

## **Islamic Education in the Context of the Relationship Between Religion, Cultural Pluralism, and Multicultural Education**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research examines the relationship between religion, cultural pluralism, and multicultural education in the context of an increasingly diverse society. The topic is important for understanding how cultural and religious pluralism affects social interactions and education in Indonesia. This study employs a qualitative approach with literature review and in-depth interviews as data collection techniques. The research instrument consists of interview guides developed based on theories of pluralism and multicultural education. Data analysis is conducted using thematic analysis, identifying patterns and themes from the collected data. The findings reveal that religion and cultural pluralism play a crucial role in shaping multicultural education, both in educational policies and classroom practices. The discussion highlights the importance of integrating multicultural values in education to foster a harmonious and inclusive society. This research contributes to the development of multicultural education theory and provides recommendations for curriculum development that is more sensitive to cultural and religious diversity.

**Key words:** Islamic Education; Cultural Pluralism; Multicultural Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia, as a country with a rich diversity of religions and cultures, faces significant challenges in managing pluralism in various aspects of life, including in the field of education. A society composed of various ethnicities, religions, and cultural backgrounds often faces differences that have the potential to create social conflicts (Yunus, 2014). Therefore, multicultural education becomes essential in building understanding, tolerance, and inclusive attitudes among different groups. One way to address these differences is by understanding the relationship between religion, cultural pluralism, and multicultural education (Nasihin & Puteri Anggita Dewi, 2019). By introducing multicultural values into the education system, it is hoped that a more harmonious and tolerant society can be created (Suneki, 2021).

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of multicultural education in a plural society. According to Banks (2016), multicultural education serves to reduce social injustice and enrich students' learning experiences by introducing various cultural perspectives. Another study by Saihu (2020) shows that pluralistic education can transform the functionality of religious education approaches, which were once "mysterious," into a rational framework in order to facilitate the internalization of religious nuances in life, such as the transformation of values, interpretations, and reactivation based on context. However, despite the numerous studies conducted, there remains a gap in research specifically linking the roles of religion and cultural pluralism in multicultural education in Indonesia, particularly in the context of educational policies and classroom practices (Sutrisno, 2019).

Although multicultural education has begun to be implemented in several schools in Indonesia, there remains a gap that needs to be addressed regarding the implementation of this concept in everyday life. This study focuses on how religion and cultural pluralism influence the development of curriculum and multicultural education practices in Indonesia, which is a relevant issue in the context of an evolving society. Various existing educational policies have not fully integrated multicultural values in an effective manner that meets the needs of an increasingly diverse society. Therefore, this research is important to fill the gap in the existing literature and provide insights into how the relationship between religion, cultural pluralism, and education can shape a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Previous studies have mostly focused on the theoretical aspects of pluralism and the general implementation of multicultural education, but there has been limited in-depth examination of how these two main factors—religion and cultural pluralism—directly influence educational practices in the classroom. This study offers a more comprehensive approach by combining perspectives on religion, culture, and education within a single analytical framework, which allows for a more holistic understanding of the existing dynamics. The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach that examines the relationship between the dimensions of religion, culture, and education simultaneously in Indonesia, a country known for its extraordinary diversity. For this reason, it is both important and interesting to conduct this study in order to understand the relationship between religion and cultural pluralism within the context of multicultural education in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (Agus et al., 2023). The aim of this study is to explore the understanding of the role of religion, cultural pluralism, and multicultural education in shaping the identity of individuals and society. To achieve this research goal, an in-depth review is conducted using academic books and journals that are relevant and can address the issues raised in this study. The data sources are derived from reputable books and scholarly journals. The data is then analyzed in depth and presented in descriptive

form in accordance with the research objectives (Rahmadi, 2011). It is hoped that this study will provide a description of the role of religion, cultural pluralism, and multicultural education, especially in Islamic education.

## **RESULT AND DISUSSION**

This study aims to identify the role and relationship between religion and cultural pluralism in shaping multicultural education, both in educational policies and classroom practices. Based on data obtained from a literature review, several key findings were identified that describe the contributions of religion and cultural pluralism in the context of multicultural education.

### **1. The Role of Religion in Multicultural Education**

The research findings indicate that religion has a significant influence on multicultural education. Most respondents stated that inclusive religious education can strengthen understanding of tolerance, peace, and mutual respect. This is reflected in educational policies that support the integration of religious values into the curriculum, both at the primary and tertiary levels. In some schools and universities, religious education is not limited to the teachings of one religion but also includes the understanding of other religions, which contributes to the formation of interfaith tolerance (Nuha, 2024).

Religion plays a crucial role in shaping individual identity. It provides meaning and direction in life, as well as a framework of values that guide social behavior. Religion is often closely linked to culture, as reflected in the practices, symbols, and values upheld by society (Amani et al., 2024). However, religion can also become a source of division if it is not accompanied by attitudes of tolerance and understanding of differences. For example, in a pluralistic society like Indonesia, there are significant differences in the ways individuals from various religions view life, diversity, and interfaith relations. Therefore, religious education based on the principle of tolerance becomes crucial in the context of a plural society.

### **2. The Influence of Cultural Pluralism on Multicultural Education**

Cultural pluralism, which involves the diversity of tribes, ethnicities, and languages, also plays a key role in shaping inclusive educational practices. Data shows that in areas with high cultural diversity, educational policies accommodate the needs of different cultures, such as teaching in local languages, as well as celebrating major holidays from various cultures and religions (Amin, 2018). For example, some schools hold events that involve various cultures and religions, enriching students' learning experiences.

Cultural pluralism refers to the existence of diverse cultures, tribes, and ethnicities living side by side within a society. Indonesia, as a country with over 300 ethnic groups and diverse religions, is a concrete example of cultural pluralism. This

diversity presents challenges in building understanding and mutual respect among individuals from different backgrounds (Amin, 2018). The importance of cultural pluralism in education is to create space for students to understand and appreciate this diversity. This can help reduce the potential for conflict and strengthen a sense of unity among different groups in society (Rozi, 2017).

### **3. Learning Practices that Reflect Multicultural Values**

Based on observations in several classrooms, it was found that teaching which integrates multicultural values is carried out through project-based approaches, group discussions, and problem-based learning. In practice, teachers and lecturers encourage students to share their views on cultural and religious differences, and how these differences can enrich social life (Nuha, 2024). However, there are several challenges in implementing this policy, such as limited resources and the lack of preparedness among some educators in managing highly diverse classrooms.

According to Banks (2016), multicultural education has great potential to shape individuals who can live harmoniously in a pluralistic society. In multicultural education, students are taught to recognize, understand, and appreciate differences, as well as to overcome prejudices and stereotypes that may arise from ignorance of diversity. Several challenges identified in this study related to the implementation of multicultural education include resistance to change within the education system, lack of training for teachers, and the absence of clear policy support. Although there are policies supporting multicultural education, its implementation is still limited in certain regions or schools (Hadijaya et al., 2024). This may be due to various factors, such as budget constraints, a lack of awareness of the importance of multiculturalism, or cultural and social barriers.

### **4. The Relationship Between Religion and Cultural Pluralism in Multicultural Education**

Religion and cultural pluralism play a crucial role in creating a harmonious and inclusive multicultural education. Religion, which teaches values of tolerance, peace, and respect for differences, serves as a foundation for building understanding among various societal groups. In the context of education, this contributes to teaching that fosters the development of students' character, not only making them intelligent but also empathetic towards others (Priyatna, 2016). Cultural pluralism, on the other hand, enriches students' learning experiences by introducing them to diverse perspectives. When cultural diversity is valued in education, students can learn to view differences as strengths rather than obstacles. Therefore, multicultural education aims not only to provide knowledge but also to cultivate attitudes that support peaceful and harmonious social life.

However, despite the existence of many policies that support multicultural education, its implementation still faces challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of training for educators on how to manage diversity in the classroom. This leads to the inability of some teachers to effectively handle highly diverse classrooms. Furthermore, existing policies are not yet fully uniform across

Indonesia, meaning that some regions or schools have yet to integrate multicultural principles into their teaching practices.

Multicultural education theories, such as those proposed by Banks (2016), state that successful education is one that is able to integrate various cultural and religious perspectives. In this study, it has been shown that religion and cultural pluralism not only support but also enrich multicultural learning, creating a more inclusive and dynamic classroom. The theory of interculturalism is important for bringing individuals closer to shared values that involve all cultural and religious groups, while still respecting differences (Hanum, 2015). This is clearly evident in learning practices that integrate cross-cultural activities, which not only highlight diversity but also promote intercultural dialogue.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that religion and cultural pluralism make significant contributions in shaping multicultural education. Although challenges in implementation still exist, policies and practices that support multicultural education provide a strong foundation for creating a more inclusive and harmonious society. Therefore, further efforts are needed to strengthen training for educators and ensure that education policies supporting diversity can be applied evenly across Indonesia. This research emphasizes that religion and cultural pluralism play a crucial role in the development of multicultural education. These two elements influence both education policies and classroom practices, and contribute significantly to the creation of a harmonious and inclusive society. Although challenges in implementation remain, especially regarding the gap between policy and practice on the ground, multicultural education that is sensitive to cultural and religious diversity provides a solid foundation for strengthening social harmony. Therefore, to ensure that multicultural education is optimally implemented, further efforts are required to enhance educator training and ensure that education policies supporting diversity are applied consistently across Indonesia. Future research could explore additional strategies to address the challenges of implementing multicultural policies and measure their impact on the quality of education and social relations within society.

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