



Multicultural Islamic Education in Fostering Attitudes of Tolerance and Religious Moderation in Schools

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Abstract

This study examines multicultural Islamic education in fostering students' attitudes of tolerance and religious moderation at SMP Islam Sawahan Turen. The research employed a qualitative method using a case study approach to explore the implementation of multicultural Islamic values within the school environment. Data were obtained from the principal, Islamic Education teachers, general teachers, students, school documents, and religious and social activity programs. The data collection techniques included observation, in depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The findings reveal that multicultural Islamic education was implemented through several strategies, including Islamic learning based on tolerance values, the development of a religious and inclusive school culture, social religious activities, and teachers' role modeling. Islamic Education teachers integrated the principles of tasamuh, tawassuth, i'tidal, and rahmatan lil 'alamin into classroom learning and daily interactions. The study also indicates that multicultural Islamic education contributes significantly to the development of students' tolerant attitudes, empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity. Furthermore, religious moderation was strengthened through habituation, character building, and supportive social interactions within the school environment. Teachers played a central role in shaping inclusive and moderate religious attitudes among students.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of multicultural Islamic education has become increasingly important in contemporary society due to the growing challenges of intolerance, radicalism, and social polarization among young generations (Ni & Zaironi, 2026; Zaironi, 2025; Zaironi et al., 2026). Educational institutions are expected to become strategic spaces for cultivating peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and inclusive religious understanding (Firghol et al., 2026; Nia Hasanah, Muchammad Syamsul Ma'arif,

Nurul Ma'rifah, 2025). In the Indonesian context, schools play a significant role in shaping students' social and spiritual character (Acetylena & Zaironi, 2026; Mufarrohah & Zaironi, 2026) because they directly influence students' patterns of interaction and moral development (Luluk Ananta, Fajriah, 2025; Tirta & Zaironi, 2025). Islamic education is not merely intended to strengthen ritual understanding, but also to foster humanistic and moderate religious attitudes that support social harmony in pluralistic communities (Antika et al., 2026; Arisih & Muhammad, 2026). Several social conflicts rooted in religious misunderstanding indicate that tolerance education remains highly relevant and urgently needed. Therefore, multicultural Islamic education is important because it contributes to strengthening social cohesion, preventing exclusivism, and promoting balanced religious attitudes that are compatible with democratic and multicultural societies.

One of the major social problems underlying this research is the increasing tendency of exclusive religious attitudes among adolescents in educational environments (J Francis & McKenna, 2017). In many cases, students are exposed to rigid religious interpretations through social media, peer groups, or informal religious narratives that may reduce appreciation toward diversity and differences (Saha, 2024; Woodward & Kimmons, 2019). Such conditions potentially create intolerance, discrimination, and social segmentation among students from different cultural or religious backgrounds. In addition, some educational practices still emphasize cognitive religious achievement without balancing moral, social, and multicultural dimensions (Afandy et al., 2026; Maqfiroh & Sumarni, Yustina, 2025; Muqoffi et al., 2026). Consequently, students may possess religious knowledge but lack empathy, openness, and respect toward others. This situation demonstrates that religious education requires transformative approaches capable of integrating Islamic values with multicultural awareness. Therefore, strengthening multicultural Islamic education becomes an important educational response to address social fragmentation and to develop students' moderate and tolerant religious character within school environments.

Field phenomena indicate that schools increasingly face challenges in maintaining harmonious interactions among students with different social

backgrounds, perspectives, and levels of religious understanding. In several educational contexts, intolerance appears through verbal discrimination, rejection of differing opinions, excessive fanaticism, and limited social interaction among students. However, some Islamic schools have attempted to create inclusive educational cultures through character education, collaborative activities, and religious moderation programs. At SMP Islam Sawahan Turen, multicultural Islamic education is reflected in daily learning activities, school culture, and religious-social programs emphasizing cooperation, mutual respect, and Islamic moderation. Teachers consistently integrate the principles of *tasamuh*, *tawassuth*, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* into classroom instruction and social interaction. This phenomenon demonstrates that schools possess significant potential to become effective spaces for internalizing tolerance and strengthening students' inclusive religious attitudes through educational habituation and exemplary practices.

Previous studies have widely discussed multicultural education and religious moderation in Islamic educational institutions (Abidin & Murtadlo, 2020; Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023). Several researchers concluded that multicultural education contributes positively to the development of students' social awareness, tolerance, and democratic values within pluralistic societies (Salleh et al., 2021; Sukardi et al., 2025). Other studies emphasized that Islamic education can become an effective instrument for preventing radicalism and strengthening peaceful religious understanding among students (Nurhayati & Hamid, 2020; Tambak, 2021). In addition, research on religious moderation generally focused on curriculum development, teacher competence, and the integration of national values within Islamic learning (Ni & Zaironi, 2026). However, many previous studies tended to examine multicultural education conceptually and normatively without exploring how multicultural Islamic values are implemented through school culture, teacher role modeling, and daily interactions among school communities. As a result, the practical dimensions of multicultural Islamic education in shaping students' tolerant attitudes remain insufficiently explored, particularly in Islamic junior high school contexts characterized by diverse social interactions and religious learning practices.

Furthermore, previous research often concentrated on formal curriculum aspects while paying limited attention to informal educational processes that significantly influence students' character formation (Subairi & Zaironi, 2025; Syarifuddin et al., 2025; Zaironi, 2026). Studies discussing tolerance in Islamic education mostly examined theoretical concepts, policy implementation, or classroom instruction separately, rather than analyzing the interconnected relationship between school culture, social activities, and teachers' exemplary behavior (Huda, 2025; Riaz et al., 2023). Several researcher also focused primarily on higher educational institutions or public schools, leaving Islamic based junior high schools relatively underrepresented in academic discussions (Hussin et al., 2024, 2024). Consequently, there remains a research gap concerning how multicultural Islamic education is internalized holistically through both academic and non-academic practices within Islamic school environments. This gap is important to address because students' moderate religious attitudes are often shaped not only through formal instruction but also through social interaction, habituation, and institutional culture. Therefore, this research contributes by providing a more comprehensive understanding of multicultural Islamic education practices in strengthening tolerance and religious moderation among students.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive exploration of multicultural Islamic education as an integrated educational practice involving learning processes, school culture, social religious activities, and teachers' role modeling simultaneously. Unlike previous studies that tended to separate these dimensions, this research examines how various educational components collectively contribute to shaping students' tolerant and moderate religious attitudes. Another important aspect of this study is its focus on an Islamic junior high school context, which represents a critical developmental stage in students' character and identity formation. This research also highlights the practical implementation of Islamic moderation values such as *tasamuh*, *tawassuth*, *i'tidal*, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in everyday school activities. Therefore, this study is academically significant because it expands the discourse of multicultural Islamic education from theoretical perspectives

toward contextual and practical educational experiences that are directly connected to students' social and religious development in schools.

Based on the issues and research gaps described above, this study investigates how multicultural Islamic education is implemented in fostering tolerance and religious moderation among students at SMP Islam Sawahan Turen. This research specifically examines the forms of multicultural Islamic educational practices, the role of teachers and school culture, and the influence of social religious activities on students' attitudes. The study argues that multicultural Islamic education can effectively strengthen students' inclusive religious perspectives when supported by collaborative educational environments, consistent teacher exemplification, and character-based learning processes. Furthermore, the research assumes that tolerance and religious moderation are not formed solely through theoretical instruction, but through continuous habituation within students' daily social experiences at school. Therefore, this study contributes to the development of Islamic educational discourse by emphasizing that multicultural Islamic education functions not only as religious instruction but also as a strategic instrument for promoting social harmony and peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study (Gammelgaard, 2017; Viera, 2023) approach to explore the implementation of multicultural Islamic education in fostering tolerance and religious moderation among students. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in depth understanding of social interactions, educational practices, and participants' experiences within natural school settings. The case study design allowed researchers to investigate contextual educational phenomena comprehensively and systematically. The research was conducted at SMP Islam Sawahan Turen. This school was selected because it actively integrates multicultural Islamic values into learning activities, school culture, and religious-social programs. In addition, the institution demonstrates inclusive educational practices emphasizing tolerance, cooperation, and moderate religious attitudes among students, making it relevant and representative

for examining multicultural Islamic educational implementation in school environments.

Data were collected through observation, in depth interviews, and documentation (Mbanaso et al., 2023). Observations were conducted to examine students' interactions, learning activities, and school culture related to tolerance and religious moderation. Interviews involved the principal, Islamic Education teachers, general teachers, and students to obtain comprehensive information. Documentation included school regulations, activity reports, photographs, and educational programs supporting multicultural Islamic education implementation within the institution. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Khan et al., 2025). The researchers organized and simplified the collected information to identify important themes related to multicultural Islamic education and students' tolerant attitudes. The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking to enhance credibility, consistency, and the accuracy of research findings obtained from different participants and data sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Multicultural Islamic Education in Fostering Attitudes of Tolerance and Religious Moderation in Schools

Multicultural Islamic education in this study refers to educational practices integrating Islamic values with principles of tolerance, inclusivity, social harmony, and religious moderation within the school environment. Operationally, this concept was reflected through classroom learning, teachers' exemplary behavior, school culture, and social religious activities encouraging students to respect differences and maintain balanced religious attitudes. At SMP Islam Sawahan Turen, multicultural Islamic education was implemented by embedding the values of *tasamuh*, *tawassuth*, *i'tidal*, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* into educational interactions and institutional programs. Teachers consistently emphasized respectful communication, cooperation, and empathy during learning activities. Students were also encouraged to participate

in collaborative programs promoting social solidarity and peaceful coexistence. Therefore, multicultural Islamic education functioned not only as religious instruction but also as a medium for strengthening students' moderate and inclusive character formation within school life.

Table 1. Excerpt From Interview With Informant

Interview Excerpts	Indicators	Informants
"Students are taught to respect different opinions and avoid judging others excessively."	Tolerance and respect for diversity	Islamic Education Teacher
"We encourage students to cooperate regardless of social background or academic ability."	Inclusive social interaction	General Teacher
"School activities emphasize togetherness and mutual help among students."	Social solidarity and cooperation	Vice Principal
"Teachers always remind us to communicate politely and appreciate others."	Moderate communication attitudes	Student
"Religious learning is connected with peaceful Islamic values in daily life."	Internalization of religious moderation	Principal

The interview findings demonstrate that multicultural Islamic education was implemented through consistent educational interactions emphasizing tolerance and inclusive communication. Teachers played a strategic role in translating Islamic values into practical attitudes applicable within students' daily social relationships. The data indicate that tolerance was not only conceptualized as theoretical understanding but also practiced through collaborative learning, respectful dialogue, and collective participation in school programs. Furthermore, students' statements reveal that the educational environment encouraged openness and mutual appreciation among peers from diverse backgrounds. Such conditions suggest that multicultural Islamic education contributed significantly to reducing exclusive attitudes and strengthening social cohesion within the school community. Therefore, the integration of moderate Islamic values into educational activities became an effective mechanism for developing students' peaceful and balanced religious perspectives in contemporary educational settings.

Critically, the table also reveals that religious moderation was strengthened through institutional culture rather than relying solely on classroom instruction. The principal and teachers consistently emphasized peaceful Islamic values through both formal and informal educational processes. This indicates that multicultural Islamic education functioned as a holistic system involving behavioral habituation, moral

guidance, and social interaction simultaneously. The presence of collaborative activities and inclusive communication practices reflects the school's effort to create an educational atmosphere supporting emotional and social development alongside religious understanding. Moreover, students' responses suggest that exemplary conduct demonstrated by teachers significantly influenced their attitudes toward diversity and social relationships. Consequently, the implementation of multicultural Islamic education at the school level demonstrates that moderate religious character can be effectively cultivated when educational values are reinforced continuously through institutional culture and daily social experiences.

Observational findings further strengthened the interview data by showing that students interacted harmoniously during both academic and non-academic activities. Researchers observed that students demonstrated respectful behavior during classroom discussions, group assignments, and religious-social programs organized by the school. Teachers consistently used polite language, encouraged collaborative participation, and prevented discriminatory attitudes among students. In several activities, students from different academic abilities and social backgrounds worked cooperatively without displaying exclusionary behavior. Researchers also found that school assemblies and religious programs frequently emphasized the importance of tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility. These observations indicate that multicultural Islamic education was not limited to theoretical discourse but had become part of students' habitual behavior within school interactions. Therefore, the implementation of multicultural Islamic values contributed practically to strengthening harmonious relationships and inclusive attitudes among students.

The research findings demonstrate that multicultural Islamic education at SMP Islam Sawahan Turen functioned as a comprehensive educational strategy for developing tolerance and religious moderation among students. The educational process combined classroom learning, institutional culture, social activities, and teacher role modeling in fostering inclusive attitudes. Religious moderation emerged through continuous habituation emphasizing respectful communication, cooperation, and empathy in students' daily interactions. The findings also indicate that the success of multicultural Islamic education depended significantly on teachers' consistency in

integrating peaceful Islamic values into educational practices. Consequently, multicultural Islamic education contributed not only to students' religious understanding but also to their social maturity and emotional awareness. This confirms that Islamic education possesses substantial potential to become a transformative medium for strengthening peaceful coexistence and harmonious social relationships within pluralistic educational environments.

The overall data pattern indicates that multicultural Islamic education developed through interconnected educational components involving learning processes, school culture, social interaction, and exemplary leadership. The findings consistently show that tolerance and religious moderation were strengthened through repetitive educational habituation rather than isolated instructional activities. Another significant pattern reveals that teachers functioned as central agents in shaping students' inclusive attitudes through communication, behavioral example, and social guidance. In addition, collaborative school activities created opportunities for students to practice mutual respect and social responsibility directly. These patterns demonstrate that multicultural Islamic education became effective because it integrated cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. Therefore, the implementation of multicultural Islamic education at the school reflects a holistic educational approach capable of fostering balanced religious understanding and strengthening students' harmonious relationships within diverse social environments.

Table 2. The Influence of Multicultural Islamic Education

Informant Position	Interview Excerpts	Indicators
Principal	"Moderate Islamic values must become the foundation of all school activities."	Institutional commitment to moderation
Islamic Education Teacher	"Tolerance should be practiced daily, not merely explained theoretically."	Practical implementation of tolerance
General Teacher	"Inclusive interaction helps students respect differences naturally."	Development of inclusive attitudes
Student	"Teachers motivate us to cooperate and avoid conflicts."	Positive behavioral influence
Vice Principal	"School programs are designed to strengthen togetherness and empathy."	Social harmony and empathy building

The table demonstrates that all educational stakeholders shared a collective commitment toward strengthening tolerance and religious moderation within the school environment. The principal emphasized institutional policies supporting moderate Islamic values, while teachers focused on transforming those principles into practical educational experiences. This alignment indicates that multicultural Islamic education was implemented collaboratively through coordinated educational roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, students acknowledged that teachers' guidance and school programs positively influenced their social attitudes and interpersonal relationships. The findings reveal that educational influence became more effective because values were consistently reinforced through daily interaction and institutional support. Therefore, the implementation of multicultural Islamic education reflected a systemic educational process integrating leadership, instruction, and social habituation in shaping students' inclusive and moderate religious character.

Another important interpretation derived from the table is that educational influence operated not only through formal teaching but also through relational and emotional engagement among school communities. Teachers and school leaders actively cultivated empathy, cooperation, and respectful communication as part of students' everyday experiences. Such practices indicate that tolerance and moderation were internalized gradually through social participation and repeated behavioral reinforcement. Students' responses further suggest that positive school relationships encouraged openness and reduced tendencies toward exclusivism or social discrimination. This demonstrates that multicultural Islamic education became meaningful because it connected religious principles with practical social realities encountered by students. Consequently, the findings confirm that educational environments emphasizing exemplary conduct, collaborative interaction, and institutional consistency contribute significantly to developing peaceful, balanced, and socially responsible religious attitudes among students.

The data pattern reveals that multicultural Islamic education operated through continuous collaboration between institutional leadership, teachers, students, and school programs. The implementation of moderate Islamic values was consistently

reinforced across formal learning, school culture, and social interaction. Another visible pattern shows that tolerance developed more effectively when supported by direct behavioral examples and collective participation in school activities. Furthermore, emotional closeness between teachers and students strengthened the internalization of inclusive attitudes and peaceful religious understanding. These patterns indicate that multicultural Islamic education was not implemented as a fragmented educational agenda but as an integrated institutional culture. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that sustainable religious moderation in schools can be effectively developed through collaborative educational environments emphasizing tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and consistent moral exemplification.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that multicultural Islamic education significantly contributes to fostering tolerance and religious moderation among students through learning activities, school culture, and teachers' exemplary conduct. These findings align with previous studies explaining that Islamic education can function as an important medium for developing peaceful social relationships and preventing exclusivist religious attitudes within educational settings (Sahin, 2018). Earlier researcher argued that multicultural education encourages students to appreciate diversity, strengthen empathy, and develop democratic values in pluralistic societies (Devaki et al., 2025; Sukardi et al., 2025). Similarly, the present study found that the integration of *tasamuh*, *tawassuth*, *i'tidal*, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* into daily educational practices strengthened students' inclusive attitudes. However, this research extends previous discussions by emphasizing the interconnected role of institutional culture, social habituation, and interpersonal interaction in shaping students' moderate religious perspectives comprehensively.

The study also reveals that teachers occupied a central role in internalizing multicultural Islamic values through communication patterns, classroom instruction, and daily interaction with students. This finding corresponds with educational theories emphasizing the importance of teacher exemplification in shaping students' moral and social character (BABATUNDE et al., 2025; Rissanen et al., 2018). Previous

research commonly highlighted curriculum implementation as the primary strategy for strengthening tolerance, whereas the present findings indicate that informal educational processes and behavioral modeling possess equally important influence (Okeke, 2024). Teachers at SMP Islam Sawahan Turen consistently demonstrated respectful communication, cooperation, and social empathy, enabling students to experience moderation values directly within educational relationships. Consequently, this study suggests that multicultural Islamic education becomes more effective when supported by teachers' consistent moral behavior rather than relying solely on cognitive religious instruction in classroom environments.

Another important finding concerns the role of school culture in supporting students' tolerant attitudes and social inclusivity. Previous literature generally emphasized that institutional environments influence students' behavioral development through repeated social interaction and collective norms (Veenstra & Lodder, 2022; Zhang & Cao, 2025). The current study supports this perspective by demonstrating that school activities promoting cooperation, mutual respect, and social solidarity contributed positively to strengthening harmonious relationships among students. Nevertheless, this research differs from earlier studies because it highlights how religious moderation was developed not only through policy or formal regulations but also through habitual educational experiences embedded in school traditions and collective practices. The findings indicate that students internalized multicultural Islamic values more effectively when they encountered those principles consistently across academic and non-academic activities. Therefore, institutional culture became a crucial mechanism for transforming religious values into practical social behavior.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse of multicultural Islamic education by reinforcing the argument that religious moderation is formed through multidimensional educational processes involving cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual development simultaneously. The findings strengthen social constructivist perspectives suggesting that students' attitudes emerge through interaction, habituation, and collective educational experiences rather than isolated theoretical learning. In practical terms, the study implies that schools should integrate

multicultural Islamic values holistically within curriculum design, institutional culture, and extracurricular activities. Educational stakeholders should also prioritize teachers' role modeling and collaborative learning environments to strengthen students' social awareness and inclusive religious understanding. Consequently, multicultural Islamic education can serve as an effective educational strategy for promoting peaceful coexistence and preventing intolerance within increasingly diverse educational and social contexts.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that multicultural Islamic education possesses strategic relevance in responding to contemporary social challenges related to polarization, intolerance, and rigid religious attitudes among adolescents. Several previous studies emphasized the urgency of strengthening religious moderation within educational institutions; however, many focused primarily on conceptual or policy dimensions. In contrast, this study demonstrates how moderation values can be operationalized through everyday educational practices and interpersonal relationships within schools. Students developed empathy, openness, and cooperative behavior because multicultural Islamic values were continuously reinforced through interaction and social participation. This finding suggests that sustainable moderation cannot be achieved solely through doctrinal teaching, but requires supportive educational ecosystems encouraging inclusive experiences and peaceful communication. Therefore, multicultural Islamic education represents both a theoretical framework and a practical educational model for nurturing socially responsible and moderate generations.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study shows that multicultural Islamic education effectively strengthens students' attitudes of tolerance and religious moderation through integrated educational practices involving learning activities, school culture, social interaction, and teachers' exemplary behavior. The research highlights that moderate religious attitudes are developed not only through theoretical instruction but also through continuous habituation, inclusive communication, and collaborative social experiences within the school environment.

This study contributes academically by expanding the discourse of multicultural Islamic education from conceptual discussions toward practical educational implementation within Islamic school settings. The research demonstrates that religious moderation can be developed holistically through interconnected institutional components, including curriculum, school culture, and teacher role modeling. Furthermore, the study enriches educational literature concerning the relationship between Islamic values, tolerance, and students' social character development in multicultural contexts.

This research remains limited because it focuses only on one Islamic junior high school, making the findings contextually specific and not fully generalizable to broader educational environments. In addition, the study primarily emphasizes qualitative exploration without measuring students' behavioral changes quantitatively. Future research is recommended to involve comparative studies across different schools and apply mixed-method approaches to obtain more comprehensive insights regarding multicultural Islamic education and religious moderation.

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