

Inclusive Islamic Education: A Model for Promoting Tolerance in Multicultural Schools

**Firmansyah¹; Dhikrul Hakim²; Qasem Muhammad³;
Candra Wijaya⁴; Mujhirul Iman⁵; Anang Anas Azhar⁶**

¹Universitas Medan Area, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

²Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School University, Indonesia

³International Institute for Islamic Studies, Iran

^{4,5,6}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

¹Correspondence Email: firmaryah@staff.uma.ac.id

Article Info

Received: June 30, 2025

Accepted: September 7, 2026

Published: September 30, 2026

Online First: September 30, 2026

Keywords

Islamic Religious Education;
Multicultural Education;
School Culture;
Tolerance;
Inclusive Education.

Abstract

This study examined how Islamic Religious Education contributed to the formation of tolerance within a multicultural school through the interaction of curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture. A qualitative single-case study was conducted within the context of senior high school education in Medan City, Indonesia, with SMA Sultan Iskandar Muda purposively selected as the case. The study involved 20 informants, including school leaders, Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and educational staff. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis and analyzed thematically using perspectives from Islamic Religious Education, multicultural education, and social interaction. The findings revealed three interconnected mechanisms: curriculum accommodation that institutionally recognized religious and cultural diversity, pedagogical mediation that connected Islamic values with inclusive learning experiences, and participatory school culture that provided recurring opportunities for constructive engagement across differences. The study advanced an integrative institutional model in which these mechanisms worked together to strengthen the development of tolerance, rather than functioning as separate educational practices. The findings suggest that tolerance-oriented religious education becomes more meaningful when inclusion is coherently embedded throughout curriculum, pedagogy, and everyday school life while maintaining differentiated religious identities.

A. Introduction

Diversity does not automatically produce tolerance; when poorly managed, multicultural schools can become spaces where prejudice, exclusion, and social tension are reproduced rather than reduced (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Elias & Mansouri, 2023; Sutisna & Khorri, 2024). Schools are not merely sites of academic instruction but social environments where students encounter religious, cultural, and social differences and learn how to respond to them in everyday life. These experiences are shaped by communication, relationships, participation, and the wider educational environment (Rosmawati, 2025; Sunbanu et al., 2025). Interreligious literacy and multicultural educational practices can further strengthen respectful engagement across differences (Ali et al., 2021; Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, 2023; Muhajir et al., 2025). Tolerance is thus an educational outcome that must be deliberately cultivated through curriculum, pedagogy, communication, and inclusive social interaction.

Within this educational context, religious education has a strategic role in shaping students' moral reasoning, social attitudes, and ethical behaviour toward difference. In Indonesia, Islamic Religious Education, or *Pendidikan Agama Islam* (PAI), holds particular significance because it operates within the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy and a national framework committed to unity in diversity. PAI is expected not only to transmit Islamic knowledge but also to cultivate moderation, inclusivity, and respect for religious plurality (Tabrani ZA et al., 2024; Sibawaihi et al., 2025). This role becomes increasingly important because religious understanding develops within complex social and interpretive contexts in which pluralism, religious identity, and interfaith relations are continuously negotiated (Mursyid et al., 2024; Taufiq & Said, 2025). However, tolerance is not automatically produced through religious instruction; it requires curriculum content, pedagogical practices, and school culture that consistently support inclusive values (Abdullah et al., 2023; Mustakim et al., 2021).

Against this background, the challenge for PAI extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge to the transformation of religious values into students' character and social conduct. Islamic education becomes socially meaningful when religious learning enables students to connect ethical principles with the realities of interaction, difference, and coexistence. Studies have shown that Islamic learning can support character development when pedagogy connects religious knowledge with engaging learning experiences and students' everyday realities (Yani & Rahmi, 2024; Siswanto et

al., 2026). The strengthening of religious and moral education is also relevant to broader concerns regarding the moral development of younger generations (Musradinur et al., 2026). Moreover, Islamic religious thought has historically interacted with diverse social and cultural realities, indicating that religious understanding cannot be separated from its social context (Rozi et al., 2024). These perspectives position tolerance-oriented PAI as an educational process that connects religious formation with students' social engagement across differences.

Previous studies on Islamic education and tolerance can be grouped into several interconnected strands. Studies of interfaith dialogue and communication emphasize the importance of interaction in reducing prejudice and strengthening mutual understanding (Sutisna & Khorri, 2024; Ali et al., 2021). Other studies examine the integration of multicultural values into Islamic education curricula through Qur'anic teachings, prophetic ethics, and principles of peaceful coexistence (Rahmawati & Hang, 2025; Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, 2023; Hamid & Wahyuni, 2024). Another body of scholarship highlights teachers and inclusive pedagogy as important actors in building tolerant classroom environments (Latif & Hafid, 2021; OK et al., 2025; Muhajir et al., 2025). Research has also demonstrated the relevance of local culture, educational practices, and institutional environments in strengthening religious moderation and tolerance (Burga & Damopolii, 2022; Wahab et al., 2024; Nasir & Rijal, 2021). Collectively, these studies establish that tolerance formation involves curricular, pedagogical, cultural, and relational dimensions rather than religious knowledge alone.

Recent scholarship has increasingly shifted toward institutional and integrative approaches to tolerance-oriented Islamic education. Inclusive education is sustained through the interaction of educational management, learning practices, and supportive environments (Bahri et al., 2023; Ulfah et al., 2026), while institutional strategies can strengthen religious moderation within Islamic educational settings (Syabuddin et al., 2026; Naomira & Hemawati, 2026). Multicultural Islamic education further promotes tolerance through institutional practices, religious literacy, and interaction across differences (Muhajir et al., 2025; Sibawaihi et al., 2025). Studies also emphasize the role of school environments in accommodating religious and cultural diversity (Hamid & Wahyuni, 2024; Sari et al., 2023). In Indonesia, religious moderation provides an important framework for negotiating Islamic identity and social diversity (Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Tabrani ZA et al., 2024). These studies reveal the broader institutional foundations of tolerance.

Despite these advances, the literature remains fragmented in explaining how curriculum, pedagogy, interreligious interaction, institutional management, and school culture work together in tolerance formation. Limited attention has been given to how these dimensions operate as an integrated process within multicultural educational settings. It remains particularly unclear how Islamic Religious Education can connect curriculum accommodation, pedagogical mediation, and participatory school culture while maintaining students' religious identities.

This study conceptualizes inclusive Islamic Religious Education as an interconnected institutional process. Its novelty lies in explaining tolerance formation through three interacting mechanisms: curriculum accommodation, pedagogical mediation, and participatory school culture. Accordingly, the study examines how these mechanisms interact to promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence among students. It seeks to provide an empirically grounded explanation of tolerance formation and contribute to broader discussions on inclusive religious education in plural societies.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative single-case design to examine how Islamic Religious Education fosters tolerance in a multicultural school setting. The research was conducted at SMA Sultan Iskandar Muda, Medan, North Sumatra, which was purposively selected as an information-rich case because of its religiously and culturally diverse student population, inclusive institutional policies, and established practices for accommodating religious diversity. The case was selected for in-depth analysis rather than statistical representation of senior high schools in Medan City. This design enabled the study to examine how tolerance-oriented Islamic education operates through curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture within a specific institutional context (Busetto et al., 2020; Creswell, 2012; Miles et al., 2014).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The study involved 20 purposively selected informants, including school leaders, Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and educational staff, based on their direct involvement in curriculum implementation, religious education, school activities, and multicultural interactions. Interviews explored curriculum, teaching practices, school culture, and experiences of tolerance formation, while observations focused on classroom interaction, religious activities, interreligious encounters, and daily school routines. Documents included curriculum materials, lesson

plans, school policies, and reports of multicultural and religious activities (Creswell, 2012; Fitriani, 2023; Masru'ah et al., 2025). These sources were used complementarily to capture both formal institutional arrangements and their everyday implementation.

Data were analyzed thematically through reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation. A coding matrix integrated three perspectives: Islamic Religious Education to identify tolerance, compassion, respect, and ethical conduct; multicultural education to examine inclusion, equality, and recognition of diversity; and social interaction theory to analyze tolerance in classroom communication, peer interaction, religious activities, and daily routines. The codes were organized into three analytical themes: inclusive curriculum design, teacher pedagogical practices, and participatory religious culture (Busetto et al., 2020; Creswell, 2012; Miles et al., 2014). This framework enabled analysis of how these dimensions interacted within the selected case.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through source and method triangulation. Interview data were cross-checked with observation notes and school documents to assess the consistency and credibility of the findings. Triangulation was conducted by comparing participants' accounts with observed practices and relevant institutional documents within each analytical theme. Convergences and differences across these sources were examined before the findings were organized into the final thematic categories. This procedure was particularly important for distinguishing formally stated inclusive policies from practices observed in classrooms, religious activities, and everyday school interactions.

Ethical procedures were applied throughout the research process. Formal permission was obtained from the school management. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of the data. Participant identities were anonymized using codes, and all data were used only for academic purposes. Anonymous participant codes were used in reporting interview evidence to protect individual identities while maintaining the traceability of the empirical data.

C. Results and Discussion

This section presents the empirical results of the study, which are organized into three main themes reflecting the implementation of inclusive islamic religious education in a multicultural school context. The findings are derived from classroom observations, interviews, and school documentation.

1. Results

The findings from the selected case at SMA Sultan Iskandar Muda are organized into three interrelated themes: (1) the formation of an accommodative curriculum, (2) inclusive teaching and learning practices, and (3) participation in inclusive religious activities. These themes emerged from the analysis of interviews, classroom and school observations, and institutional documents. The findings describe how curriculum, pedagogical practices, and participatory school culture were manifested within this particular multicultural school context.

a. Formation of an Accommodative Curriculum

The findings show that the curriculum implemented at SMA Sultan Iskandar Muda accommodated the religious and cultural diversity of its students. Analysis of institutional policy documents and school records revealed three forms of accommodation: culturally based, religion-based, and faith-based curriculum orientations. These were reflected in school activities that recognized cultural differences, accommodated religious diversity, and provided facilities supporting different religious identities. Thus, curriculum accommodation within the selected case was evident not only in formal curricular arrangements but also in the institutional recognition of students' cultural and religious diversity.



Figure 1. Institutional Curriculum Policies Accommodating Student Religious and Cultural Diversity

Figure 1 documents three manifestations of curriculum accommodation within the school. Panel (a) shows students wearing various traditional costumes during a cultural celebration, representing the culturally based curriculum. Panel (b) shows students participating together in a shared school activity associated with the religion-based curriculum and the accommodation of religious diversity. Panel (c) documents worship facilities and school spaces used by students from different religious backgrounds, representing the faith-based curriculum. Taken together, the three panels provide visual evidence that cultural and religious diversity was institutionally accommodated through school activities, shared spaces, and religious facilities.

Interview evidence supported the documentary findings. Islamic Religious Education teachers reported that religious learning content was deliberately presented in ways that emphasized ethical values alongside Islamic doctrinal instruction. One teacher explained, *"In teaching Islamic values, we focus not only on religious doctrine but also on respect for others and living peacefully with students from different religious backgrounds."* (Interview with NH, August 2024). Another teacher stated that learning materials were selected carefully to avoid exclusive interpretations and to promote inclusive perspectives in religious instruction (Interview with NK, August 2024). These accounts indicate that curriculum accommodation also occurred through the selection and presentation of learning materials.

Teachers further reported that accommodating diversity did not require removing Islamic doctrinal content from religious education. Rather, religious learning materials were presented in ways that maintained Islamic values while encouraging students to respect peers from different religious and cultural backgrounds (Interview with NK, August 2024). This pattern was also observed during classroom activities, where teachers invited students to discuss experiences of interreligious interaction, social harmony, and cooperation.

Classroom observations showed students from different religious and cultural backgrounds participating in group discussions and collaborative learning activities without segregation. The convergence of documentary, interview, and observational evidence therefore shows that curriculum accommodation within this case operated at three levels: institutional policy, religious learning content, and classroom practice.

b. Inclusive Teaching and Learning Practices

The second theme concerns how inclusive values were manifested through teaching and learning practices. Classroom observations and school activity documentation showed that teachers used collaborative, creative, and culturally accommodative activities

involving students from different backgrounds. These practices occurred both within formal learning and through broader school activities, indicating that inclusive pedagogy was not confined to Islamic Religious Education lessons alone.



Figure 2. Inclusive Teaching and Learning Practices Supporting Student Diversity

Figure 2 documents three forms of inclusive educational practice. Panel (a) shows students participating in a coordinated cultural performance involving group interaction and collaboration. Panel (b) shows teachers, educational staff, and students participating in a religious celebration within the school environment. Panel (c) documents the involvement of the foundation, teachers, educational staff, and students in presenting local cultural expressions during national commemorative activities. Across the three panels, participation, collaboration, religious activities, and cultural expression occurred within shared educational spaces involving different members of the school community.

Classroom observations further showed that teachers organized group discussions and joint learning tasks involving students from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Extracurricular and project-based activities similarly involved mixed-group participation. Observed interaction within these activities was characterized by cooperation among students rather than separation according to religious or cultural background. School documentation also recorded creative and cultural activities in which students participated collectively.

Students described these practices as part of their everyday experience of diversity at school. One student stated, *"The teachers do not only teach lessons, but also teach us to respect*

every difference." (Interviews with NS and NR, August 2024). School leaders likewise reported that inclusive practices were encouraged through collaboration among teachers, students, and parents, as well as through creative and project-based learning (Interviews with NM and ND, August 2024).

School leaders further described collaboration among teachers, students, and parents as extending inclusive practices beyond formal classroom instruction. Creative activities and project-based learning provided opportunities for students from different backgrounds to participate in shared educational experiences (Interview with NM, August 2024). Across observation, documentation, and interview data, inclusive teaching and learning were therefore manifested through collaborative learning, mixed-group participation, cultural accommodation, and broader involvement of the school community.

c. Participation in Inclusive Religious Activities

The third theme concerns students' participation in inclusive religious activities. Observations and school documentation showed that students from different religious backgrounds participated within shared school settings during religious ceremonies, prayer-related activities, and religiosity classes. Three recurring forms were identified: participation in religious celebrations, alternating prayer activities, and joint religiosity classes. These activities constituted recurring components of the school environment rather than being limited to classroom instruction.



Figure 3. Student Participation in Inclusive Religious Activities

Figure 3 documents these three forms of participation. Panel (a) shows students participating in a religious ceremony or celebration organized within the school environment. Panel (b) shows students in a shared school space reading prayer texts, with prayers recited alternately according to their respective religions. Panel (c) shows a joint religiosity class attended by students from different religious backgrounds. The three panels demonstrate that religious diversity was present within shared institutional spaces while students continued to participate according to their respective religious traditions.

Observations showed that prayer-related activities were conducted in the school auditorium, where students from different religious traditions shared the same setting while prayers were performed according to their respective traditions. In this study, therefore, “joint prayer” refers to participation within a shared activity setting with alternating prayer recitations rather than the performance of a single common religious ritual. Students were observed participating respectfully during these activities. School documentation also recorded joint religiosity classes in which students from different religious backgrounds attended mixed-group sessions focused on identifying values shared across religious traditions.

Student interviews supported these observations. One student stated, *“Through joint prayers, I feel that my relationship with my friends has grown stronger despite our different religions.”* (Interviews with NT and NA, August 2024). An Islamic Religious Education teacher similarly explained, *“We habituate students through collective prayers and other religious activities to help them learn respect and cooperation across religious differences.”* (Interview with NK, August 2024)

Teachers further reported that shared religious activities were incorporated into school routines rather than conducted only as occasional ceremonial events. These activities repeatedly brought students into shared institutional spaces while allowing them to maintain their respective religious practices (Interview with NK, August 2024). Across interviews, observations, and school documentation, the evidence consistently showed participation in religious ceremonies, alternating prayer activities, and mixed-group religiosity classes.

Overall, the findings from this selected case reveal three empirically connected dimensions of inclusive Islamic Religious Education: curriculum accommodation, inclusive pedagogical practices, and participatory school culture. The first was manifested through institutional policies and learning content; the second through collaborative and culturally accommodative educational practices; and the third through

students' participation in shared religious and school activities. These findings are specific to the institutional context examined in this study and provide the empirical basis for analyzing how the three dimensions interact in the formation of tolerance.

2. Discussion

The findings indicate that tolerance within Islamic Religious Education is shaped less by the transmission of tolerant values than by institutional coherence among curriculum, pedagogy, and everyday social experience. Curriculum accommodation recognizes diversity, pedagogical practices translate this recognition into learning, and participatory school culture enables students to experience difference directly. These mechanisms function relationally: curriculum provides normative legitimacy, teachers mediate its educational meaning, and school culture gives it social expression (Hamid & Wahyuni, 2024; Muhajir et al., 2025; Naomira & Hemawati, 2026). This interpretation extends studies linking tolerance with institutional support, pedagogical consistency, and social interaction (Burga & Damopolii, 2022; Fitriani, 2023; Muhajir et al., 2025) and aligns with integrative approaches emphasizing educational management, learning practices, and inclusive environments (Muliadi et al., 2025; Syabuddin et al., 2026; Ulfah et al., 2026). Tolerance-oriented PAI thus operates as an institutional process rather than isolated classroom practice.

Within this process, curriculum accommodation is fundamental because institutional recognition determines whether diversity remains peripheral or becomes part of the educational environment. The culturally based, religion-based, and faith-based orientations identified in this case indicate that recognition was embedded in curriculum arrangements, facilities, activities, and learning content. This matters because inclusive religious education requires more than moral appeals to respect difference; it requires institutional structures that legitimate the presence and expression of different identities. This finding is consistent with studies emphasizing the incorporation of multicultural and inclusive values into educational policy and curriculum (Hamid & Wahyuni, 2024; Mukhibat et al., 2024; Akbar et al., 2023). It also supports arguments that religious education becomes less exclusionary when institutional arrangements acknowledge plural social realities (Rahmat, 2023; Haj & Marno, 2024; Fitria, 2026). Curriculum accommodation thus provides a normative foundation through which religious difference can be institutionally recognized without displacing religious identity.

Formal recognition alone does not make tolerance meaningful in students' everyday experiences (Hasaniy & Azisurrohman, 2024). Collaborative learning, culturally responsive activities, and contextual engagement with religious values show that teachers mediate between Islamic normative commitments and religious-cultural plurality (Verisa et al., 2024). Students therefore encounter diversity not merely as a curricular principle but through structured pedagogical interaction. Previous studies likewise emphasize teachers' roles in creating inclusive classroom climates and facilitating engagement across differences (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Aryati & Suradi, 2022; Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, 2023), while communication across religious boundaries supports tolerance and social cohesion (Sutisna & Khorri, 2024). Such pedagogical mediation becomes more consistent when reinforced by curriculum and school culture rather than relying on individual teacher initiatives (Ali et al., 2021; Hamid & Wahyuni, 2024; Faisal, 2026; Nazula et al., 2024).

This interaction helps explain why Islamic religious identity and inclusivity need not be positioned as opposing educational aims. Islamic content was not removed or diluted to accommodate diversity; instead, religious values were pedagogically connected with respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. Such mediation enables religious commitment to remain visible while its social expression is negotiated within a plural educational environment. This interpretation resonates with scholarship positioning religious moderation and multicultural Islamic education as processes through which religious identity encounters diverse social realities (Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Tabrani ZA et al., 2024). Studies of Islamic interpretation in Indonesia similarly demonstrate that religious understanding develops within complex social, ideological, and interfaith contexts rather than independently of them (Mursyid et al., 2024; Sholihuddin et al., 2026). The critical educational issue, therefore, is not whether religious identity should be retained, but how religious learning enables that identity to engage ethically with difference.

Tolerance became more than a cognitive or normative orientation because these curricular and pedagogical commitments were reinforced through recurring participation in school life. Shared religious activities, alternating prayer practices, religiosity classes, cultural events, and collaborative activities created structured encounters among students from different backgrounds. From a social interaction perspective, such encounters matter because attitudes toward difference develop through patterns of contact, participation, and recognition embedded in everyday relationships (Muhajir et al., 2025; Sutisna &

Khori, 2024; Rusydi, 2024). This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that interreligious encounters and participatory activities can strengthen mutual understanding when conducted within inclusive environments (Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, 2023; Nur et al., 2025). It also supports the view that tolerance is cultivated through lived educational experiences rather than normative explanation alone (Elias & Mansouri, 2023; Aziz & Hakim, 2024). School culture consequently becomes the experiential arena in which curricular recognition and pedagogical mediation acquire social meaning.

Importantly, participation in shared spaces did not require students to homogenize their religious identities. The practices observed instead combined common participation with differentiated religious expression. This distinction is conceptually important because inclusive religious education can be misunderstood as requiring theological convergence or minimizing doctrinal boundaries. The case demonstrates another possibility: students may retain distinct religious practices while participating within a common institutional environment structured around recognition and respectful interaction. This complements research emphasizing equal participation and recognition in multicultural education (OK et al., 2025; Tentiasih & Rifa'i, 2022), while supporting arguments that religion itself can become a resource for social learning when institutional arrangements prevent difference from becoming a basis for exclusion (Aryati & Suradi, 2022; Hamid, 2025). Tolerance, in this sense, is reflected in the capacity to engage constructively with difference without requiring the erasure of religious distinction.

Seen together, the three mechanisms provide an analytical bridge between Islamic Religious Education, multicultural education, and social interaction. Islamic Religious Education helps frame the ethical meanings attached to respect and coexistence, multicultural education illuminates institutional recognition and inclusion, while a social interaction perspective helps explain how these meanings are encountered and negotiated through recurring social relations (Elias & Mansouri, 2023; Sutisna & Khori, 2024; Tabrani ZA et al., 2024). Bringing these perspectives together makes it possible to understand tolerance not simply as a value transmitted through religious instruction, but as an educational process connecting normative commitments, institutional recognition, and students' lived interactions. This relational configuration extends studies that have emphasized curricular, pedagogical, or participatory dimensions of tolerance formation (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Fitriani, 2023; Muhajir et al., 2025; Nur et al., 2025).

The analytical significance of these mechanisms lies in their interdependence rather than their separate presence. Curriculum accommodation without pedagogical mediation may remain symbolic, while pedagogy without institutional support may depend excessively on individual teachers. Similarly, participatory activities without inclusive curricular principles may become ceremonial rather than educational. Recent research emphasizing integrative institutional strategies and the relationship between educational management, learning practices, and inclusive environments reinforces the importance of such institutional interconnectedness (Muliadi et al., 2025; Syabuddin et al., 2026; Ulfah et al., 2026). In the present case, institutional recognition gives pedagogical practices legitimacy, pedagogy translates institutional principles into meaningful learning, and participatory culture provides recurring social contexts in which those principles can be experienced. The findings therefore suggest that the analytical strength of these mechanisms lies in their institutional coherence rather than in the isolated operation of any single component.

Rather than locating tolerance primarily in individual attitudes, this study consequently locates its formation within the institutional conditions that organize students' repeated experiences of religious and cultural difference (Hasaniy & Azisurrohman, 2024). Its conceptual contribution is the articulation of curriculum accommodation, pedagogical mediation, and participatory school culture as mutually reinforcing mechanisms of tolerance-oriented Islamic Religious Education. This formulation complements institutional approaches to inclusive education (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Ulfah et al., 2026; Verisa et al., 2024) while extending scholarship emphasizing interaction, participation, and recognition in multicultural religious education (Muhajir et al., 2025; Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, 2023). Rather than constituting a linear sequence or independent interventions, these mechanisms form an interconnected institutional configuration through which religious values, recognition of diversity, and lived social interaction can jointly shape the educational conditions for tolerance (Nazula et al., 2024).

For educational practice, this means that tolerance-oriented religious education cannot depend solely on textbooks, individual teachers, or occasional diversity programs. Within the case examined, inclusion was sustained because curriculum arrangements, pedagogical practices, cultural activities, religious participation, and institutional spaces operated in broadly compatible directions. Educational institutions seeking to strengthen tolerance therefore need to consider the alignment between

what they formally recognize, what teachers enact pedagogically, and what students repeatedly experience in school life. This insight is relevant to *madrasahs*, *pesantren*, and other religiously affiliated schools negotiating the relationship between religious identity and plural social realities (Alhashmi et al., 2020; Subaidi, 2020). However, the mechanisms identified here should be treated as an analytical framework rather than a transferable institutional template, because their operation is shaped by governance structures, student composition, institutional histories, and local socio-religious contexts (Ghazali, 2016; Mulya et al., 2022; Rusydi, 2024).

The experience of SMA Sultan Iskandar Muda also illuminates a wider problem in religious education: how faith-based schooling can sustain confessional identity while enabling students to engage constructively across religious and cultural boundaries. Similar tensions between religious commitment, inclusion, diversity, and intergroup relations are discussed across scholarship on multicultural and religious education (Elias & Mansouri, 2023; Akbar et al., 2024; Mulya et al., 2022). Indonesia provides a particularly instructive setting because Islamic education operates within a Muslim-majority society characterized by substantial religious, cultural, and interpretive diversity (Nasir & Rijal, 2021; OK et al., 2025; Tabrani ZA et al., 2024). The significance of this local case therefore lies not in offering an institutional arrangement for replication elsewhere, but in showing how curriculum, pedagogical mediation, and structured participation can interact while religious identities remain differentiated.

Such a mechanism-based reading contributes to wider debates on how religious education can respond to diversity without reducing religious particularity or treating coexistence merely as an abstract moral principle. Research across diverse educational contexts has emphasized the importance of inclusive environments and sustained intergroup engagement where religious and cultural differences share common social spaces (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Elias & Mansouri, 2023). The present case adds an institutional dimension to this discussion: opportunities for contact may be educationally consequential when curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture consistently frame encounters through recognition, participation, and respect. What becomes analytically transferable is therefore not a particular Indonesian school practice, but an explanation of how institutional coherence can shape the conditions under which religious education supports constructive engagement across difference. This proposition allows the local evidence to enter broader debates on faith-based education, pluralism, and social cohesion without detaching it from its specific socio-religious context.

Despite its conceptual and empirical contributions to understanding tolerance-oriented Islamic Religious Education, the limitations of this study must be acknowledged. As a qualitative single-case study conducted in one purposively selected multicultural school, its findings offer analytical rather than statistical generalization. The evidence captures institutional practices, participant experiences, and school interactions but does not establish causal effects or measure changes in students' tolerance over time. Moreover, the findings remain context-dependent and cannot determine whether the same institutional mechanisms operate across schools with different demographic, religious, and governance characteristics. These limitations therefore define the boundaries within which the proposed model should be interpreted.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that tolerance-oriented Islamic Religious Education becomes more effective when curriculum accommodation, pedagogical mediation, and participatory school culture operate as an integrated institutional process. These mechanisms connect formal recognition of diversity with classroom learning and students' recurring experiences of religious and cultural difference. The study's main scholarly contribution lies in formulating an integrative model that explains how Islamic Religious Education, multicultural education, and social interaction jointly shape tolerance while allowing students to maintain their religious identities.

Practically, the findings suggest that schools should align inclusive curriculum policies, teacher preparation in multicultural and tolerance-based pedagogy, and participatory religious activities that encourage interfaith interaction and mutual respect. These practices should not be treated as a uniform model but adapted to local institutional and socio-religious contexts. Their central implication is that inclusion becomes sustainable when curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture consistently reinforce one another across the educational environment.

Based on the limitations acknowledged in the Discussion, future research should examine the proposed mechanisms across multiple educational settings with different demographic and governance characteristics. Mixed-method or quantitative studies are also needed to assess relationships between institutional practices and changes in students' tolerance, while longitudinal research could examine how such attitudes and interreligious interactions develop and persist over time. Ultimately,

tolerance-oriented Islamic Religious Education becomes meaningful when respect for diversity is not merely taught as a moral message but lived through coherent curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research, analysis, or reporting of the findings presented in this article.

Declaration of Generative AI

Generative AI tools were used during the manuscript preparation process solely to support language refinement, improve academic clarity and coherence, and assist with the organization and presentation of the manuscript. The authors critically reviewed, verified, and revised all AI-assisted content and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, citations, and integrity of the final manuscript. Generative AI was not used to generate, fabricate, alter, or analyze the empirical data, interview evidence, or research findings.

References

- Abdullah, A., Alim, A., Andriyadi, F., & Burga, M. A. (2023). Application of Multicultural Education in Strengthening Community Solidarity in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 11(3), 1173–1198. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v11i3.965>
- Aderibigbe, S. A., Idriz, M., Alzouebi, K., AlOthman, H., Hamdi, W. B., & Companioni, A. A. (2023). Fostering Tolerance and Respect for Diversity through the Fundamentals of Islamic Education. *Religions*, 14(2), 212. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020212>
- Akbar, I. A., Zainuddin, M., & Soleh, A. K. (2023). Legal and ethical interpretation of blasphemy cases in Indonesia: A ma'na-cum-maghza perspective. *Asy-Syir'ah: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah dan Hukum*, 57(1), 83–106. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajish.v57i1.1218>
- Alhashmi, M., Bakali, N., & Baroud, R. (2020). Tolerance in UAE Islamic Education Textbooks. *Religions*, 11(8), 377. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080377>
- Ali, N., Afwadzi, B., Abdullah, I., & Mukmin, M. I. (2021). Interreligious Literacy Learning as a Counter-Radicalization Method: A New Trend among Institutions of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 32(4), 383–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2021.1996978>

- Aryati, A., & Suradi, A. (2022). The Implementation of Religious Tolerance: Study on Pesantren Bali Bina Insani with Bali Hindus Communities. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 10(2), 471–490. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v10i2.646>
- Aziz, A., & Hakim, L. (2024). Conversion to Islam as a strategy for legalizing marriage: Experiences of interfaith couples in East Jakarta. *Asy-Syir'ah: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah dan Hukum*, 58(1), 47–86. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajish.v58i1.1391>
- Bahri, S., Djunaidi Ghony, & Hasan Busri. (2023). Implementation of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Learning in SD Taman Harapan and SD Bina Budi Mulia Malang City. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v5i1.208>
- Burga, M. A., & Damopolii, M. (2022). Reinforcing Religious Moderation through Local Culture-Based Pesantren. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(2), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i2.19879>
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to Use and Assess Qualitative Research Methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2(1), 14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Person Education, Inc.
- Elias, A., & Mansouri, F. (2023). Towards a Critical Transformative Approach to Inclusive Intercultural Education. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 18(1), 4–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2023.2211568>
- Faisal, F. (2026). From Self to Others: Contextual Learning and Students' Multicultural Perspective Development in Islamic Higher Education. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)*, 8(3), 1114–1136. <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v8i3.879>
- Fitria, N. (2026). Multicultural Cultural Capital and Inclusive Islamic Entrepreneurship: A Qualitative Case Study of a Pesantren in Rural Indonesia. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)*, 8(3), 1097–1113. <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v8i3.835>
- Fitriani, M. I. (2023). Islamic Religious Education and Interreligious Tolerance in a Multi-Religious Country: Challenges, Typological Implications, and the Proposed Strategy. *Ulumuna*, 27(1), 416–449. <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v27i1.765>
- Ghazali, A. M. (2016). The Concept of Tolerance in Islamic Education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 1(1), 81–97. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v1i1.619>
- Haj, H. S., & Marno, M. (2024). Pengembangan Model Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Berbasis Multikultural. *ISLAMIKA*, 6(1), 255–267. <https://doi.org/10.36088/islamika.v6i1.4271>

- Hamid, N. (2025). Model of Institutional Development for Inclusivity: Integrating Da'wah into the Transformation of Multicultural Islamic Education at Madrasah Ibtida'iyah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 15(1), 66–77. <https://doi.org/10.38073/jpi.v15i1.2610>
- Hamid, N., & Wahyuni, S. (2024). A Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(2), 113–127. <https://doi.org/10.38073/jpi.v14i2.1731>
- Hasaniy, N. R., & Azisurrohman, A. (2024). Beyond the boundaries of faith: A multidimensional of religious spatial segregation in the context of urban society. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 2(2), 158–171. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v2i2.76>
- Latif, M., & Hafid, E. (2021). Multicultural Attitudes in An Islamic Boarding School of South Sulawesi – Indonesia. *Cogent Education*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1968736>
- Masru'ah, I., Mubarakah, S., Mulyana, A., Suwendi, S., & Setyawan, C. E. (2025). Implementation Of Religious Moderation Values in a Multicultural School: A Case Study at SMPN 1 Panawangan Ciamis. *Civilization Research: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 4(2), 325–337. <https://doi.org/10.61630/crjis.v4i2.96>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A methods Sourcebook*. United States of America: Sage.
- Muhajir, M., Kultsum, U., Choiri, M. M., Mustonah, S., Kulkarni, H., & Karim, A. (2025). Integrating Multicultural Values to Foster Tolerance and Inclusivity in Islamic Religious Education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(1), 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v11i1.44607>
- Mukhibat, M., Effendi, M., Setyawan, W. H., & Sutoyo, M. (2024). Development and Evaluation of Religious Moderation Education Curriculum at Higher Education in Indonesia. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2302308>
- Muliadi, M., Syamsidar, S., & Islam, N. (2025). Religious Moderation by Design: A Comparative Sociological Da'wah Study in Indonesian Higher Education. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 13(2), 1549–1580. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i2.1778>
- Mulya, W. T., Aditomo, A., & Suryani, A. (2022). On Being a Religiously Tolerant Muslim: Discursive Contestations Among Pre-Service Teachers in Contemporary Indonesia. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 44(1), 66–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2021.1917338>
- Mursyid, A. Y., AlBaihaqi, M. D., & Murtafi'ah, A. R. (2024). Politics and Pluralism: Analyzing State official Tafsir and Interfaith Discourse in Indonesia. *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis*, 25(1), 57–75. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i1.5379>

- Musradinur, M., Munandar, I., Rahmatillah, S., & Irwandi, I. (2026). The Role of Qur'anic Studies Colleges in Preventing Demoralization of the Young Generation in Nagan Raya Regency. *Jurnal Nispatti*, 11(2), 121–132. <https://doi.org/10.26811/nispatti.v11i2.247>
- Mustakim, Z., Ali, F., & Kamal, R. (2021). Empowering Students as Agents of Religious Moderation in Islamic Higher Education Institutions. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 65–76. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v7i1.12333>
- Naomira, D., & Hemawati. (2026). Transforming Character Education Through Integrated Islamic School Culture: Evidence from Smp It An-Naas Binjai. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)*, 8(2), 608–626. <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v8i2.680>
- Nasir, M., & Rijal, M. K. (2021). Keeping The Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation Through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 11(2), 213–241. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.213-241>
- Nazula, D., Anggraeni, D. D. A., & Nafiah, A. Z. (2024). Strategic leadership in developing a culture of literacy: A case study at SDIT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 2(1), 82–95. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v2i1.46>
- Nur, Z., Usman, S., & Saprin, S. (2025). Islamic Education: Pillars of Tolerance and Harmony in Multicultural Societies. *Kasyafa: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2(1), 88–102. <https://doi.org/10.61166/kasyafa.v2i1.67>
- OK, A. H., Tanjung, Y. F., & Rahmani, S. (2025). Internalization of Multicultural Education at Muhammadiyah Private Junior High School in Gunungsitoli City. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)*, 7(2), 444–462. <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v7i2.445>
- Rahmat, R. (2023). Islamic Religious Education Curriculum with a Multicultural Insight in Elementary Schools. *Anjasmoro: Islamic Interdisciplinary Journal*, 1(1), 78–89. <https://doi.org/10.69965/anjasmoro.v1i1.21>
- Rahmawati, & Hang, N. T. T. (2025). Character Education Strategies in Shaping Noble Morality of Students in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)*, 7(3), 1139–1157. <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v7i3.526>
- Rosmawati, W. (2025). Ketergantungan Gadget dan Implikasinya terhadap Interaksi Sosial serta Prestasi Belajar Peserta Didik. *Panteu: Journal of Primary Education and Learning*, 1(1), 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.26811/panteu.v1i1.4>
- Rozi, S., Nurlizam, & Zubir, M. (2024). The Reception of Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar within Social Religious Issues in the Malay World. *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis*, 25(2), 247–272. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i2.5406>

- Rusydi, B. A. (2024). Ambiguity of damages in civil court decisions: A case-based analysis of racial and ethnic discrimination in Indonesia. *Asy-Syir'ah: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah dan Hukum*, 58(1), 209–224. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajish.v58i1.414>
- Sari, D. I., Darlis, A., Silaen, I. S., Ramadayanti, R., & Tanjung, A. A. A. (2023). Moderasi Beragama dalam Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. *Journal on Education*, 5(2), 2202–2221. <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v5i2.873>
- Sholihuddin, M., Lubab, N., & Hamid, J. A. (2026). Applied Islamic Values in the Practice of Religious Moderation for Students of Islamic Boarding School Students in Lasem District. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)*, 8(1), 27-50. <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v8i1.654>
- Sibawaihi, S., Arifullah, M., & Moh. Hadi, M. S. (2025). Implementing Multicultural Education in Indonesian State Islamic Universities: Case Studies of UIN Sunan Kalijaga and UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2025.141.1-14>
- Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, D. (2023). Contribution of Islamic Religious Education to Intercultural Values in Pluralistic European Cultures: Insights from Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Religions*, 14(4), 453. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040453>
- Siswanto, I., Tabrani ZA., Syarif, M., Akyuni, Q., & Nurainiah, N. (2026). Transforming Fiqh learning to strengthen students' character as prospective Islamic Religious Education teachers. *Jurnal Nispatti*, 11(2), 133–160. <https://doi.org/10.26811/nispatti.v11i2.239>
- Subaidi, S. (2020). Strengthening Character Education in Indonesia: Implementing Values from Moderate Islam and the Pancasila. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 11(2), 120–132. <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/217576/>
- Sunbanu, Y. M., Liunokas, A. B., & Lakapu, P. A. (2025). Pengaruh Pola Asuh Demokratis dan Permisif terhadap Prestasi Belajar Siswa. *Panteu: Journal of Primary Education and Learning*, 1(1), 51–70. <https://doi.org/10.26811/panteu.v1i1.6>
- Sutisna, S., & Khori, A. (2024). Communication Management in Diversity Tolerance to Maintain the Unity of the People. *Kharisma: Jurnal Administrasi Dan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 3(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.59373/kharisma.v3i1.46>
- Tabrani ZA., Walidin, W., Idris, S., & Huda, M. (2024). Pancasila As the Core Value for Character Building in Islamic Higher Education Institutions. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 12(2), 565–592. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i2.1212>
- Taufiq, M., & Said, M. (2025). Qur'anic Interpretation among Sasak Muslims Across Communities, Theologies, and Ideological Conflicts. *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis*, 26(2), 383–412. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v26i2.6287>

- Tentiasih, S., & Rifa'i, R. M. (2022). Integrasi Nilai-Nilai Multikultural dalam Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam untuk Membangun Toleransi di Sekolah. *AL-MUADDIB: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Kependidikan*, 4(2), 341–357. <https://doi.org/10.46773/muaddib.v4i2.1334>
- Verisa, G. S., Mutmainah, N., Fidyastuti, N., & Minsih, M. (2024). Improving the creativity of children with disabilities based on local culture: An exploration of the “Karya.Ku” program. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 2(2), 172–183. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v2i2.75>
- Wahab, A., Wahyudi, Umar, M. H., & Badarussyamsi. (2024). The Leadership Vision of Charismatic Kyai in the Implementation of Religious Moderation Values in Al-Baqiyatush Shalihat Islamic Boarding School, Jambi Province. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism (IJIERM)*, 6(2), 399–424. <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v6i2.336>
- Yani, M., & Rahmi, S. (2024). Menjadikan PAI Menyenangkan melalui Model MPA dengan Media Migami di SMAN 1 Peukan Bada. *Jurnal Nispatti*, 9(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.26811/nispatti.v9i1.204>