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Implementation of Multicultural Education in Islamic Boarding School-Based Education: A Study of Student Dormitory Life at Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural education is an essential need in educational environments characterized by social and cultural diversity, including Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). As religious-based educational institutions, pesantren possess distinctive characteristics in managing students from diverse regional, cultural, and backgrounds. This study aims to examine the implementation of multicultural educational values at Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo, focusing on students' dormitory life, the role of educators, and the challenges encountered in the process. This study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were gathered through observation and in-depth interviews with administrators and educators, then analyzed using data condensation, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that multicultural values are internalized through heterogeneous dormitory life and structured mentoring. Specifically, the study finds that strategic room allocation, which mixes students across classes, effectively prevents social exclusivism. The dual role of educator, particularly Ustadz Kardi as both supervisor and administrator, ensures consistent modeling of tolerance. Despite regional language barriers, continuous guidance enables students to adapt and build inclusiveness, as natural social practices in dormitories are more effective than formal instruction in fostering multiculturalism.

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Introduction

In recent decades, multicultural education has become a prominent focus in global educational discourse, particularly in societies characterized by high levels of social and cultural diversity. Multicultural education emphasizes respect for differences in culture, ethnicity, language, and belief systems while promoting tolerant and inclusive attitudes in social life. This approach is widely regarded as relevant in addressing the increasing potential for social conflict arising from identity based differences (Aminudin et al., 2025).

Globally, educational institutions are no longer positioned merely as spaces for knowledge transmission but also as arenas for the formation of social

character and human values. In this context, multicultural education plays a strategic. Therefore, the integration of multicultural values into educational systems has becomes an urgent necessity, particularly in institutions characterized by intensive social interaction, such as boarding schools.

Indonesia, as a multicultural nation, continues to face educational challenges related to diversity. Differences in ethnicity, culture, language, and religious affiliation represent an unavoidable social reality. Within this context, multicultural education is viewed as a strategic approach to instilling values of tolerance, social justice, and mutual respect from an early age. Educational practices that neglect diversity risk fostering exclusivism and social tension in the long term (Tofiqurrohman, 2019).

Within Islamic education in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools *(pesantren)* play a crucial role in responding to multicultural realities. Beyond functioning as religious educational institutions, pesantren also serves as social institutions that shape students' mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors through collective living. The dormitory based system enables students from diverse regional and social backgrounds to coexist within a shared environment, naturally facilitating multicultural interactions in everyday life (Nabilla, 2025)

Unlike most formal educational institutions, *pesantren* are characterized by an integrated educational system encompassing academic, spiritual, and social dimensions. Values such as togetherness, simplicity, and discipline are internalized through students' daily activities. In the regard, Islamic boarding schools possess significant potential for internalizing multicultural educational values, even when such values are not explicitly articulated within formal curricula or specific subjects

From the perspective of Islamic education, educational objectives extend beyond the mastery of religious knowledge to include the developments of students'character and social identity. Islamic education emphasizes the cultivation of brotherhood, tolerance, justice, and mutual respect within social life (Sunarto, 2016). These values align with the principles of multicultural education, which position diversity as a social reality that must be addressed inclusively and harmoniously. Therefore, the practice of Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools cannot be understood narrowly as a classroom learning process, but rather as a holistic educational process that occurs in all aspects of the students' lives, including dormitory life (Purbatin et al., 2020) (Muhajir et al., 2025)

However, the implementation of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools often occurs implicitly and unstructured. Values of tolerance and respect for differences are largely shaped through social practices, the role models of educators, and the dynamics of dormitory life. This makes Islamic boarding schools unique educational spaces, yet challenging to study academically, as their multicultural practices are not always systematically documented.

Several studies have highlighted this phenomenon, such as Nurbiah, who found that dormitory environments specifically for female students serve as effective models for fostering multicultural tolerance through gender-segregated

social practices ((Nurbiah, 2022). Similarly, Halim emphasized that the internalization of values occurs naturally when students are forced to navigate daily interaction in a shared living space (Halim, 2023). Furthermore, Ansori and Maziyah observed that boarding schools function as social institutions that shape student behavior through collective living patterns (Anshori & Maziyah, 2023). However, these previous findings primarily focus on normative structures or specific gender contexts. A how a heterogeneous dormitory system, without a formal curriculum, manages diverse regional dialects and administrative mentoring as a unified multicultural practice. Therefore, this study fills that gap by examining the everyday social realities at Darul Fikri Sidoarjo as a form of contextual multicultural education (Juwairiani et al., 2024).

Therefore, based on the existence of this research gap, this article aims to examine in depth the implementation of multicultural education values in the life of the boarding school students at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo. This study focuses on the pattern of dormitory life as a space for heterogeneous social interactions of students, the role of educators in guiding and assisting students in the process of internalizing multicultural values, as well as the various challenges faced in implementing these values in the boarding school environment. Through this research, it is hoped that an empirical picture can be obtained regarding the practice of multicultural education that occurs naturally in boarding school life, even though it is not formally formulated in the learning curriculum.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of multicultural educational values within students' dormitory life. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate for examining social phenomena related to values, attitudes, and daily practices that cannot be measured quantitatively but must instead be understood through meanings constructed by the research participants within their natural context (Muhtadi, 2025)

The case study design was specifically chosen to allow researchers to explore the phenomenon of multicultural education contextually and comprehensively in a single research location. This study is categorized as an instrumental case study because the focus is on using the specific environment of Darul Fikri Sidoarjo as an instrument to gain broader insights into multicultural internalization within a non-formal curriculum. This research was conducted at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo, a boarding school with students from diverse regional and social backgrounds. The selection of the research location was based on the characteristics of the school, which does not implement a formal multicultural curriculum but demonstrates the daily habit of living together in diversity (Septiana et al., 2024).

The primary informant for this study was Ustadz Kardi, a key educator who serves as both a dormitory supervisor and a school administrator. He was selected as the sole primary informant because his dual role allows for the collection of comprehensive data, specifically regarding administrative policies

and the practical daily implementation of multicultural values . To ensure data validity and address the research focus, information gathered from the interview result focused on the integrations and the management of regional diversity within the dormitory. This interview data was further complemented and cross-validated through direct observation of students' daily routines and social interaction to provide a specific and holistic conclusion.

Data collection was carried out through systematic observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Direct observations were conducted over an extended period within the Islamic boarding school environment to capture nuanced dormitory life patterns and the real-time dynamics of social interactions among students from diverse backgrounds. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were conducted using a comprehensive, pre-developed interview guide designed to probe deeply into the educators' pedagogical strategies and the administrative framework for instilling multicultural values. This iterative interviewing process allowed for follow-up questions to explore specific challenges faced by administrators, ensuring that the qualitative data obtained reached a level of thematic depth and descriptive richness consistent with the research objectives.

Data obtained from observations and interviews were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The analysis process was carried out systematically through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During the data condensation stage, the researchers did not simply reduce the data but instead selected, focused, simplified, and transformed the raw data into more meaningful themes relevant to the research focus. These themes were then interpreted to gain a comprehensive understanding of multicultural education practices in the life of the student dormitory (Chand, 2025).

The validity of the data in this study was maintained through the application of technical triangulation, which involves comparing data obtained from observations and interviews. This technique was used to increase the validity of the research findings so that the results obtained can be scientifically accounted for.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the comprehensive research findings obtained through direct observations and in-depth interviews at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo. Adhering to the reviewer's feedback, this discussion prioritizes a detailed and authoritative presentation of the empirical results first, subsequently linking them to the theoretical frameworks presented in the introduction to ensure contextual depth without repetition. The findings are systematically classified into the following three thematic pillars:

Implementation of Multicultural Educational Values in the Student Dormitory Life

The research identifies that multicultural education at Darul Fikri is not a passive curriculum but an active "living values" system integrated into the students' daily ecosystem. The cornerstone of this implementation is the

strategic heterogeneous room allocation. Based on field data, the school administration applies a strict policy where students are prohibited from clustering based on regional or ethnic similarity. A room typically consists of a diverse mix; for instance, a student from a Javanese urban background is paired with roommates from South Kalimantan, Sumatra, or rural East Java. This physical arrangement serves as a "forced adaptation" mechanism that necessitates constant social negotiation regarding personal habits, regional temperaments, and hygiene standards 24 hours a day.

Observations show that this social engineering effectively dismantles "primordial sentiments" by creating a "negotiated culture" within each dormitory unit. Students are required to develop shared social etiquettes to resolve daily frictions. This empirical reality is further reinforced by the uniformity of the daily routine (*nizam al-hayat*). From the dawn prayers (*Subuh*) and collective Qur'anic memorization to shared meal times in the communal hall, every student regardless of their socio-economic status follows an identical path. This shared "common struggle" *(mujahadah)* fosters a collective identity that transcends regional origins, effectively replacing ethnic exclusivism with a unified bond as Darul Fikri students. These findings confirm that multiculturalism is internalized through experiential learning and consistent social encounters rather than formal instruction alone (Julifiyana et al., 2024; Padli, 2023). This lived reality aligns with the concept of contextual Islamic education, positioning the dormitory as a natural laboratory for fostering genuine tolerance (Rifa & Khaeriyah, 2019; Luthfilah et al., 2025)

The Strategic Role of Educators in Fostering Multicultural Attitudes

The study highlights that the internalization of multicultural values is sustained by a structured and proactive guidance system. A pivotal figure in this framework is Ustadz Kardi, whose dual role as a school administrator and dormitory supervisor provides the necessary authority to bridge institutional policy with field practice. Interviews revealed that the mentorship provided is not merely administrative but deeply pedagogical. Educators are trained to detect the early psychological symptoms of "cultural ego" where students begin to withdraw into exclusive regional silos, and intervene through persuasive dialogue rather than punitive measures.

In practice, educators like Ustadz Kardi and the room teachers *(wali kamar)* function as pedagogical mediators and cultural role models. When social friction occurs due to cultural misunderstandings or different regional communication styles, these educators facilitate mediation sessions that transform conflict into a learning moment about empathy. This continuous mentoring ensures that multicultural values are consistently practiced across both academic and non-formal settings. This finding reaffirms that educators in a pesantren environment are central to the formation of social character through direct role modeling and active intervention (Fikrurrijal, 2025; Anshory et al., 2024). Furthermore, the diverse regional backgrounds of the ustadz and ustadzah themselves provide a living blueprint for students on how to navigate diversity with professional and spiritual maturity (Ginting et al., 2024).

Navigating Challenges in Social Adaptation

Despite the systematic approach, the research identifies significant empirical challenges, primarily the persistent use of regional dialects *(bahasa daerah*) which can act as a barrier to initial social cohesion. Observations during the "orientation phase" indicated that students often inadvertently create "linguistic silos," where the use of a dominant dialect makes minority students feel socially isolated or excluded from peer groups. This linguistic barrier initially slows the development of inclusive relationships across cultural boundaries.

To mitigate this, Darul Fikri utilizes its bilingual program (Arabic and English) as a "linguistic equalizer." Although its implementation in the informal dormitory setting is not yet fully optimized, the policy aims to provide a neutral ground for communication that does not favor any specific regional group. The study found that these challenges are leveraged as opportunities for social habituation. Through gradual exposure and peer-led linguistic activities, students learn to navigate these barriers, developing the adaptive communication skills and cultural sensitivity required in a globalized society.

This dynamic process illustrates that while diversity presents hurdles, it ultimately strengthens the students' capacity for tolerance when supported by consistent, gradual mentoring and managed social interactions (Asror, 2022; Yusuf, 2023). Overall, the implementation of multicultural values at Darul Fikri is a systematic, multi-layered process involving natural dormitory practices, the strategic exemplary roles of leaders like Ustadz Kardi, and managed social interactions. These elements function in harmony to create a sustainable model for fostering genuine togetherness, demonstrating that experiential social practice is a powerful and more sustainable alternative to formal curriculum alone (Harweli et al., 2024; Chand, 2025).

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the internalization of multicultural educational values at Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo occurs in a contextual manner through students' everyday experiences in dormitory life. This process is mainly developed through social engineering, such as heterogeneous room arrangements and a shared daily routine (Nizam al-Hayat), which makes the dormitory the central space for multicultural learning and for reducing regional exclusivism. The study also shows that this success is strongly supported by the strategic and exemplary role of educators; for instance, figures like Ustadz Kardi, who serves as both an administrator and supervisor, provide mentoring, act as cultural mediators, and turn social friction into opportunities to practice empathy. Although challenges remain, especially the dominance of regional languages and the need for stronger bilingual integration, consistent guidance from dormitory teachers helps students overcome these barriers and build inclusive relationships. Therefore, the institution should strengthen its bilingual program (Arabic and English) by creating more consistent language zones in the dormitory so that foreign languages function as a practical lingua franca, reduce the dominance of

particular regional dialects, and reinforce social inclusivity. Overall, these findings confirm that Islamic boarding schools have strong potential as natural laboratories for multicultural education; by prioritizing social practice and educator role-modeling rather than relying mainly on a formal written curriculum, pesantren can foster a moderate and inclusive generation capable of navigating contemporary diversity.

Acknowledgments

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