
Islamic Education as a Means of Strengthening Tolerance Among Religious Communities

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Abstract: *Islamic education plays a strategic role in fostering attitudes of tolerance among religious communities within plural societies. However, despite extensive discussions on Islamic education and tolerance, there is still limited integrative analysis examining how Islamic education can systematically strengthen tolerant character amid contemporary social polarization. This article aims to analyze the concept, implementation, and challenges of strengthening Islamic education as a means of shaping tolerant character through a literature review approach. The discussion emphasizes that Islamic education is not only oriented toward spiritual and intellectual aspects but also toward social dimensions that cultivate values of justice, empathy, and respect for differences. The implementation of tolerance values is carried out through curriculum integration, educators' role modeling, inclusive educational environments, innovative learning methods, and community-based social activities. On the other hand, Islamic education faces challenges in the form of digital social polarization, limited curriculum integration, insufficient pedagogical capacity of educators, minimal cross-community collaboration, and suboptimal utilization of technology. Analysis using the grand theory perspective of structural functionalism indicates that education functions as a mechanism for maintaining social order and harmony. The findings highlight that strengthening tolerance-based Islamic education contributes to shaping moderate and religious individuals while supporting the stability of multicultural societies. With an adaptive and comprehensive approach, Islamic education can serve as an agent of peace and social integration.*

Keywords: *Islamic Education, Religious Tolerance, Multiculturalism, Social Integration, Structural Functionalism*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping individuals' perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors within a pluralistic society (Busara, 2023; Shofiyyah & Miharja, 2025). In the context of a diverse society such as Indonesia, education functions not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a medium for the internalization of social and humanitarian values (Saeful et al., 2019). Religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity constitutes a social reality that requires mutual respect and

tolerance among followers of different religions. Without adequate understanding, such differences may potentially trigger prejudice, conflict, and social disintegration. Therefore, educational institutions bear moral and social responsibility for instilling the values of tolerance from an early stage (Mufarokah et al., 2025; Sholeh, 2025). Education oriented toward humanitarian values can serve as a foundation for creating harmonious social life. In this regard, Islamic education has significant potential to contribute to strengthening interreligious tolerance.

Islamic education fundamentally teaches universal values such as justice, compassion, brotherhood, and respect for fellow human beings (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Firdausi, 2025; Maidugu & Isah, 2024). Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence with followers of other religions without compromising individual beliefs (Sulaiman, 2021; Unsurni, 2025). These values align with the principles of tolerance required in multicultural societies. Through well-planned and systematic learning processes, Islamic education can serve as an effective means of fostering moderate and inclusive attitudes. Curriculum design, instructional methods, and educators' role modeling play crucial roles in shaping open religious understanding. Humanistic Islamic education not only produces religious individuals but also citizens with strong national awareness. Thus, Islamic education occupies a strategic position in building interreligious harmony.

However, in reality, the practice of interreligious tolerance within educational settings continues to face various challenges. Religious exclusivism rooted in narrow and textual interpretations of religious teachings is still evident. In some cases, religious education is perceived as reinforcing boundaries of difference. The limited integration of tolerance values within Islamic education learning processes contributes to the emergence of intolerant attitudes. Furthermore, pedagogical approaches that lack dialogue and contextual relevance weaken the internalization of religious moderation values. Insufficient educators' literacy regarding multicultural education further exacerbates this condition. This situation raises concerns about the role of Islamic education in maintaining social harmony. Therefore, an in-depth examination of how Islamic education can function as a means of strengthening interreligious tolerance is necessary.

Research conducted by Supadi (2024) shows that Islamic religious education plays a strategic role in fostering interfaith tolerance through the instillation of values of moderation,

dialogue, and respect for differences. This study emphasizes that the implementation of inclusive and contextual Islamic religious education can strengthen social harmony in multicultural societies (Supadi, 2024). Research conducted by Warsah et al. (2025) shows that an Islamic Religious Education learning approach based on religious moderation is effective in instilling inclusive, tolerant, and anti-extremist attitudes in students. This study emphasizes that integrating the values of moderation into learning strategies, methods, and assessments is key to shaping a balanced and harmonious religious character in a pluralistic society (Warsah et al., 2025).

Research conducted by Nazilah et al. (2024) shows that the implementation of moderation values in Islamic Religious Education learning in the classroom significantly promotes the formation of attitudes of tolerance and appreciation for diversity. This study emphasizes that dialogic, participatory, and value-based learning strategies are able to strengthen students' inclusive character in the context of a multicultural society (Nazilah et al., 2024). Research conducted by Habibulloh (2024) shows that Islamic education in Indonesia plays an important role in fostering tolerance among religious communities through the internalization of values such as moderation, dialogue, and respect for differences. This study emphasizes that strengthening the curriculum and inclusive teaching practices are key factors in creating social harmony within a diverse society (Habibulloh, 2024).

Based on the review of previous studies, several research gaps can be identified. Most existing research focuses on the normative aspects of Islamic teachings on tolerance without examining their conceptual implementation within Islamic education. Moreover, studies that holistically integrate pedagogical perspectives, curriculum development, and social values remain limited. Research explicitly linking Islamic education to the strengthening of interreligious tolerance in diverse religious contexts is still scarce. Therefore, this study offers novelty by positioning Islamic education as a strategic instrument for building interreligious tolerance. The conceptual and analytical approach employed is expected to enrich the body of knowledge in Islamic education studies. Accordingly, this research contributes both theoretical and practical value.

Based on the aforementioned background, the purpose of this study is to analyze the role of Islamic education as a means of strengthening interreligious tolerance. This study aims to examine

conceptually the values of tolerance embedded within Islamic education. In addition, it seeks to identify strategies within Islamic education that foster inclusive and moderate attitudes. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relevance of Islamic education in pluralistic societies. The findings are anticipated to serve as a reference for educators and administrators of Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of tolerance-based educational policies. Thus, this research holds strong academic and social significance.

METHOD

This study employed a library research approach, focusing on the identification, examination, and analysis of literature sources relevant to the topic of Islamic education and interreligious tolerance (Nugroho, 2021). The literature selection process was conducted using explicit inclusion criteria to enhance methodological transparency. Sources were limited to publications from 2015–2025 to ensure recency and relevance to contemporary discussions on religious moderation. The databases used included Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, DOAJ, and national journal repositories. Keywords applied in the search process included “Islamic education,” “religious moderation,” “interreligious tolerance,” and “Islamic education and pluralism.” A total of 45 scholarly sources were initially identified, of which 30 were selected after screening based on relevance, academic credibility (peer-reviewed status), and thematic alignment with the research focus (Setiawan, 2018). This study did not involve direct field participants; instead, texts and documents served as the primary objects of analysis. Data collection was conducted through searches in academic databases, digital libraries, and journal repositories. Thus, library research constituted the main foundation for constructing the scientific arguments of this study.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and thematic analysis techniques aimed at identifying concepts, themes, and patterns of thought related to Islamic education and interreligious tolerance (Haryono, 2020). The analytical stages included: (1) data organization, (2) open coding of key ideas, (3) thematic categorization, (4) interpretative analysis, and (5) theoretical synthesis across sources. The researcher functioned as the primary analytical instrument, ensuring systematic interpretation supported by documented evidence from the

selected literature. To ensure validity and reliability, source triangulation was applied by comparing arguments across different authors, perspectives, and publication contexts. Consistency checks were conducted to identify convergences and divergences in findings. Nevertheless, this study has limitations. It relies exclusively on secondary data and does not include empirical field verification. Additionally, the selection of literature was limited to accessible databases and English- and Indonesian-language publications, which may exclude relevant studies from other linguistic contexts. Despite these limitations, the structured and transparent methodological process enhances the replicability and academic rigor of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Concept of Islamic Education in Building Interfaith Tolerance

Islamic education essentially represents a process of forming the whole human being, encompassing not only intellectual development but also spiritual, moral, and social dimensions (Maidugu & Isah, 2024). Within the context of plural societies, Islamic education plays a strategic role in instilling respect for differences without compromising Islamic identity. Values such as justice, compassion, human brotherhood, and respect for human dignity are universal principles within Islamic teachings that are relevant to fostering tolerance. Education oriented toward these values produces individuals who are not only ritually devout but also socially sensitive to diversity. Thus, Islamic education can serve as a medium for character formation that promotes peaceful coexistence amid differing beliefs. This perspective demonstrates that tolerance is not an external concept but an inherent component of Islamic educational values.

From a theological perspective, interreligious tolerance has a strong foundation in Islamic teachings, particularly in the principles of religious freedom and respect for individual belief. Islamic education functions as a medium for internalizing these values through systematic and continuous learning processes (Shodiq, 2025). A curriculum emphasizing contextual understanding of religious teachings helps learners recognize that diversity is an unavoidable social reality (Rasyid et al., 2026). Through such understanding, learners not only accept diversity but also develop constructive dialogical abilities. Islamic education that

promotes reflective and critical approaches encourages the emergence of moderation in religious life. This is essential to prevent exclusivist attitudes that may lead to social conflict.

Islamic education also serves a social function in building societal harmony by fostering collective awareness of peaceful coexistence. Educational processes occur not only in classrooms but also through social interactions within schools and communities. Educators' role modeling is crucial in instilling tolerance, as students tend to emulate observed behaviors. Inclusive and dialogical educational environments reinforce students' social experiences in appreciating differences. Consequently, tolerance is not merely taught conceptually but practiced in everyday life. Such experiences cultivate enduring open-minded attitudes.

Islamic education may further integrate historical approaches to demonstrate that Islamic civilization has a long tradition of coexistence with other religious communities (Mala & Hunaida, 2023). Objective historical instruction enables learners to understand the contributions of cross-cultural interaction to the development of knowledge and civilization. This historical awareness strengthens the perception that tolerance forms part of Islam's intellectual heritage. By understanding historical contexts, learners are less likely to perceive diversity as a threat and more likely to view it as an opportunity for cooperation. This approach reduces prejudice and broadens global perspectives. Ultimately, Islamic education helps construct an identity that remains rooted in Islamic values while open to diversity.

In the era of globalization, challenges to tolerance have become increasingly complex due to uncontrolled information flows and the spread of intolerant narratives through digital media (Dharma et al., 2025). Islamic education must respond by providing both deep religious literacy and adequate digital literacy. Learners need the skills to evaluate information critically and understand socio-religious contexts. Through this approach, Islamic education functions not only as a guardian of values but also as an agent of social transformation. This underscores its role in fostering societies resilient to religion-based conflicts. Such efforts form part of sustainable social development strategies.

The concept of Islamic education in promoting interreligious tolerance cannot be separated from the integration of spiritual, social, and intellectual values in learning processes. Adaptive Islamic education is capable of addressing the challenges of modern societal

plurality. By instilling inclusivity, dialogue, and respect for differences, Islamic education contributes significantly to social harmony. These contributions extend beyond individuals to societal stability at large. Therefore, strengthening tolerance-based Islamic educational concepts constitutes a strategic necessity in contemporary educational development.

2. The Implementation of Islamic Education in Instilling an Attitude of Tolerance

The implementation of Islamic education in fostering interreligious tolerance requires a systematic and integrated approach across all educational components (Muis, 2025). The value of tolerance cannot merely be conveyed theoretically but must be internalized through authentic learning practices. Islamic education curricula should be designed to integrate materials that emphasize respect for diversity, intercultural dialogue, and awareness of peaceful coexistence. Contextual learning materials relevant to social realities help students understand that differences in belief are inherent in modern society. Through such an approach, Islamic education functions as a means of cultivating both social and moral awareness oriented toward harmony. This implementation also demands alignment between educational objectives and learning strategies so that tolerance does not remain a normative discourse alone.

The role of educators in implementing tolerance values is crucial to the success of the educational process. Educators function not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as role models demonstrating inclusivity and openness toward differences (Alexander, 2022). Such modeling is reflected in communication styles, facilitation of dialogue, and respect for diverse student perspectives. These interactions shape learning experiences that strengthen empathy and mutual respect. Furthermore, educators' competence in understanding social and religious dynamics is essential to avoid exclusivist or discriminatory content delivery. Strengthening educators' capacities through training and professional development becomes a strategic step in ensuring effective implementation of tolerance education. Consequently, educator quality is directly proportional to the success of cultivating tolerant character among learners.

Educational environments also play a significant role in actualizing tolerance through daily social interactions (Budnyk et al., 2022). Schools or Islamic educational institutions that cultivate inclusive cultures provide students with opportunities to directly experience respect for diversity. Collaborative activities, group discussions, and cross-background social projects

can serve as effective learning media for tolerance. These experiences enrich students' understanding of complex and plural social realities. When tolerance is practiced institutionally, it becomes more deeply embedded than when taught solely in theory. A conducive environment also strengthens harmonious interpersonal relationships and reduces the potential for social conflict. This demonstrates that tolerance education requires systemic support from the entire educational ecosystem.

The utilization of innovative learning methods constitutes another essential aspect of implementing tolerance-based Islamic education. Dialogical approaches, case studies, project-based learning, and critical reflection enable students to explore diversity issues more deeply. These methods foster analytical and empathetic thinking skills in addressing differences. Moreover, integrating educational technology broadens students' horizons through access to diverse global information. However, technological utilization must be accompanied by guidance so learners can critically evaluate information. Such innovative implementation strengthens the relevance of Islamic education in addressing digital-era challenges. Thus, tolerance learning becomes more contextual and adaptive to contemporary developments.

Extracurricular activities and community service also provide effective means of instilling tolerance values through direct experience. Interaction with communities of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds broadens students' perspectives. Such experiences enhance their understanding of cooperation and social solidarity in real-life contexts. Islamic education that integrates social engagement strengthens the practical dimension of character formation. Students not only comprehend tolerance conceptually but also experience its benefits socially. This fosters collective awareness of maintaining harmony within plural societies. Therefore, tolerance education extends beyond classrooms into broader social life.

Overall, implementing Islamic education to promote tolerance requires synergy among curriculum design, educators, educational environments, learning methods, and social activities. A comprehensive approach ensures that tolerance values are deeply internalized among learners. Islamic education responsive to social dynamics can produce generations who are not only religiously grounded but also open and inclusive. This is essential for maintaining social stability in multicultural societies. By strengthening tolerance-based educational

practices, Islamic institutions can act as agents of peace and social integration. Such efforts represent a significant contribution of education toward building harmonious and sustainable societies.

3. Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening Islamic Education in Promoting Tolerance

Islamic education plays a significant role in promoting tolerance by cultivating values of respect, compassion, and justice that are rooted in Qur'anic teachings and the prophetic tradition. Through the integration of moral instruction, inclusive dialogue, and contextual understanding of religious texts, learners are guided to appreciate diversity in beliefs, cultures, and social backgrounds as part of God's creation rather than as sources of conflict. Educational practices such as reflective discussion, cooperative learning, and community engagement help students internalize principles of coexistence, empathy, and peaceful interaction in plural societies. By emphasizing universal ethical values alongside theological understanding, Islamic education not only strengthens spiritual identity but also nurtures responsible citizens who contribute to social harmony and mutual respect. In efforts to promote tolerance among religious communities, Islamic education faces a number of complex challenges amid the dynamics of globalization and social change. These challenges can be identified as follows:

- a. The increase in social polarization and the spread of exclusivist narratives through digital media

These various challenges indicate that Islamic education is not only confronted with pedagogical issues but also with broader and more complex social dynamics (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Social polarization reinforced by the flow of digital information often produces narratives that cultivate exclusivist attitudes toward other groups. Learners who are exposed to information without adequate critical literacy are likely to internalize intolerant perspectives. This condition requires Islamic education to strengthen reflective and critical thinking skills in understanding differences. Contextual religious literacy becomes essential so that students can assess information objectively and avoid extreme interpretations. Therefore, Islamic education must function both as a filter and as a guide in responding to these digital dynamics.

b. Limitations of integrating the value of tolerance in the Islamic education curriculum

The limited integration of tolerance values within the curriculum also represents a significant challenge in the practice of Islamic education. Curricula that remain normatively oriented often fail to connect religious values with the realities of a pluralistic society. As a result, learners tend to understand religious teachings textually without being able to apply them in diverse social contexts. The development of an adaptive curriculum therefore becomes an urgent necessity to bridge this gap. An interdisciplinary approach that links religious values with social and cultural issues can broaden students' perspectives. Such integration helps learners recognize the relevance of religious teachings in fostering social harmony. Thus, curriculum reform constitutes an essential component of strategies to strengthen tolerance-oriented education.

c. The capacity of educators that is not yet optimal in managing multicultural learning

Educator capacity is also a determining factor in the success of tolerance education. Not all educators possess the pedagogical readiness to manage discussions on diversity in a constructive and inclusive manner (Zhao & Zhang, 2025). Limited understanding of multicultural approaches can hinder dialogical learning processes. Therefore, professional development for educators becomes a strategic step in improving the quality of Islamic education. Training that emphasizes empathetic communication, intercultural dialogue, and the use of educational technology can strengthen educators' competencies. With adequate competence, educators are able to create learning environments that are safe and open to differences. This, in turn, supports the sustainable development of tolerant character among learners.

d. The lack of social collaboration across communities in educational practice

Education that is isolated from social realities risks producing a narrow understanding of diversity (Skrefsrud, 2020). Collaboration with social communities and other religious institutions can enrich students' learning experiences. Direct interaction with diverse communities strengthens empathy and social solidarity. Moreover, interfaith dialogue facilitated by educational institutions can serve as an

effective form of practical learning. Collaborative Islamic education helps learners understand diversity as a social strength. This participatory approach enhances the relevance of education within multicultural societies.

- e. The utilization of digital technology that has not been optimal in supporting education on tolerance

The utilization of digital technology represents both a challenge and an opportunity in strengthening tolerance-based education (Sitanggang et al., 2025). When used appropriately, technology can serve as a medium for disseminating values of moderation and peace. However, without proper guidance, it may reinforce bias and social prejudice. Integrating digital literacy into Islamic education therefore becomes a crucial strategy to address this issue. Learners need to be equipped with the skills to produce and share positive content that reflects values of tolerance. This approach transforms technology from merely a communication tool into a medium for character education. With wise utilization, technology can support the transformation of Islamic education to remain adaptive to contemporary developments.

Overall, the challenges faced by Islamic education in promoting tolerance require strategic, comprehensive, and sustainable responses. Curriculum renewal, strengthening educators' capacity, social collaboration, and the utilization of digital technology constitute essential steps in reinforcing tolerance-based education. An integrated approach will strengthen the position of Islamic education as an agent in fostering a peaceful society. Such efforts influence not only individuals but also broader social stability. Through adaptive strategies, Islamic education can produce generations who are religious, open-minded, and capable of living harmoniously in diversity. Therefore, strengthening tolerance-oriented education should become a strategic agenda in the future development of Islamic education.

Discussion

The discussion of Islamic education as a means of strengthening interreligious tolerance can be analyzed through the perspective of the grand theory of multicultural education developed by James A. Banks. This theory emphasizes that education must accommodate cultural, religious, and social diversity within the learning process to achieve social justice and societal harmony.

Banks views education as an instrument of social transformation that not only transfers knowledge but also cultivates critical awareness of plurality. Previous discussions indicate that Islamic education aims at holistic human development encompassing spiritual and social dimensions, which aligns with multicultural education principles that promote respect for differences. Values such as justice, brotherhood, and respect for human dignity embedded in Islamic education can be understood as the integration of multicultural values within a religious context. Thus, Islamic education possesses a normative foundation compatible with the goals of multicultural education in fostering inclusive societies.

Within Banks' multicultural education dimensions, particularly the aspect of content integration, Islamic education can incorporate tolerance values through contextual and reflective curricula responsive to plural social realities. Earlier discussions highlighted the importance of curricula that connect religious teachings with diverse societal life. This aligns with Banks' view that integrating content reflecting diversity helps students comprehend social complexity more comprehensively. Islamic education curricula that present historical narratives of harmonious interreligious interaction and universal Islamic values have the potential to broaden students' perspectives. Such integration enriches academic understanding while cultivating inclusive attitudes in social life. Therefore, implementing Islamic education by adopting multicultural content integration principles can strengthen the internalization of tolerance values.

Furthermore, the knowledge construction process dimension in Banks' theory is relevant in explaining the importance of reflective and critical approaches within Islamic education. This process allows learners to understand how social and cultural perspectives influence interpretations of reality. Previous discussions suggested that dialogical and analytical approaches in Islamic education are expected to develop students' critical thinking regarding diversity. This is consistent with Banks' notion that education should encourage students to question assumptions and biases in understanding the social world. Islamic education that promotes contextual religious literacy can help learners objectively comprehend diversity. Hence, knowledge construction becomes a means of cultivating tolerance based on understanding rather than mere normative doctrine.

Another relevant dimension is equity pedagogy, which stresses fair and inclusive instructional strategies for all learners. Earlier discussions emphasized the educator's role as a

model in fostering tolerant learning environments. Banks' perspective reinforces that equitable pedagogy enhances participation and learning outcomes within diverse contexts. Educators' exemplary inclusive communication and use of dialogical and collaborative methods demonstrate alignment with this principle. Inclusive educational environments help learners develop empathy and social openness. Thus, implementing equitable pedagogical practices in Islamic education is essential in actualizing tolerance values.

Additionally, the prejudice reduction dimension relates to efforts to minimize social bias through educational experiences. Discussions on collaborative activities, intercommunity interactions, and community engagement reflect relevance to this concept. Direct social interaction enables learners to understand the perspectives of other groups more humanely. Banks asserts that learning experiences promoting empathy reduce stereotypes and discrimination. Islamic education that facilitates intercultural and interfaith dialogue can function as a mechanism for prejudice reduction. This approach strengthens the role of education in fostering sustainable social cohesion.

Overall, analysis using the grand theory of multicultural education demonstrates that Islamic education holds strong potential as an instrument for strengthening interreligious tolerance. Curriculum integration, reflective approaches, inclusive pedagogy, and constructive social interaction reflect alignment with Banks' theoretical dimensions. Previously identified challenges can be addressed through systematic application of multicultural education principles within Islamic education. This confirms that Islamic education remains relevant not only in religious contexts but also in building harmonious plural societies. By adopting this theoretical perspective, Islamic education can contribute more significantly to shaping generations that are both religiously grounded and inclusive. Therefore, multicultural theoretical approaches provide a robust conceptual foundation for understanding and advancing the role of Islamic education in global tolerance contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that strengthening tolerance-based Islamic education is not merely a normative ideal but a systemic necessity within plural societies. The thematic analysis reveals three principal findings: first, the conceptual foundation of Islamic education inherently contains values of justice ('adl), balance (tawazun), and respect for diversity; second, effective

implementation depends on curriculum integration, educators' role modeling, dialogical learning strategies, and community-based social engagement; and third, contemporary challenges such as digital polarization, limited pedagogical competence, and insufficient cross-community collaboration hinder the optimal internalization of tolerance values. From the perspective of structural functionalism, these findings confirm that Islamic education functions as a strategic social instrument for maintaining social cohesion and harmony. Therefore, practical implications include the need for curriculum reform that explicitly integrates moderation values, continuous professional development programs to enhance educators' pedagogical capacity for inclusive teaching, and policy support for interfaith collaborative activities within educational institutions. Future research is recommended to complement this library-based study with empirical field investigations to assess the effectiveness of tolerance-based Islamic education practices in diverse educational settings.

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