

MULTICULTURAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION THROUGH LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF DIVERSE STUDENTS IN PESANTREN

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Received: March 2025. Accepted: July 2025. Online First: January 2026. Published: June 2026.

ABSTRACT

Pesantren, the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, has increasingly become a learning space for students from varied ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds, creating new opportunities for multicultural Islamic education. This study explores how Islamic multicultural values are understood and implemented at Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an in Central Bengkulu. Employing a qualitative field research design, data were gathered through observations, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an has transformed into a modern Islamic boarding school with a diverse student community drawn from different regions, while upholding equal treatment for all students as long as institutional rules are observed. Multicultural Islamic values are embedded in both formal academic activities and traditional pesantren learning, supported by a combination of theoretical instruction and practical application. These values are strengthened through extracurricular activities, the use of Arabic and English, and programs such as *Muhadhoroh* (public speaking) and *Mubimmah Ta'awuniah* (collaborative tasks), which promote collaboration and mutual understanding. The study concludes that the pesantren's innovative practices, including its art-stage initiatives, effectively nurture tolerance, cooperation, and intergroup harmony. This approach provides a meaningful model for enhancing multicultural Islamic education in pesantren and other Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Multi-identity, Multicultural Islamic Education, Pesantren, Students

INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism has become a central global issue as nations increasingly grapple with religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity (Ji et al., 2025). Around the world, societies are confronted with challenges such as intolerance, ethnoreligious conflict, and violent extremism, underscoring the urgent need for educational systems to promote mutual respect, peace, and intercultural understanding (Zamora et al., 2025; Hamdan et al., 2022). Indonesia, often celebrated for its long-standing multicultural heritage, is frequently cited as an example of how plural societies can coexist peacefully (Aspinall & Berger, 2001; Hefner, 2009, 2018). Its rich mosaic of cultures and religions positions it as a model for global discourse on pluralism and coexistence (Ruslan et al., 2025). However, this diversity, even as a national asset, also presents risks when not properly managed, including the potential for horizontal conflicts, intolerance, and social fragmentation (Bruinessen, 1990).

Within Indonesia, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) represent a unique microcosm of this national diversity (Zaluchu et al., 2025). Their communal living system requires students

to share spaces, responsibilities, and daily routines, demanding continuous interpersonal adaptation (Rasyid et al., 2022). Previous research highlights the importance of cultivating tolerance and intercultural sensitivity in this context to maintain harmonious social interaction (Wahid, 2014; Rohman et al., 2025). Despite a shared religious identity, students in pesantren often come from highly diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, creating potential for misunderstandings or conflict. Studies warn that unaddressed diversity can escalate into violence or bullying (Barton et al., 2021), and documented reports have revealed recurring cases of aggression and harassment within Indonesian pesantren (Rahmatullah et al., 2020; Ru'iyah, 2019). These findings indicate that pesantren environments require culturally responsive management approaches to ensure that diversity becomes an enriching force rather than a source of tension.

The province of Bengkulu exemplifies regions where multicultural dynamics are particularly pronounced. Its ethnically diverse communities require strong multicultural understanding to sustain social cohesion (Rasyid et al., 2022). In pesantren across Bengkulu, students live collectively in dormitories, making cultural sensitivity and effective governance especially crucial (Susanto et al., 2025). Without structured multicultural management, issues such as bullying, mockery, discrimination, and violence may emerge (Bamashmous & Meisha, 2025; Barton et al., 2021). Media reports increasingly highlight cases of violence and unethical behavior in pesantren (Ru'iyah, 2019), underscoring weaknesses in supervision, the limited integration of multicultural values, and insufficient support for students navigating intercultural interactions (Nieto, 2017; An et al., 2025). National data reinforce these concerns: 36% of school-related violence cases in 2024 occurred in faith-based institutions, with Islamic schools and pesantren accounting for significant proportions of sexual violence, bullying, and discriminatory practices. These issues disproportionately affect female students, revealing deep gender imbalances and urgent gaps in student protection.

Despite these challenges, pesantren in Bengkulu continue to grow, reflecting strong community trust and demand for religious-based education. Studies show that pesantren across Indonesia, including those in Bengkulu, are expanding in number and diversity of models, from traditional institutions to internationally oriented boarding schools (Lukens-Bull, 2019; Iqbal, 2023). Public interest remains high, as noted by Parker and Raihani (2011), with institutions such as Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) and the rapidly developing Pesantren Ihya'ul Qur'an serving as prominent examples (Amrullah et al., 2024). Pesantren Ihya'ul Qur'an, led by Ustadz Herman, has demonstrated noteworthy institutional growth, establishing affiliated educational units and supporting students' academic mobility to leading institutions such as Al-Azhar University, Middle Eastern universities, and LIPIA (Bright & Heyting, 2024; Bolen et al., 2025). Its integration of Arabic and English (Ardinal, 2017) attracts students from diverse ethnic and cultural groups across Bengkulu and South Sumatra, making it a highly multicultural educational setting.

Recent studies underscore the increasingly strategic role of multicultural Islamic education in nurturing student attitudes, strengthening tolerance, and fostering harmonious coexistence within pesantren environments. Evidence from institutions such as Ihya'ul Qur'an shows that multicultural values can be successfully integrated into Islamic educational practices while maintaining a strong religious foundation (Luthfi et al., 2025). Research further indicates that many Islamic schools in Indonesia have long embraced multicultural principles, welcoming students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds without disrupting teaching and learning activities (Ok et al., 2022; Paisun, 2025). These findings collectively illustrate that multiculturalism is not only compatible with Islamic education but also enhances the social and pedagogical experiences of students within these institutions.

Despite these promising developments, a notable research gap persists regarding how pesantren administrators design and implement institutional strategies to support learners from varied backgrounds within a single educational system. Existing studies tend to focus on multicultural practices at the classroom level, with limited attention to the governance and leadership approaches that shape these practices (Ramdhani et al., 2021). This gap highlights the need for further exploration of administrative policies, daily management routines, and structural programs that enable pesantren to operationalize multicultural Islamic education effectively. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate how Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an develops, manages, and sustains multicultural values within its institutional framework, offering insights that can strengthen pesantren competitiveness and promote innovation and excellence in multicultural Islamic education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design informed by the Multicultural Education Framework (Banks, 2008; Nieto, 2017) integrated with Islamic pedagogical values. This combined framework provides a comprehensive lens for examining how multicultural principles, such as equity, tolerance, and respect for diversity, are interpreted and practiced within an Islamic educational setting. The case study approach is particularly suited to capturing the complex social interactions and lived experiences of students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds at Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an. By grounding the analysis in both multicultural theory and Islamic educational values, the study seeks to generate an in-depth understanding of how the pesantren cultivates an inclusive learning environment rooted in both modern multicultural principles and traditional Islamic ethics.

Data were collected at Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an in Central Bengkulu through multiple qualitative techniques, primarily semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit insights into participants' experiences, challenges, and strategies for navigating multicultural interactions within the pesantren. Additional data were gathered through observations and documentation, complemented by a literature review of classical and contemporary works on multicultural and Islamic education. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification. This systematic analytic process enabled the researcher to interpret cognitive, social, and cultural dynamics holistically, revealing how multicultural values are embedded, negotiated, and enacted within the pesantren ecosystem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an

Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an, located in Central Bengkulu, was founded in 2014 by Herman HS, Lc., and officially inaugurated by Governor H. Rohidin Mersyah, M.A., on May 3, 2018. Since its establishment, the institution has expanded into a comprehensive educational center offering elementary, junior high, and senior high school programs. Its core mission is to integrate a modern pesantren curriculum with the national education system while maintaining the foundational norms and values of Salaf pesantren traditions. Through this combined approach, the institution aims to cultivate students who are faithful, knowledgeable, ethical, and diligent.

Situated on Gunung Bungkok Street in Padang Ulak Tanjung Village, Talang Empat District, the pesantren occupies a strategic and easily accessible location near the central area of Bengkulu. The institution manages three formal education units, SD Ihyaul Qur'an, SMP Ihyaul Qur'an, and SMA Ihyaul Qur'an, serving students across multiple grade levels. Despite its

relatively recent establishment, Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an has built a strong academic reputation, demonstrated through various achievements in competitions at local, provincial, and national levels. These accomplishments reflect the pesantren's growing prominence and commitment to educational excellence.

The Strategy of Multicultural Islamic Education Implementation

In contrast to many pesantren that enforce strict gender segregation (Bruinessen, 1990; Lukens-Bull, 2019), Pesantren Ihya'ul Qur'an implements an integrated learning system in which male and female students share the same classroom environment. This inclusive arrangement encourages gender-neutral interaction and supports the pesantren's commitment to multicultural Islamic education. Traditional pesantren commonly separate genders not only during classroom instruction but also throughout daily routines (Lukens-Bull & Dhofier, 2000), often to prevent inappropriate interaction or potential moral issues. Some pesantren even reinforce gender-specific identities through highly structured environments, such as Pesantren Darussalam Gontor Putri and Pesantren Banjarwati Paciran Lamongan (Malihah et al., 2020). In contrast, Pesantren Ihya'ul Qur'an adopts a more flexible and equitable model that aligns with contemporary educational reforms emphasizing inclusivity, gender awareness, and multicultural values.

Interview data further illustrate this approach. A member of the pesantren leadership explained that students are not separated in the classroom but are housed in different dormitory areas, with female students placed on the north side of the river and male students on the south side (Ustadz Ali, personal communication, 2023). He noted that this arrangement still allows for meaningful interaction within appropriate limits. The spatial design, an integrated learning environment with separate dormitories, reflects an educational philosophy consistent with Qur'anic values, particularly Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, which emphasizes human equality and mutual recognition. As Hoon (2017) highlights, such principles encourage positive interactions that promote social harmony, suggesting that the pesantren's model fosters both religious and multicultural development.

Learning based on Multicultural Islamic Education

Pesantren institutions possess distinctive educational characteristics that set them apart from other learning environments, particularly through their reliance on classical Islamic texts authored by scholars from diverse intellectual traditions (Fauzi, 2012). These foundational works typically cover a wide spectrum of Islamic disciplines, such as fiqh, tafsir, adab, history, and Aqidah, which shape students' religious understanding and moral development. At Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an, these classical materials are complemented by texts that implicitly support the integration of multicultural values within the learning process. Among the core references used in daily instruction are *Hadith al-Arba'in*, *Safinah al-Najah*, *Fath al-Qarib*, and *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, each contributing to students' spiritual growth while simultaneously fostering respect, discipline, and ethical engagement with diverse peers. Through this combination of classical knowledge and multicultural orientation, the pesantren cultivates an educational environment that aligns Islamic teachings with inclusive and culturally responsive practices.

Table 1. The Values of Multicultural Islamic Education in the Books in Pesantren

No	Book Names	Multicultural Values	Available in chapters
1	<i>Hadist al-Arbain</i>	Multicultural values explicitly: 1. Humanity 2. Tolerance 3. Help each other 4. Justice 5. Brotherhood	Abandoning what is not useful, loving one's fellow Muslims, saying good or being silent, not being angry, doing good in all affairs, having a sense of shame, forbidding doing wrong, and giving alms from excess wealth.
2	<i>Fath al-Qarib</i>	Multicultural values: 1. Humanity 2. Tolerance 3. Help each other 4. Brotherhood	Prayer, fasting, <i>zakat</i> , funeral, hajj, <i>muamalat</i> (such as buying and selling, inheritance, and will)
3	<i>Ta'lim al-Mutaallim</i>	Multicultural values: 1. Deliberation 2. Justice 3. Help each other	Love, advice, and deliberation
4	<i>Taysir al-Khalaq</i>	Multicultural values: 1. Humanity 2. Tolerance 3. Help each other 4. Justice 5. Brotherhood	Manners of teachers and <i>santri</i> , fulfilling the rights of parents, relatives, neighbors, manners of getting along, getting along, getting along, brotherhood, fairness, honesty, trustworthiness, forgiving, generous, humble, not grudging, not envying, not greedy, not pitting sheep, not arrogant.
5	<i>Riyadh al-Shalihin</i>	Multicultural values: 1. Openness 2. Deliberation 3. Humanity 4. Tolerance 5. Please help 6. Justice 7. Brotherhood	Commandment: fulfilling the mandate, restoring the rights of the oppressed, upholding the honor of Muslims, compassion, reconciling those in dispute, loving orphans, women, the weak and the poor, associating with wives well, and doing justice to them, give

In formal educational institutions, particularly at the junior and senior high school levels, the curriculum typically comprises general subjects alongside religious studies (*diniyah*). Since many pesantrens also operate formal schools, they implement a dual curriculum that integrates the pesantren's internal curriculum with the national curriculum. This integrative model is widely practiced across Indonesian pesantrens, where the combination of religious and national curricula has become a distinctive characteristic of their educational framework. Table 2 presents the list of general subjects included in pesantren.

Table 2. General Subjects and Pesantren Subject

No	Pesantren Subject	General Subject
1	<i>Nahwu and Shorof</i>	Mathematics
2	Arabic	History
3	Fiqh	English
4	Interpretation and Translation	Indonesian Language
5	Hadith	Science Learning
6	<i>Tabfiððh</i>	Civic Education
7	Al-Qur'an	Biology
8	<i>Imla'</i>	Physics
9	<i>Mahfuðot</i>	Chemistry
10	<i>Aqidah</i>	Information Technology
11	<i>Moral</i>	Physical Education
12	<i>Tabfiððð</i>	
13	<i>Ulumul Qur'an</i>	

The curriculum at Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an integrates the national education system with the traditional pesantren curriculum, reflecting its commitment to combining religious and general scientific knowledge within a unified educational framework. All three formal institutions under the pesantren, its elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, are formally registered under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, ensuring compliance with national standards. This dual-curriculum model is consistent with trends in many modern pesantren across Indonesia, where religious and scientific studies are blended to cultivate well-rounded learners. Despite this integration, classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), which have historically served as the foundation of Salaf pesantren, remain central in the instructional process, as highlighted by Bruinessen (1990).

Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an also maintains a structured daily schedule that combines spiritual development, academic instruction, and character formation from early morning until night. Students begin the day with night prayers, Qur'an memorization, and morning vocabulary practice before moving on to hygiene routines and breakfast. Academic learning is divided into morning and afternoon sessions, with breaks for prayer, meals, and rest. Additional religious activities, such as Qur'an review, Tahsin, evening study periods, and night memorization, reinforce both academic and spiritual learning, while weekly programs such as multilingual *kebutbah*, storytelling, Fiqh studies, and Qur'anic interpretation further support students' holistic development.

This structured environment provides continuous opportunities for collaboration and intercultural interaction among students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Shared activities, including *Mubadhoroh* (public speaking), cooperative tasks, cleanliness duties, and the use of Arabic and English in daily communication, foster teamwork, mutual respect, and effective cross-cultural understanding. As Liddicoat (2014) observes, foreign language learning is often enhanced in multicultural settings, a pattern evident in the pesantren's linguistic practices. Through daily interaction and collective responsibilities, students gradually develop tolerance, respect, and social cohesion, values aligned with the Islamic principle of *tasamuh*, which advocates peaceful coexistence and harmonious community relationships (Hoon, 2017).

Active Use of Foreign Languages

The active integration of foreign languages in the pesantren environment begins as soon as new students arrive, where they are encouraged, and in many cases required, to use Arabic and English in daily communication to strengthen linguistic proficiency. Students who fail to follow these language policies may receive sanctions, reinforcing the pesantren's commitment to language discipline. Such practices are typically found in pesantrens that adopt modern and progressive educational models, including institutions such as Pesantren Gontor and contemporary programs that embed the use of foreign languages as part of broader educational reforms (Hamzah & Iqbal, 2023). In support of this approach, one teacher explained that students are expected to use Indonesian, English, and Arabic. However, greater emphasis is placed on the latter two languages because Indonesian is already widely used outside the pesantren. The teacher also noted that students who fail to use Arabic or English may receive disciplinary consequences (Ustadz Ali, personal communication, 2025).

Liddicoat (2014) argues that enforcing the use of a foreign language can also promote multicultural integration among students by fostering shared linguistic practices within a diverse community. Although many students come from regions such as Bengkulu, South Sumatra, and Lampung, they continue to maintain their native languages (Tahir et al., 2020). Thus, the inclusion of Arabic and English in the pesantren context supports students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds by providing extensive and sustained exposure to foreign languages, ultimately enhancing both linguistic competency and intercultural understanding.

Multicultural Values in Extracurricular Activities

Beyond its formal classroom instruction, Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an offers a diverse range of supplementary and extracurricular programs that run from early morning until late evening. These activities embody key principles of multicultural education and provide students with opportunities to engage in collaborative, creative, and character-building experiences. Programs such as scouting, *Muhadhoroh* (public speaking), *Muhimmah Ta'awuniah* (collaborative tasks), sports, artistic activities, calligraphy, and haiku writing highlight the pesantren's commitment to nurturing students' social, linguistic, and cultural competencies. Artistic and literary activities, in particular, serve not only as creative outlets but also as educational tools that reflect cultural plurality and foster mutual appreciation among learners from diverse backgrounds.

In addition to internal activities, students actively participate in external competitions, including Qur'an memorization contests, sports tournaments, and various academic or creative events, where many achieve notable success. Engagement in these broader arenas enables students to interact with peers from different schools and cultural communities, thereby expanding their social horizons and enriching their multicultural experiences. Through these encounters, students cultivate greater cultural awareness, develop the ability to appreciate differing perspectives, and strengthen their openness to diverse forms of social and intellectual engagement beyond their daily pesantren environment.

Commencement Ceremony

The annual commencement ceremony at Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an High School is held during the graduation of junior high (9th grade) or senior high (11th grade) students. Beyond its academic purpose, the event functions as a cultural celebration featuring a variety of student art performances. Much like the tradition at Pesantren Gontor, reflecting the influence of the principal's alumni background, the highlight of the ceremony is the *Art Stage*, also known as *Panggung Gembira*. This program showcases Qur'anic recitation (*tahfidz al-Qur'an*), traditional dances, *badrah* musical ensembles, theatrical performances, and other artistic displays. The event is highly collaborative, involving students from both genders along with teachers (*ustadz* and

ustadzah) and pesantren administrators, and requires substantial institutional planning and support.

During the farewell ceremony, students present a diverse array of regional dances that reflect Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, such as the Saman dance from Aceh, the Andun dance from Bengkulu, and the Genjringan performance from Palembang, South Sumatra. These artistic expressions, harmoniously staged together, demonstrate the pesantren's commitment to cultural integration and embody the principles of multicultural education (Heniwyaty, 2018; Pradana, 2018). Collaborative efforts among dormitory groups, such as residents of the Bersatu dormitory, further symbolize the dismantling of ethnic, cultural, and hierarchical barriers within the school community. Broadcast live through the pesantren's media platform, IQTV, the event publicly showcases unity, collective identity, and the successful practice of multicultural Islamic education within the pesantren environment.

The Dimension of Multicultural Islamic Education in Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an

Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an employs a series of strategies to embed and sustain multicultural Islamic education across academic, social, and extracurricular domains. These efforts, summarized in Figure 1, demonstrate the institution's systematic commitment to nurturing tolerance, cooperation, cultural appreciation, and global-mindedness.

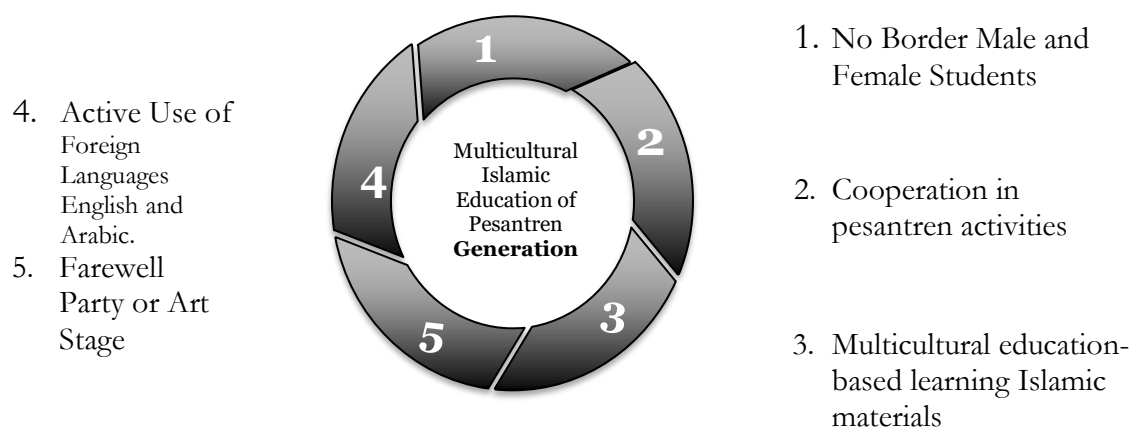


Figure 1. Dimensions of Multicultural Islamic Education at the Pesantren of Ihyaul Qur'an

Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an demonstrates a distinctly multicultural environment due to its openness to students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Bengkulu Province itself embodies rich cultural heterogeneity, consisting of ethnic groups such as Rejang, Serawai, and Lembak, each maintaining its own language and traditions. The Rejang community, for instance, uses the Rejang language written in the traditional Kaganga script, whereas Serawai and Lembak speakers uphold their linguistic identities as markers of cultural heritage. This diversity reflects the unique sociocultural character of Bengkulu, where no single mother tongue dominates; instead, each ethnic group preserves its linguistic tradition in everyday life (Diana, 2023).

In contrast to many pesantren that strictly segregate male and female students, Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an adopts a more integrated learning system, allowing both genders to interact within shared educational spaces while maintaining Islamic ethical boundaries. This model enables natural communication, reduces prejudice, and builds trust among students from different families, regions, and ethnicities. This inclusive approach aligns with Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), which emphasizes that human diversity, across gender, ethnicity, and tribe, exists so that individuals may know and understand one another. As Rasyid et al. (2022) affirm, difference

becomes a basis for cooperation and collective well-being rather than division. Through such interaction, students learn the Qur'anic value of *ta'arufu*, which calls for intentional, benevolent engagement with others.

To enhance intercultural unity, Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an implements a linguistic environment in which Arabic and English serve as the primary languages of daily communication and instruction. Indonesian is not emphasized because it poses no communicative barrier; it is already the students' shared lingua franca. This multilingual policy encourages interaction across diverse backgrounds and supports the development of linguistic competence (Liddicoat, 2014). The mastery of Arabic, especially for students aspiring to pursue studies in the Middle East, has proven effective, as demonstrated by nineteen alumni who gained admission to universities across the Middle East in 2024 and an additional five students accepted to Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 2025. Increasingly, students also pursue studies at Indonesian state universities and European institutions, evidencing the global opportunities enabled by multilingual education.

Extracurricular activities play a vital role in cultivating intercultural understanding within the pesantren. Activities such as scouting, *Muhadhoroh* (public speaking), *Mubimmah Ta'awuniah* (collaborative tasks), sports, calligraphy, and creative arts reinforce multicultural values while supporting skill development and preventing issues such as bullying or intolerance. Continuous supervision by teachers helps maintain discipline and strengthen the pesantren's multicultural environment. These activities foster daily productivity, collaboration, and social cohesion among students from diverse backgrounds.

Graduation ceremonies and arts performances serve as major venues for expressing multicultural values in Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an. When planned on a large scale, these events significantly enhance students' creativity and showcase the harmonious coexistence of spirituality and artistic expression, demonstrating that religion and culture complement one another (Lukens). Much like Pesantren Darussalam Gontor's celebrated *Panggung Gembira*, Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an incorporates theatrical plays, *hadrah*, and regional dances such as the Saman dance (Aceh), Andun (Bengkulu), and Genjringan (Palembang), reaffirming Indonesia's cultural richness (Sista et al., 2019; Hamzah & Iqbal, 2023). Extensive social media coverage amplifies their impact, enhancing public appreciation. Through these events, local arts and traditions foster social cohesion and reduce prejudice, demonstrating the transformative potential of multicultural education within Islamic boarding schools (Mubin, 2023). The success of these performances also reflects the pesantren's growing adaptability and modernization.

The findings of this study can be interpreted through Banks' (2008) and Nieto's (2017) multicultural education frameworks, which highlight core components such as equity pedagogy, content integration, prejudice reduction, and the creation of empowering school cultures. When examined through these lenses, Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an demonstrates a learning environment that intentionally cultivates respect for diversity and social justice. This aligns with broader literature showing that Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia have increasingly adopted multicultural approaches to strengthen tolerance and inclusivity (Hamdan & Fadli, 2022; Rasyid et al., 2022). Within this study, multicultural practice is not treated as an isolated pedagogical technique but rather as a foundational whole-school orientation that shapes governance, learning processes, and student socialization.

Complementing these Western-derived frameworks, Islamic pedagogical principles, particularly *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'aruf* (mutual recognition), *adl* (justice), and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), serve as the theological and ethical basis for multicultural engagement in the pesantren. Classical and contemporary Islamic scholars have emphasized that diversity is divinely intended, a theme reflected in Qur'anic teachings such as Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13). These values are operationalized in pesantren settings through daily routines, communal

activities, and interpersonal relationships, supporting Hefner's (2018) argument that Indonesian Islamic education has long fostered pluralist ethics. In this pesantren, Islamic pedagogy reinforces the moral obligation of respecting differences, providing a spiritual framework that strengthens multicultural practices promoted by Banks and Nieto.

The findings also show that the pesantren's institutional structure reflects Banks' concept of *school culture reform*, in which the entire organizational ecosystem is designed to minimize prejudice and promote equitable participation. This is visible in policies regulating gender interaction, language use, conflict resolution, and student discipline. Such structural reforms parallel insights from research on pesantren models that balance modernity and tradition while promoting social inclusivity (Hamzah & Iqbal, 2023; Lukens-Bull, 2001). The pesantren's multilingual environment, rooted in Arabic and English language learning practices, supports intercultural mediation and pragmatic competence, resonating with Liddicoat's (2014) work on language learning as a means for intercultural understanding. These features collectively create a microcosm of multicultural coexistence where students from diverse backgrounds can thrive.

Within the curriculum, the pesantren combines national educational standards with classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), enabling what Banks (2008) frames as *content integration*, the deliberate inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives into teaching materials. This curricular approach echoes earlier observations that Indonesian pesantren adapt both local wisdom and global knowledge to prepare students for contemporary challenges (Bruinessen, 1990; Lukens-Bull, 2019). Aligning with Nieto's (2017) emphasis on affirming diversity, learning materials highlight values such as humanity, cooperation, justice, and deliberation, which are core tenets of both multicultural pedagogy and Islamic ethics. This integrative approach ensures that multicultural ideas are neither foreign nor imposed but harmonized with Islamic identity and tradition.

Classroom interactions and extracurricular activities further illustrate the implementation of *equity pedagogy*, where learning experiences are structured to support the success of all students regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Activities such as joint language learning, collaborative service projects, and mixed-ethnicity dormitory life nurture solidarity and reduce intergroup tension. These findings resonate with studies showing that intentional contact and shared activities promote multicultural acceptance and social capital among youth (An et al., 2025; Syarif et al., 2024). The pesantren context amplifies these outcomes through spiritual discipline, communal worship, and shared moral expectations, fostering a cohesive and empathetic student community.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an embodies the synthesis of multicultural education theory and Islamic pedagogical principles. By nurturing *empowered learners* (Banks, 2008) who are also shaped into *insan kamil*, holistically developed individuals grounded in Islamic ethics, the pesantren provides an exemplary model of multicultural Islamic education in contemporary Indonesia. Its success supports broader national discourses on religious moderation (Zaluchu et al., 2025) and contributes to the ongoing scholarly discussion on how Islamic boarding schools can promote pluralism, harmony, and intercultural understanding (Paisun et al., 2025; Ramdhani et al., 2021). This integrated framework helps explain how the pesantren effectively reduces prejudice, strengthens students' intercultural competence, and sustains a culture of peace rooted in both pedagogical innovation and Islamic moral values.

The present study offers several important contributions to the growing body of research on multicultural Islamic education, particularly within the pesantren context. By examining the curricular practices, linguistic policies, extracurricular activities, and socio-cultural dynamics at Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an, this study provides an empirically grounded account of

how multicultural values are embedded in both formal and informal learning spaces. The findings expand current understandings of how pesantren can function as inclusive, intercultural learning environments that promote *ta'arufu*, tolerance, and global-mindedness, values that align with contemporary educational demands. Moreover, this study contributes methodologically by integrating document analysis, observation, and interviews, offering a multimodal perspective that captures the complexity of multicultural practices in Islamic boarding schools. These insights can inform policymakers, educators, and pesantren leaders seeking to strengthen multicultural approaches within Islamic education systems in Indonesia and beyond.

Despite these contributions, the study is not without limitations. First, the findings are based on a single pesantren, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other Islamic boarding schools with different cultural, geographic, or organizational characteristics. Second, the scope of the study emphasizes observable practices and institutional policies, leaving less room for longitudinal analysis of students' long-term attitudes and behavioral changes related to multiculturalism. Future research could broaden the sample by including multiple pesantren across diverse regions to capture wider variations in multicultural implementation. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine how exposure to multicultural Islamic education influences students' identity development, intergroup attitudes, and academic trajectories over time. Additionally, comparative studies between pesantren and non-pesantren Islamic schools may offer deeper insights into how different institutional models shape multicultural educational outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the multicultural practices at Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an can be effectively understood through the integration of Banks' and Nieto's multicultural education frameworks with core Islamic pedagogical principles. The pesantren's institutional culture, reflected in its multilingual environment, inclusive routines, balanced gender interaction model, and values-driven extracurricular programs, shows how multiculturalism can function not only as an instructional strategy but as a holistic educational ethos grounded in Islamic teachings of *tasamuh*, *ta'aruf*, *adl*, and *ukhawah*. Through intentional content integration, equity-focused pedagogy, and the cultivation of an empowering school culture, the pesantren successfully fosters tolerance, collaboration, and intercultural understanding among students from diverse backgrounds. By embedding multicultural values in both academic learning and daily communal life, Pesantren Ihyaul Qur'an offers a compelling model for strengthening multicultural Islamic education within Indonesia's wider pesantren system. These findings underline the importance of harmonizing global multicultural education principles with local religious traditions, and they point to future research opportunities exploring governance strategies, teacher preparation, and curriculum innovation in diverse Islamic educational settings.

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