



# Integrating Multicultural Education in Islamic Primary Boarding Schools: Roles and Educational Implications

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## Abstract

This study examines the role of Islamic primary educational institutions, particularly madrasah and boarding-based schools, in promoting multicultural education. It focuses on both academic and non-academic strategies in fostering inclusive, tolerant, and diversity-aware student character. The study aims to explore how multicultural values are integrated through curriculum design, extracurricular activities, and social interactions within the school environment. This research employs a qualitative approach using content analysis. Data were collected from relevant books, journal articles, and academic documents related to multicultural education and Islamic schooling. The data were systematically analyzed through coding, categorization, and interpretation to identify key themes, institutional roles, and educational practices. The findings reveal that these institutions play a significant role in developing multicultural education. Academically, inclusive teaching approaches are implemented to respect cultural and religious diversity. Non-academically, activities such as arts, sports, social projects, and intercultural dialogue contribute to strengthening students' tolerance, empathy, and collaborative skills. This study highlights the importance of curriculum reinforcement, teacher capacity building, and community engagement in enhancing the effectiveness of multicultural education. The findings contribute to strengthening the discourse on Islamic education and its role in fostering social cohesion in diverse societies.

## INTRODUCTION

In the midst of globalization and cultural diversity, multicultural education has become increasingly important in shaping a generation that is tolerant, inclusive, and capable of living harmoniously with differences (Zamzami et al., 2025). Indonesia, as a country rich in religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity, faces challenges in maintaining social harmony; therefore, education must be directed toward fostering mutual respect and understanding among citizens (Ixfina, 2024). Islamic primary educational institutions, particularly madrasah and boarding-based schools, play a strategic role in shaping students' character from an early age. As institutions grounded in Islamic values, madrasah and pesantren not only focus on religious

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instruction but also bear responsibility for developing ethics, morality, and social awareness among students (Zain et al., 2024). Therefore, the development of multicultural education in Islamic primary schools is essential to prepare a religious generation that is also capable of accepting and respecting differences, thereby fostering social harmony from the early stages of formal education.

Multicultural education plays a crucial role in plural and diverse societies, including Indonesia. Legally, this is grounded in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that education must respect diversity, instill moral values, and develop socially just individuals (Asrulla et al., 2025). Furthermore, madrasah curriculum regulations highlight the importance of integrating religious education with character education, thereby providing legitimacy and a strategic role for madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools in shaping tolerant and inclusive generations (Selvia, 2024).

From a philosophical perspective, multicultural education aligns with Islamic principles that emphasize justice, humanity, and equality (Miftahussurur & Firdaus, 2024). Religious values such as tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect serve as the moral foundation for shaping students' character and morality from an early age (Putri & Wiranata, 2025). Thus, madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools function not only as institutions for religious instruction but also as platforms for developing social character that appreciates diversity and fosters solidarity.

From an educational standpoint, education plays a significant role in shaping knowledgeable, morally grounded, and socially competent individuals (Susanti & Hasmiza, 2025). Through both formal curricula and extracurricular activities, madrasah can cultivate awareness of cultural, religious, and social diversity, enabling students to grow into tolerant, inclusive individuals who can adapt to diverse environments (Klein et al., 2021). Therefore, this study is important to conduct in order to identify strategies, methods, and best practices of Islamic primary schools in effectively and systematically developing multicultural education.

This study is considered significant because systematic scholarly research examining the role of madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools in multicultural education remains limited. Most previous studies have primarily focused on academic or religious aspects without deeply analyzing how multicultural values are integrated into curricula, extracurricular activities, and daily practices within these institutions (Tomia et al., 2025). This study aims to provide a scientific basis for understanding the mechanisms and strategies employed by madrasah to instill values such as tolerance, cooperation, and respect for diversity. The importance of this study is also driven by the increasing plurality of modern society and high social mobility, requiring younger generations to be equipped with social and cultural competencies from an early age to interact positively within diverse environments (Akyuni et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2024; Engkizar, Jaafar, Hamzah, Syafril, Oktavia, et al., 2026).

Theoretically, this study expands the discourse on multicultural education by positioning madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools as strategic institutions in shaping students' character (Kurdi, 2023). The findings of this study can serve as important references for curriculum development, instructional strategies, and educational policies based on pluralistic values. Practically, this study contributes to character development by preparing a generation that is tolerant, inclusive, and ready to face challenges in the global era (Suprayitno & Moefad, 2024). In the future, the findings may serve as guidelines for policymakers and educators to integrate multicultural education more systematically into religion-based primary education, thereby creating a more inclusive and adaptive learning environment.

This study has distinctive features compared to previous research on multicultural education. Most prior studies have focused on secondary education or general education, emphasizing general curricula or broad character education. In contrast, this study specifically focuses on madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools as Islamic educational institutions that shape students' character from an

early age. Moreover, this study adopts a holistic approach encompassing academic curricula, daily practices, habituation activities, social interactions, and moral development. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of how multicultural education is practically implemented within religion-based primary education contexts.

Unlike previous studies that tend to separate religious education from multicultural education, this study emphasizes their harmonious integration. This approach aims to equip students with tolerance, collaborative skills, and respect for diversity. The study is also relevant to current and future challenges, including the impacts of globalization and increasing social mobility, while providing practical recommendations for madrasah and pesantren in preparing a religious yet adaptive generation (Rachman & Muallif, 2024). Furthermore, this study contributes both theoretically and practically, serving as a foundation for curriculum development, instructional strategies, and habituation programs, thereby strengthening the implementation of multicultural education within Islamic education and providing a reference for future studies.

This study aims to examine the role of madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools in developing multicultural education. The focus lies in understanding how these institutions instill values of tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for cultural, social, and religious diversity through curriculum design, learning activities, and social interactions within the school environment. Additionally, this study seeks to evaluate the extent to which the strategies and methods employed by educators and school administrators are effective in guiding students to internalize multicultural values comprehensively. It is expected that the findings will provide practical academic contributions to the development of multicultural education practices, as well as serve as an important reference in strengthening the role of madrasah as institutions that shape a tolerant, inclusive, and socially adaptive generation.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using qualitative content analysis to examine the role of madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools in the development of multicultural education. This approach is selected because it enables a systematic analysis of meanings, themes, and patterns derived from relevant written sources, allowing for an in-depth understanding of multicultural education within the context of Islamic education (Alouzi et al., 2026; Defriyanto et al., 2026; Engkizar, Jaafar, Hamzah, Syafril, Febriani, et al., 2026; Kassymova et al., 2025).

The data sources consist of various written documents, including academic books, scholarly journal articles, research reports, educational policy documents, madrasah curricula, educational guidelines, and other relevant literature related to pesantren, madrasah, and multicultural education. In addition, this study utilizes official publications from educational institutions and legal documents related to the Indonesian education system to strengthen its juridical and educational foundation. The data collection process was conducted through the stages of identification, selection, and classification of relevant sources aligned with the research focus (Hidayat et al., 2025). Particular emphasis was placed on selecting credible sources with strong relevance to the role of madrasah in multicultural education.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques through several stages, namely coding, categorization, and interpretation (Mujahiddin et al., 2021). In the coding stage, meaningful units related to multicultural values, such as tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for diversity, were identified. Subsequently, the data were organized into thematic categories to uncover patterns and relationships among concepts. The final stage involved interpretation to understand the roles, strategies, contributions, and challenges faced by madrasah and Islamic primary boarding

schools in developing multicultural education (Az-Zahra et al., 2025; Mutiaramses et al., 2025).

The findings of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools in promoting multicultural education. The results may also serve as important references for educational policy development, improvement of teaching practices, and future research (Rusli et al., 2025). Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of a more inclusive and adaptive education system in response to cultural, social, and religious diversity in society.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Concept of Multicultural Education in Madrasah and Islamic Primary Boarding Schools**

Multicultural education is an educational approach that emphasizes the importance of recognition, appreciation, and respect for diversity in society, including differences in culture, ethnicity, language, and religion (Rasyid et al., 2024). This approach aims to equip students with the ability to understand and appreciate differences, enabling them to live harmoniously within a pluralistic environment (Fikriyah et al., 2025). Particularly in the context of madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools, multicultural education is not only focused on academic instruction but is also directed toward shaping students' character to be inclusive, tolerant, and ethically grounded (Santoso & Ahmad, 2025).

Islamic values serve as a strong foundation for the implementation of multicultural education in madrasah. Principles such as justice, compassion, empathy, and cooperation, as taught in Islamic teachings, function as guidelines for students to understand and respect differences (Muhtarom et al., 2024). By internalizing these values, students learn to adopt the perspectives of others, respect diversity, and interact with mutual understanding and respect (Wasilah et al., 2023). This process builds a solid moral and spiritual foundation, which in turn supports the creation of a harmonious and inclusive social life.

Furthermore, multicultural education in madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools also emphasizes the application of multicultural values through inclusive teaching and learning practices. Students are encouraged to actively participate in group discussions, collaborative projects, and extracurricular activities involving peers from diverse backgrounds (Apriliani et al., 2024). This approach not only broadens academic knowledge but also develops social skills, communication abilities, and teamwork competencies (Suleman, 2024). Thus, students are trained to navigate social dynamics in an open-minded, wise, and adaptive manner toward existing differences in their surroundings.

Therefore, multicultural education in madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools plays a crucial role in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually competent but also emotionally and socially mature. This approach enables students to develop into individuals who appreciate diversity, manage conflicts constructively, and actively contribute to building a just, harmonious, and civilized society (Juliani et al., 2025). Learning processes that emphasize multicultural values prepare students to become responsive, empathetic, and responsible citizens in facing social and cultural challenges in their environment (Ulya, 2025).

### **The Role of Madrasah and Islamic Primary Boarding Schools in Shaping Multicultural Character**

Islamic primary madrasah and boarding schools play a highly strategic role in shaping students' character in appreciating diversity. This role extends beyond academic instruction or religious education to include the development of inclusive social and moral attitudes (Saniya & Filasofa, 2025). By instilling multicultural values,

madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools contribute to developing a younger generation capable of living harmoniously in pluralistic societies, respecting differences, and upholding principles of justice, tolerance, and mutual respect (Asror, 2022). This educational process enables students not only to achieve intellectual competence but also to develop emotional and social maturity, preparing them to navigate diverse life dynamics (Sumiyati et al., 2025).

The curriculum implemented in madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools is designed to integrate academic learning with character education in a comprehensive manner (Affifah et al., 2025). In addition to studying religious and general subjects, students are actively engaged in various activities that instill multicultural values, such as the habituation of good morals, intercultural dialogue, group discussions, and social projects (Miftahussurur & Firdaus, 2024). These activities aim to ensure that students not only understand the concept of tolerance theoretically but are also able to apply it in their daily lives, both within the school environment and in the wider community (Irwansyah et al., 2024). Through this approach, the curriculum of madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools supports the development of inclusive, tolerant, and socially adaptive character in response to cultural diversity (Ningsih et al., 2025).

Furthermore, collaborative activities involving students from diverse backgrounds provide direct experiences regarding the importance of cooperation, communication, and respect for differences (Wibowo, 2024). With guidance and supervision from teachers and school administrators, students learn how to resolve conflicts constructively, appreciate others' opinions, and internalize social values grounded in Islamic teachings (Mulyawati et al., 2024). This approach not only enhances students' social and emotional competencies but also shapes their character to become positive agents of change in diverse and pluralistic societies (Jayanti & Umar, 2024).

Thus, madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools' function as educational institutions that not only deliver knowledge but also comprehensively instill multicultural values. Through inclusive educational approaches and diverse learning experiences, students are equipped with the capacity to become tolerant, empathetic individuals who actively participate in building a harmonious, just, and civilized society (Az-Zahra & Nabila, 2024). Such education emphasizes the development of character and social skills, ensuring that students are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally mature and prepared to face the dynamics of pluralistic social life (Suprayitno & Moefad, 2024).

### **The Role of Teachers and School Administrators as Role Models and Facilitators**

Teachers and madrasah administrators play a crucial role in shaping students' character in moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. Their responsibilities extend beyond delivering instructional content to serving as role models in attitudes, behavior, and daily interactions (Putri et al., 2024). By demonstrating noble character, honesty, justice, and empathy, teachers and administrators provide concrete examples that enable students to internalize positive values in their lives (Judrah et al., 2024). This approach ensures that education in madrasah is not solely academic but also emphasizes character formation, equipping students to face social challenges with wisdom and integrity.

In addition to serving as role models, teachers and administrators also function as facilitators in implementing multicultural education (Tuala et al., 2024). They design inclusive and participatory learning strategies that encourage students to actively engage in discussions, collaborate, and respect differing perspectives. In situations involving conflict or differing viewpoints, teachers and administrators act as mediators who guide students toward fair and constructive solutions (Lestari et al.,

2025). Thus, their role extends beyond academic instruction to include the development of students' social, emotional, and communication skills.

Furthermore, the role of teachers and administrators in multicultural education includes creating a conducive and diversity-friendly learning environment (Siregar & Nasution, 2024). They encourage students to express their cultural, religious, and personal identities positively while respecting the differences of others (Syahbuddin & Haryati, 2022). This approach is essential in fostering inclusive, tolerant, and respectful attitudes among students, which serve as the foundation for building a harmonious and civilized society (Maulana & Wahyudi, 2024). In such an environment, students not only achieve academic growth but also develop essential social and ethical competencies for interacting within a pluralistic society.

By performing dual roles as role models and facilitators, teachers and madrasah administrators make a significant contribution to shaping students who are capable of appreciating diversity and engaging in constructive social behavior (Hasanuddin et al., 2025). This role ensures that education in madrasah not only focuses on academic knowledge but also emphasizes the development of inclusive, empathetic, and socially competent individuals (Saleh et al., 2025). Through this approach, students are prepared to become responsible, ethical members of society who can contribute positively to a plural and civilized social life.

### **The Implementation of Multicultural Education in Academic and Non-Academic Activities**

Madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools implement multicultural education through various strategies integrated into both academic and non-academic activities. In the academic domain, both religious and general subjects are delivered using inclusive approaches (Ni'mah & Mustofa, 2024). Teachers emphasize the importance of respecting differences in culture, religion, and students' backgrounds, enabling learners not only to gain academic knowledge but also to develop respect for diversity in their surroundings (Rudianto, 2023). Learning methods include group discussions, case studies, and collaborative projects that incorporate multiple perspectives, allowing students to develop critical thinking skills while appreciating others' viewpoints (Nafilata et al., 2025).

In addition to academic activities, multicultural education is also implemented through non-academic programs in madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools. Extracurricular activities such as arts, cultural programs, sports, and social projects provide opportunities for students to interact directly with peers from diverse backgrounds (Lubis & Novebri, 2024). Activities such as cultural celebrations, artistic performances, and community-based social initiatives not only foster a sense of togetherness but also train students to collaborate, respect differences, and develop empathy and social skills essential for community life (Saniya & Filasofa, 2025).

Moreover, multicultural education is reinforced through non-academic activities that encourage direct interaction among students from diverse backgrounds. Extracurricular programs, including arts, culture, sports, and social projects, offer meaningful opportunities for engagement and collaboration (Nurhabibah & Zulhidah, 2023). Activities such as cultural festivals, artistic performances, and community-based programs not only strengthen solidarity but also cultivate cooperation, respect for diversity, empathy, and essential social competencies (Khadijah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, collaborative projects involving diverse student groups serve as practical means of instilling multicultural values (Safrida & Julta, 2025). Through participation in shared activities, students learn to solve problems collectively, communicate effectively, and appreciate each member's contribution (Wibowo & Salfadilah, 2025). This approach allows values such as tolerance, cooperation, and inclusivity to be naturally embedded in students' daily lives, ensuring that

multicultural education is not merely understood as a theoretical concept but also practiced in everyday activities within madrasah and pesantren environments (Tampani, 2025).

By integrating both academic and non-academic strategies, madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools successfully create an inclusive, tolerant, and diversity-respecting learning environment (Ana & Arsyadana, 2025). The implementation of multicultural education equips students with strong social and emotional competencies, preparing them to contribute positively to a pluralistic society (Sunarwi & Amin, 2025). Moreover, this approach fosters the development of ethical, empathetic, and socially responsive individuals who are capable of living harmoniously and actively participating in building an inclusive and just society.

### **Implications and Challenges of Multicultural Education in Islamic Primary Schools**

Multicultural education in Islamic primary schools has a significant impact on students' character development (Hartono et al., 2024). Through learning processes that emphasize respect for differences, students become more tolerant, inclusive, and ethically responsible (Nurmansyah & Muttaqin, 2024). They learn to appreciate diverse perspectives, develop empathy, and cultivate the ability to live harmoniously within a pluralistic environment (Azhari & Albina, 2024). The impact of this educational approach extends beyond the individual level and contributes to strengthening social cohesion within society. A generation equipped with multicultural values is better prepared to build peaceful, constructive, and positive social interactions, thereby supporting the development of a harmonious and civilized society (Siregar & Nasution, 2024).

Despite its positive impact, the implementation of multicultural education in Islamic primary schools also faces several challenges. The diversity of students' cultural backgrounds and economic conditions may lead to differences in learning experiences as well as variations in understanding shared values (Azzahra & Darmiyanti, 2024). In addition, limited resources, such as teaching materials, supporting infrastructure, and educational facilities, may hinder the optimal implementation of multicultural programs and activities (Hajar & Wahyuni, 2024). Another critical challenge is the need to enhance teachers' competencies in designing, implementing, and managing inclusive learning, so that multicultural values can be effectively understood and internalized by students (Putra et al., 2025).

To address these challenges, several planned and sustainable strategies are required. Strengthening the curriculum by systematically integrating multicultural principles can provide clear guidance for the learning process (Saqujuddin et al., 2025). Furthermore, continuous teacher training is essential to equip educators with the skills needed to manage diverse classrooms and facilitate positive and healthy interactions among students (Wahyuni & Haryanti, 2024). In addition, collaboration with communities and external stakeholders, such as social and cultural organizations, can broaden students' perspectives and provide direct experiences in understanding and appreciating diversity (Lensa et al., 2025). Through the implementation of these strategies, multicultural education in Islamic primary schools is expected to be more effective in shaping inclusive student character and contributing to the development of a harmonious, tolerant, and civilized society.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings indicate that madrasah and Islamic primary boarding schools play a highly important and strategic role in the development of multicultural education. From an academic perspective, both religious and general subjects are delivered using inclusive approaches that emphasize mutual respect for differences in culture, ethnicity, and religion. Meanwhile, in the non-academic domain, various

extracurricular activities such as arts, cultural programs, sports, and social projects provide students with direct experiences in internalizing values of tolerance, empathy, and cooperation. These findings affirm that Islamic primary schools' function not only as formal educational institutions but also as spaces for character formation that prepare younger generations to live harmoniously in pluralistic societies. However, the implementation of multicultural education still faces several challenges, including limited resources, diverse student backgrounds, and the need to enhance teachers' competencies in designing and implementing inclusive learning.

Based on these findings, this study recommends several strategic measures, including strengthening the curriculum through the systematic integration of multicultural principles, implementing continuous teacher training, and enhancing collaboration with communities to broaden students' social experiences. In addition, this study provides directions for future research to examine the long-term impact of multicultural education in Islamic primary schools on students' social behavior and social cohesion, as well as to explore innovative learning models that can address practical challenges in the field. The implications of this study highlight that Islamic primary schools play a crucial role as agents of social change, focusing not only on academic achievement but also on shaping future generations who are inclusive, tolerant, and ethically grounded.

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