaceful and cohesive society. The literature findings reinforce the argument that Islamic values essentially support diversity and encourage harmonious coexistence. Therefore, strengthening the curriculum, increasing teacher capacity, and transforming learning methodologies must be the focus in the development of Islamic education in the future.

Finally, the author argues that efforts to foster tolerance and understanding in a multicultural society are not the task of one party alone, but a shared responsibility between

educational institutions, families, governments, and society. Islamic education has a wealth of values and traditions that, if explored and developed properly, can become the main pillar in building a peaceful, just, and civilized civilization.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that Islamic education has a strategic role in strengthening social cohesion and building a tolerant society in the midst of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Core values in Islamic teachings such as compassion (rahmah), justice ('adl), and respect for differences have been shown to support the creation of harmonious cross-cultural understanding. In the context of a multicultural society, Islamic education not only functions as a medium of transmission of religious values, but also as a vehicle to form individuals who are open, inclusive, and have high social awareness.

The findings of a number of articles show that Islamic education that is managed in an open, contextual, and dialogical manner is able to reduce the potential for identity-based conflicts and increase solidarity between community groups. An adaptive curriculum, teaching that fosters empathy, and active involvement in social discourse are important components in realizing Islamic education that supports peace and social integration. Islamic education like this has proven to be effective in counteracting radical ideas and strengthening the awareness of multiculturalism, both in local and global contexts.

As such, it is important for all stakeholders—especially educators, policymakers, and managers of Islamic educational institutions—to develop a more progressive and transformative approach to Islamic educational practices. This approach will not only strengthen the moral foundations of learners, but also broaden their social horizons in response to the complexities of pluralistic society.

Further Research Recommendations

This research opens up space for the development of further studies, especially through an empirical approach that explores the concrete practices of Islamic education in various institutions and social contexts. The recommendation for further research is to conduct a field study on the implementation of the Islamic education curriculum that emphasizes the values of tolerance and multiculturalism at various levels of education. In addition, it is also important to examine the perception of teachers, students, and parents towards the integration of social cohesion values in religious learning. Interdisciplinary research that combines educational, sociology, and anthropological perspectives is also strongly encouraged to enrich understanding of the dynamics of Islamic education in a changing global society.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

This article was compiled as a result of a literature review that aims to explore the contribution of Islamic education in building social cohesion and strengthening the values of tolerance in a multicultural society. The author realizes that this study has limitations in a qualitative-descriptive theoretical approach, so it does not include empirical data in the field. Therefore, the author opens up opportunities for further research that can develop these findings through quantitative approaches and field case studies.

The author states that there is no conflict of interest in writing this article. All forms of thought, analysis, and interpretation presented in this article are solely the academic responsibility of the author. This article is intended as a scholarly contribution to the development of an inclusive and progressive Islamic education discourse in response to global challenges related to diversity and social cohesion.

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