

Internalization of Multicultural Values Through Islamic Religious Education in Secondary School Students

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Received:	Reviewed:	Accepted :	Published :
January 07, 2026	April 22, 2026	June 25, 2026	June 28, 2026
DOI	https://doi.org/10.47625/fitrah.v17i1.1241		

ABSTRACT

This study examines the internalization of multicultural values through the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in secondary school students with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation in several public and vocational high schools in Indonesia. The results of the study show that PAI plays a strategic role as a pedagogical instrument in forming attitudes of tolerance, mutual respect, and inclusivity of students when implemented contextually and dialogically. The novelty of this research lies in the affirmation that the effectiveness of internalizing multicultural values is not only determined by the teaching material, but also by the ideological awareness of teachers, school policy support, and the integration of curricular and extracurricular activities. These findings strengthen PAI's position as a vehicle for strengthening religiosity with a humanitarian perspective in the midst of the reality of a multicultural society. The implications of this study reinforce the urgency of integrating multicultural values in PAI learning as a strategy to increase social harmony in diverse school environments.

Keywords: Internalization of multicultural values, Islamic Religious Education, secondary school, tolerance, inclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia takes place in a multicultural society—diverse religions, cultures, and ethnicities. Secondary school as a level of formal education plays an important role in instilling inclusive social values. Islamic Religious Education (PAI), in addition to conveying religious knowledge, has the potential to be a vehicle for internalizing the value of tolerance and mutual respect between students.¹

However, there is still a phenomenon of intolerance that shows a lack of a deep understanding of multicultural values in the formal education process.² Given the importance of the function of PAI in the formation of students' character, this study attempts to outline the process of internalizing multicultural values through PAI learning in secondary school.

Indonesia is a nation with social complexity characterized by interrelated religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and social background diversity. This multicultural reality not only represents the richness of national identity, but also presents structural challenges in maintaining social cohesion, especially through formal education pathways. In this context, schools play a strategic role as a space for socializing values that determine the direction of shaping students' attitudes and characters. Therefore, education cannot be reduced solely as a

¹ Anan, Asrul. *Implementation of Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education in Building Students' Religious Harmony*. Journal of Multicultural Education, 2023.

² Saud, Princess Anairotus, Mustakimah, and Nurul Mubin. *Internalizing Multicultural Values in Education to Realize a Tolerant Culture in Schools*. Indonesian Journal of Education Research, 2025.

process of knowledge transfer, but must be positioned as a strategic instrument for internalizing social values that uphold tolerance, justice, and respect for differences as the foundation of harmonious social life.³

In this discussion, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important position. PAI not only serves to form students who are ritually obedient, but also serves to build social awareness, humanitarian ethics, and inclusive attitudes. Islamic values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'awun* (cooperation), *'adl* (justice), and *ukhuwah insaniyah* (brotherhood of humanity) are actually in line with the principles of multicultural education.⁴ However, in practice, PAI learning in secondary school is still often oriented towards cognitive and normative aspects, so it has not fully touched the affective and social dimensions of students optimally.⁵

Along with increasingly complex social dynamics, various phenomena of intolerance, stereotypes, and exclusivism are still found in the educational environment. Some studies show that low multicultural understanding among learners has the potential to trigger discriminatory attitudes and social conflicts, both verbally and symbolically.⁶ This condition confirms that the internalization of multicultural values in learning, especially through PAI subjects, is an urgent need. Internalization is interpreted as a process of instilling values that do not stop at the knowledge stage, but continue to habituate behaviors and attitudes in their daily lives.⁷

Multicultural value is a value that emphasizes respect for the diversity of cultures, religions, and other social backgrounds in social interaction. In the context of PAI, these values are rooted in Islamic teachings that encourage *ukhuwah*, tolerance, and a balance between personal beliefs and respect for plurality.⁸

Multicultural education in general consists of internalization stages which include moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.⁹ Implementation in PAI learning involves the integration of tolerance values in the curriculum and learning practices.¹⁰

Multicultural education in PAI requires a dialogical, contextual, and reflective pedagogical approach. PAI teachers are required to be able to relate teaching materials to the diverse social realities of students, so that religious values are not understood textually and exclusively. This approach is in line with the moderate Islamic paradigm that places differences as *sunnatullah* and part of the dynamics of human life.¹¹ Thus, PAI can function as a strategic instrument in building the character of students who are religious and tolerant.

At the secondary school level, students are in a phase of psychosocial development that greatly determines the formation of social identity and attitudes. The values instilled in this phase tend to shape long-term mindsets and behaviors. Therefore, the process of internalizing multicultural values through PAI in secondary school is very crucial. Learning that is consciously designed to instill the value of inclusivity and respect for differences is believed

³ Asrul Anan, *The Implementation of Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education in Building Religious Harmony for Students* (Malang: Unisma Press, 2023), 12.

⁴ Indriyani Ma'rifah, "Institutionalization of Multicultural Values in Religious Education in Inclusive Schools, Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 2 (2023): 155–157.

⁵ Moh. Irmawan Jauhari, "Internalization of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Values," *Teaching: Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 6, no. 1 (2025): 45.

⁶ Saud Putri Anairotus et al., "Internalizing Multicultural Values in Education to Realize a Tolerant Culture in Schools," *Indonesian Journal of Education Research* 4, no. 2 (2025): 88–90.

⁷ Dhikrul Hakim, "Internalization of Multicultural Values in the Learning Process of Islamic Religious Education," *JEMOIS* 5, no. 1 (2025): 22.

⁸ Indriyani Ma'rifah, *Institutionalization of Multicultural Values in Religious Education in Inclusive Schools, Indonesia*. Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam, 2023.

⁹ "Internalization of Multicultural Education Values in Islamic Boarding Schools." *Edusoshum: Journal of Islamic Education and Social Humanities*, 2025.

¹⁰ Hernawati, Andy Hadiyanto, and Amaliyah. *Integration of Multicultural Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning (Study of SMAN 14 Jakarta)*. Indonesian Journal of Education Research, 2025.

¹¹ Jahrul Sihotang et al., "Internalization of Moderate Religious Values in Islamic Religious Education Materials," *Journal of Educational Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2025): 64–65.

to be able to build a harmonious school climate and prevent the emergence of identity-based conflicts.¹²

A number of recent studies have shown that the success of internalizing multicultural values in PAI is greatly influenced by learning strategies, teacher examples, and school policy support.¹³ However, there is still a gap between the ideal concept of multicultural education and its implementation in the field. Many schools do not yet have systematic pedagogical guidance in integrating multicultural values into PAI learning. In addition, teachers' competence in implementing a multicultural approach also still varies.¹⁴

Departing from this presentation, this research has an urgency to comprehensively examine the mechanism of internalizing multicultural values through the learning of Islamic Religious Education in high school students. This study is expected not only to enrich conceptual development in the realm of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education, but also to provide practical implications for teachers and education policy makers in formulating and implementing inclusive, humanist, and contextual PAI learning in accordance with the social dynamics of Indonesian society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach employing a descriptive research design. The qualitative method is selected to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the processes involved in the internalization of multicultural values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) among secondary school students, particularly with regard to their learning experiences, perceptions, and educational practices within the school setting. This approach allows researchers to explore the meaning behind social actions and educational interactions that occur during the learning process.¹⁵

The research was carried out in several secondary schools that have diverse student characteristics in terms of social and cultural backgrounds. The selection of the location was carried out purposively with the consideration that the school has implemented PAI learning in a multicultural environment. The research subjects include Islamic Religious Education teachers, high school level students, and school leadership elements that play a role in learning policy. The determination of informants is carried out using the purposive sampling technique, which is to select informants who are considered to have knowledge and experience relevant to the focus of the research.¹⁶

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to obtain information related to learning strategies, teachers' and students' understanding of multicultural values, and obstacles faced in their implementation. Observations are carried out directly in the PAI learning process to observe the interaction between teachers and students as well as the actualization of multicultural values in the classroom. The documentation study is used to examine learning tools, such as Learning Implementation Plans (RPP), syllabus, and relevant school policies.¹⁷

Data analysis was carried out simultaneously from the beginning of data collection until the research was completed. The data analysis technique uses an interactive model which

¹² Hernawati, Andy Hadiyanto, and Amaliyah, "Integration of Multicultural Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Indonesian Journal of Education Research* 3, no. 1 (2025): 41.

¹³ Azizah Hanum et al., "Internalization of Multicultural Islamic Education Values in High School Students," *Munaddhomah* 6, no. 2 (2025): 109.

¹⁴ Muzammil, Maskuri, and Chalimatus Sa'dijah, "Internalizing Multicultural Values through Religious Activities in Secondary Schools," *Journal of Multicultural* 7, no. 1 (2025): 77.

¹⁵ John W. Creswell dan Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2024), 45–47.

¹⁶ Sugiyono, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2022), 96.

¹⁷ Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 6th ed. (London : SAGE Publications, 2022), 167–169.

includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification. At the data reduction stage, the researcher sorts and focuses data that is relevant to the research objective. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a descriptive narrative to facilitate understanding the relationship between findings. The final stage is carried out by drawing conclusions based on patterns and themes that emerge from the research data.¹⁸

To enhance data credibility, this study employs triangulation as a validation strategy, encompassing both source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation is conducted by cross-examining information obtained from teachers, students, and school administrators to identify consistency and variation in perspectives. Methodological triangulation is applied by comparing data generated through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. In addition, a member-checking process is undertaken by discussing the research findings with selected informants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations and strengthen the trustworthiness of the data.¹⁹ This study pays attention to the ethical principles of qualitative research, including informed *consent*, identity confidentiality, and responsible use of data. All informants will be explained about the purpose of the research and their rights at the time of the research.²⁰

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Strategy for Internalizing Multicultural Values in PAI

The results of the study show several strategies for internalizing multicultural values, including: Integration of tolerance values in PAI learning materials, which combines religious narratives with students' socio-cultural contexts.²¹ Curricular and extracurricular activities that apply discussions, group work, and social activities as a vehicle for practicing multicultural values.²² Teachers' examples in practicing mutual respect and interfaith dialogue as a model for students.²³

The results of the study show that the internalization of multicultural values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in secondary schools is carried out through various pedagogical strategies that are integrated into the formal learning process and school culture. The strategy is not only oriented to the delivery of teaching materials, but also directed at the formation of attitudes, behaviors, and social awareness of students in facing the reality of diversity.

The first dominant strategy found was the integration of multicultural values in PAI learning materials and content. PAI teachers consciously relate teaching materials to the context of the plural social life of students, such as the discussion of Qur'anic verses and hadiths about tolerance, justice, and human brotherhood. The material is not delivered textually only, but is contextualized with the phenomenon of religious and cultural diversity in the school environment and society. This approach helps students understand that Islamic teachings have a direct relevance to multicultural social life.²⁴

¹⁸ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, & Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2023), 33–36.

¹⁹ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2020), 259.

²⁰ Asrul Anan, *Multicultural Islamic Religious Education* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2023), 142.

²¹ Muzammil, Maskuri, & Chalimatus Sa'dijah. *Internalization of Multicultural Values through Religious Activities at SMAN 1 Grati*. Journal of Multicultural (Unisma), 2025. Sihotang, Jahrul, Yusnaili Budianti, and Solihah Titin Sumanti. *Internalization of Moderate Religious Values in Islamic Religious Education Materials for Students*. Journal of Educational Sciences, 2025.

²² Dhikrul Hakim. *Internalization of Multicultural Values in the Learning Process of Islamic Religious Education*. JEMOIS, 2025.

²³ Azizah Hanum, Mohammad Al-Farabi, dan Feri Firmansyah. *Internalization of Multicultural Islamic Education Values in High School Students*. Munaddhomah, 2025.

²⁴ Indriyani Ma'rifah, "Institutionalization of Multicultural Values in Religious Education in Inclusive Schools, Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 2 (2023): 158–160.

The second strategy is the application of a dialogical and participatory learning approach. PAI teachers encourage open discussions, questions and answers, and critical reflection related to issues of difference and diversity. In the discussion, students are given the space to express their views, experiences, and attitudes towards differences openly and respectfully with each other. This dialogical approach has proven to be effective in fostering empathy and reducing prejudice between students.²⁵ PAI learning is no longer one-way, but rather a space for value dialogue that brings together religious teachings with social reality.

The third strategy is the example of teachers as a model for internalizing multicultural values. The findings of the study show that the attitude of PAI teachers in interacting with students has a significant influence on the success of internalizing values. Teachers who show a fair, non-discriminatory, open to differences, and respect students' opinions become concrete examples in the practice of multicultural values. This example reinforces the internalization process because learners not only understand grades cognitively, but also witness their implementation directly in daily interactions.²⁶

In addition, the internalization strategy is also carried out through the habituation of multicultural values in school activities, both through intracurricular and extracurricular activities. Religious activities, cross-background group work, and joint social activities are effective means of instilling the value of tolerance and cooperation. This habituation encourages students to practice multicultural values in real terms, so that these values do not stop at the conceptual level, but become part of social behavior.²⁷

From a theoretical perspective, these strategies are in line with the concept of internalizing values which includes the stages of knowing, feeling, and acting. Students are not only given knowledge about the importance of tolerance, but also built emotional awareness and the opportunity to practice it in school life.²⁸ This shows that PAI learning has great potential as a multicultural educational vehicle if it is designed integratively and reflectively.

However, this study also found that the effectiveness of the strategy of internalizing multicultural values is greatly influenced by teachers' pedagogical competence and school policy support. Teachers who have a limited understanding of multicultural education tend to still use conventional approaches that are less dialogical. Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity through multicultural pedagogical training is an important need so that the value internalization strategy can run optimally.²⁹

Thus, efforts to internalize multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education learning at the secondary school level are not solely determined by the substance of the material taught, but are also greatly influenced by pedagogical strategies, examples shown by teachers, and school cultural climate that upholds the principle of inclusivity. This finding confirms that Islamic Religious Education has a strategic position in shaping the character of students based on the values of religiosity, being tolerant, and being able to interact harmoniously in the life of a pluralistic society.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Internalization of Multicultural Values in PAI

Based on the findings of the study, the internalization of multicultural values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in secondary schools is influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors that are intertwined. Identification of these factors is important because

²⁵ Dhikrul Hakim, "Internalization of Multicultural Values in the Learning Process of Islamic Religious Education," *JEMOIS* 5, no. 1 (2025): 24–26.

²⁶ Azizah Hanum, Mohammad Al-Farabi, and Feri Firmansyah, "Internalization of Multicultural Islamic Education Values in High School Students," *Munaddhomah* 6, no. 2 (2025): 112.

²⁷ Muzammil, Maskuri, and Chalimatus Sa'dijah, "Internalizing Multicultural Values through Religious Activities in Secondary Schools," *Journal of Multicultural* 7, no. 1 (2025): 79–81.

²⁸ Moh. Irmawan Jauhari, "Internalization of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Values," *Teachings: Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 6, no. 1 (2025): 47–48.

²⁹ Hernawati, Andy Hadiyanto, and Amaliyah, "Integration of Multicultural Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Indonesian Journal of Education Research* 3, no. 1 (2025): 44–45.

it determines the effectiveness of the internalization strategies that have been designed and implemented in learning.

The main supporting factor comes from the school's institutional commitment to strengthening the values of tolerance and inclusivity. Schools that have explicit policies related to strengthening religious moderation and respect for diversity tend to be more successful in internalizing multicultural values. This policy is reflected in the school's visions and missions, discipline, and student character development programs. A conducive school environment creates a safe space for students to express their identity without fear of discrimination.³⁰

The next supporting factor is the strategic role of PAI teachers as agents of internalizing values. Teachers who have a moderate pedagogical and theological understanding are able to package PAI material in a contextual and dialogical manner. The findings of the study show that teachers who actively associate teaching materials with the multicultural social reality of students can accelerate the process of internalizing tolerance values. This reinforces the argument that teacher competence is not only academic, but also ideological and ethical.³¹ This is where the novelty of this research lies, which emphasizes that the success of internalizing multicultural values in PAI is highly determined by the ideological awareness of teachers in interpreting Islamic teachings in an inclusive manner.

In addition, the diversity of students' backgrounds is actually a supporting factor when managed pedagogically. Cross-cultural and religious social interaction in the school environment becomes a social laboratory that allows students to learn directly about differences. PAI learning that utilizes this reality as a learning resource has proven to be more effective than a normative approach alone.³²

On the other hand, this study also found a number of inhibiting factors. One of the main obstacles is the still dominant cognitive and textual oriented PAI learning approach. In some cases, teachers tend to focus on achieving curriculum targets without developing the affective and social dimensions of students. This condition causes multicultural values to be understood only as a concept, not as an attitude to life.³³

Another obstacle is the limitation of teacher training related to multicultural pedagogy and religious moderation. Not all PAI teachers receive adequate debriefing to manage multicultural classes in a reflective and dialogical manner. As a result, some teachers still feel hesitant to discuss sensitive issues related to religious and cultural differences.³⁴ These findings strengthen the urgency of developing policies to increase the capacity of PAI teachers based on multicultural education.

Implications of Internalization of Multicultural Values on Students' Tolerance Attitudes

The internalization of multicultural values through Islamic Religious Education has significant implications for the formation of tolerance attitudes of students in secondary schools. The results showed that students who were involved in multicultural value-based PAI learning showed a change in more inclusive attitudes in interacting with peers from different backgrounds.

The first implication is seen in the increased attitude of mutual respect and acceptance of differences. Students no longer view religious and cultural differences as a threat, but rather as a social reality that must be respected. This is reflected in daily interaction patterns, such as

³⁰ Asrul Anan, *Multicultural Islamic Religious Education* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2023), 98–100.

³¹ Indriyani Ma'rifah, "Institutionalization of Multicultural Values in Religious Education in Inclusive Schools, Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 2 (2023): 162.

³² Muzammil, Maskuri, and Chalimatus Sa'dijah, "Internalizing Multicultural Values through Religious Activities in Secondary Schools," *Journal of Multicultural* 7, no. 1 (2025): 83.

³³ Moh. Irmawan Jauhari, "Internalization of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Values," *Lesson* 6, no. 1 (2025): 49.

³⁴ Hernawati, Andy Hadiyanto, and Amaliyah, "Integration of Multicultural Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Indonesian Journal of Education Research* 3, no. 1 (2025): 46–47.

cross-background group work and more open communication.³⁵ The internalization of multicultural values through PAI acts as an ideological filter that prevents the growth of exclusive and intolerant attitudes.

The second implication is the formation of students' reflective awareness of religious teachings. Students begin to understand that religiosity is not only measured by ritual obedience, but also by the ability to respect fellow humans. This realization shows the success of PAI in integrating the theological and social dimensions in a balanced manner.³⁶ In terms of novelty, this study emphasizes that multicultural PAI does not weaken the religious identity of students, but rather strengthens religiosity with a humanitarian perspective.

The next implication is the development of the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. Students who are familiar with value dialogue in PAI learning tend to resolve differences of opinion through deliberation and empathic communication. This attitude is an important social capital in building a harmonious and democratic school culture.³⁷

Overall, the internalization of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education has direct implications for the formation of students' tolerant character. These findings contribute novelty to the study of PAI, especially by emphasizing that PAI is not only an instrument for the transmission of religious values, but also a strategic means of building social harmony in Indonesia's multicultural society.

CONCLUSION

The internalization of multicultural values through Islamic Religious Education in secondary schools has been proven to contribute to the formation of inclusive and tolerant character of students. Best practices include integrating these values into formal teaching, habituation through school activities, and positive role models of teachers. The practical implication is the need for the development of school policies and teacher training in line with the multicultural challenges in Indonesian society.

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the internalization of multicultural values through Islamic Religious Education in secondary schools plays a strategic role in shaping the attitude of tolerance and inclusivity of students. An effective internalization process does not only depend on the integration of multicultural values in PAI teaching materials, but is also determined by dialogical learning approaches, teacher examples, and support for school policies oriented towards religious moderation. The findings of this study confirm the novelty that Islamic Religious Education, when understood and applied contextually and humanistly, does not weaken the religious identity of students, but rather strengthens religiosity that is humane and able to respond to the reality of diversity constructively. Therefore, strengthening the pedagogical competence of PAI teachers based on multicultural education is an urgent need to ensure the sustainability of inclusive learning and make a real contribution to social harmony in the school environment.

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³⁵ Azizah Hanum, Mohammad Al-Farabi, and Feri Firmansyah, “Internalization of Multicultural Islamic Education Values in High School Students,” *Munaddhomah* 6, no. 2 (2025): 115.

³⁶ Dhikrul Hakim, “Internalization of Multicultural Values in the Learning Process of Islamic Religious Education,” *JEMOIS* 5, no. 1 (2025): 28.

³⁷ Jahrul Sihotang et al., “Internalization of Moderate Religious Values in Islamic Religious Education Materials,” *Journal of Educational Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2025): 68–69.

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