

## Multicultural Islamic Religious Education: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Southeast Asian Countries

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze and compare the implementation of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. The study employed a qualitative approach with a comparative study method through library research. Data were obtained from books, scientific articles, national and international journals, education policy documents, and relevant research findings. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, cross-country comparisons, and conclusion drawing. The results show that all four countries utilize religious education as a means of developing religious character, tolerance, and a harmonious social life, although each country implements different strategies according to its social context and educational policy. Indonesia emphasizes strengthening religious moderation, Malaysia emphasizes social integration of multiethnic communities, Singapore emphasizes social harmony and national cohesion, while Thailand utilizes Islamic education to strengthen identity and intercultural dialogue. The successful implementation of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education is influenced by government policy support, an inclusive curriculum, educator competence, and a conducive social environment. Therefore, the strengthening of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education needs to be continuously developed as a foundation for creating a peaceful, inclusive, and harmonious society.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Religious Education, multiculturalism, religious moderation, Southeast Asia*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dan membandingkan implementasi Pendidikan Agama Islam berbasis multikultural di Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapura, dan Thailand. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi komparatif melalui penelitian kepustakaan. Data diperoleh dari buku, artikel ilmiah, jurnal nasional dan internasional, dokumen kebijakan pendidikan, serta hasil penelitian yang relevan. Analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, perbandingan antarnegara, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keempat negara memanfaatkan pendidikan agama sebagai sarana pembentukan karakter religius, toleransi, dan kehidupan sosial yang harmonis, meskipun masing-masing menerapkan strategi yang berbeda sesuai konteks sosial dan kebijakan pendidikan. Indonesia menitikberatkan pada penguatan moderasi beragama, Malaysia pada integrasi sosial masyarakat multi-etnis, Singapura pada harmoni sosial dan kohesi nasional, sedangkan Thailand memanfaatkan pendidikan Islam untuk memperkuat identitas serta dialog antarbudaya. Keberhasilan implementasi PAI berbasis multikultural dipengaruhi oleh dukungan kebijakan pemerintah, kurikulum yang inklusif, kompetensi pendidik, dan lingkungan sosial yang kondusif. Oleh karena itu, penguatan nilai-nilai multikultural dalam PAI perlu terus dikembangkan sebagai fondasi terciptanya masyarakat yang damai, inklusif, dan harmonis.

**Kata kunci:** *Pendidikan Agama Islam, multikultural, moderasi beragama, Asia Tenggara*

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization accelerates interactions between cultures, religions, and identities. This situation demands that Islamic Religious Education no longer rely

solely on a normative approach, but shift to a multicultural approach that is more sensitive to social conditions. Within a multicultural framework, Islamic Religious Education serves not only as a means of conveying religious values but also as a tool for building social awareness, tolerance, and strengthening cohesion in diverse societies.

Multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education can be understood as a knowledge-based response to diverse global realities. Regions such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe have distinct social characteristics but face similar challenges related to plurality. (Basri 2023) In this context, Islamic Religious Education not only conveys normative teachings but also serves as a means of shaping social awareness, fostering tolerance, and promoting justice.

Southeast Asia is a region with a high level of diversity, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture, and language. This diversity is a distinctive characteristic that shapes the social life of communities in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Brunei Darussalam. In this context, education plays a strategic role in fostering mutual respect, tolerance, and the ability to coexist peacefully amidst differences. One area of education that plays a significant role in shaping students' character is Islamic Religious Education. (Setyawati et al. 2021)

Islamic Religious Education serves not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as a medium for developing values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect the teachings of Islam, a blessing for all creation. The challenges of an increasingly pluralistic society require PAI to develop an approach that accommodates the reality of diversity and encourages students to develop multicultural awareness. Through this approach, religious learning can be an instrument for strengthening social cohesion while preventing exclusive, intolerant, and discriminatory attitudes.

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, faces complex dynamics in managing religious education within a pluralistic society. Various education policies have attempted to integrate the values of tolerance, religious moderation, and respect for diversity into the curriculum. (Widianti 2022) However, challenges remain, including the emergence of intolerant attitudes, social prejudice, and conflicts rooted in differences in religious and cultural identities. This situation indicates that the implementation of multicultural-based religious education still requires strengthening, both in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and educator competency.

On the other hand, Southeast Asian countries have diverse experiences in developing religious education in multicultural societies. Malaysia implements an Islamic education system that coexists with a multiethnic and multireligious society. Singapore emphasizes social harmony through educational policies that support intergroup cohesion. Southern Thailand faces the challenge of integrating Islamic education in the context of a Muslim minority, while Brunei Darussalam develops Islamic education within a state framework that embraces Islam as its national identity. These differences in social, political, and cultural backgrounds have resulted in diverse models and practices of religious education that are interesting to study comparatively. (Weni Hamdina et al. 2024)

Comparative studies of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education are important for understanding how each country formulates policies, develops curricula, and implements values of diversity in the learning process. This comparison can provide insight into the factors that support and hinder the success of religious education in fostering inclusive attitudes. Furthermore, the study's findings can serve as a learning resource for developing educational policies that are more responsive to the needs of pluralistic societies.

Although various studies have addressed multicultural education and Islamic religious education separately, studies specifically comparing the implementation of multicultural-based Islamic religious education between Indonesia and Southeast Asian countries are still relatively limited. This limitation results in the lack of a comprehensive picture of the similarities, differences, advantages, and challenges faced by each country in integrating multicultural values into religious education.

Based on this description, research on multicultural-based Islamic religious education: A comparative study of Indonesia and southeast asian countries is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of models, strategies, and best practices in implementing Islamic religious education that can strengthen tolerance, religious moderation, and harmonious living within diverse societies. Therefore, this research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of religious education relevant to the demands of multicultural societies in the Southeast Asian region.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a comparative study method.(Mulyatiningsih 2018) This approach was chosen to analyze and compare the concepts, policies, curricula, and implementation of multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia and several Southeast Asian countries. Through comparative studies, the research can identify similarities, differences, strengths, and challenges faced by each country in developing religious education that is responsive to societal diversity.

This research uses secondary data obtained from various sources, including: Official government documents, such as education policies, laws and regulations, national curricula, and religious learning guidelines. Books and scientific articles discussing Islamic religious education, multicultural education, religious moderation, and education systems in Southeast Asian countries. Research reports, international journals, and educational institution publications relevant to the research focus.

Data collection was carried out through documentation studies (library research).(Sugiyono 2019) Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation by identifying, reviewing, and organizing various literature related to multicultural Islamic Religious Education. The collected data were then grouped based on aspects that became the focus of comparison, such as religious education policies, curriculum, multicultural values, learning strategies, the role of educators, and challenges faced in their implementation.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative comparative analysis techniques, which included data reduction, data presentation, comparative

analysis, and conclusion drawing. (A. M. Yusuf 2017) During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected information relevant to the research objectives. The data were then presented systematically in the form of narrative descriptions and a comparison matrix to facilitate the analysis process. The analysis phase involved comparing various aspects of multicultural Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia and Southeast Asian countries to identify patterns, similarities, differences, and factors influencing its implementation. The results of the analysis were then interpreted to gain a comprehensive understanding of religious education practices that support multicultural living.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation techniques by comparing information obtained from various scientific references and official documents. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a critical review of each source to ensure the validity, reliability, and relevance of the data used. Through this procedure, the research is expected to produce objective and academically accountable findings regarding multicultural Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia and Southeast Asian countries.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia**

Indonesia is a country with a high level of diversity, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture, and language. This situation encourages the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which is oriented not only toward mastering Islamic knowledge but also toward fostering tolerant, inclusive, and moderate attitudes. The implementation of multicultural-based PAI in Indonesia is reflected in a curriculum that integrates the values of religious moderation, respect for differences, and strengthening national character. Through this learning, students are guided to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively and are able to build harmonious relationships with groups from different backgrounds. (Jadidah et al. 2023)

The implementation of multicultural values in PAI is supported by various educational programs that emphasize the importance of dialogue, cooperation, and respect for diversity. Teachers play a crucial role in creating an open learning environment and encouraging students to develop mutual respect. However, implementation in the field still faces several challenges, such as the existence of exclusive religious understandings, differences in the quality of educational resources, and the influence of digital media that has the potential to spread narratives of intolerance.

Multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia has developed in the context of a highly diverse society, encompassing religion, ethnicity, language, and culture. This diversity makes education a crucial tool for maintaining social stability and cohesion amidst these differences. In this context, Islamic education occupies a strategic position, given that Muslims constitute the majority of Indonesia's population. Therefore, Islamic education is not only a means of conveying religious teachings but also a vehicle for fostering tolerance and understanding of diversity in social life. (Muhammad Makinuddin, Mohammad Afwan Choiri Irsyadi, and Mihiyiddin Mubarok 2025) However, normative and doctrinal approaches to Islamic religious

education are often inadequate to address the complexities of a diverse society. Therefore, a multicultural approach is needed that can integrate Islamic values with the realities of social diversity within society.

The Indonesian context demonstrates that diversity can become a source of conflict if not managed effectively. Numerous cases of intolerance and radicalism demonstrate the persistent gap between the ideal values of Islamic teachings and prevailing social practices. Multicultural Islamic education plays a key role in promoting tolerance and empathy among students. This approach also contributes to reducing identity-based prejudice and strengthening national integration. (Muna et al. 2024)

Internalizing multicultural values in Islamic religious education has been shown to increase students' tolerance and ability to live together peacefully. Furthermore, multicultural education can broaden intercultural understanding and strengthen students' national consciousness. Internalizing multicultural values in Islamic religious education has been shown to increase students' tolerance and ability to live together peacefully. Furthermore, multicultural education can broaden intercultural understanding and strengthen students' national consciousness.

The implementation of multicultural Islamic religious education in Indonesia is based on the curriculum. Islamic religious education promotes multicultural values through materials on tolerance, appreciation of cultural diversity, and contextual appreciation of diversity. This curriculum development aims to address social problems such as intolerance and exclusivity that persist in society. (Sinulingga, Daulay, and Lubis 2026)

The learning process for implementing multicultural Islamic religious education in the classroom uses dialogical methods, an inclusive approach, and the integration of social values into religious materials. This approach can be considered effective in developing students' moderate character and inclusive attitudes toward diversity. The application of multicultural values in the school environment provides a practical space for multicultural Islamic religious education. Interactions between students from diverse backgrounds foster mutual respect and strengthen cooperation in social life.

The main strategies in multicultural Islamic education include: first, an integrative approach, combining religious and social sciences in learning; second, a contextual approach, linking material to students' social realities; third, interactive dialogue, open discussions to understand differing perspectives; and fourth, internalization of values, instilling the values of tolerance, justice, and humanity. This strategy focuses on the simultaneous development of cognitive, affective, and social competencies. (Muhaemin and St Wardah Hanafie Das 2026)

Despite its significant potential, the implementation of multicultural Islamic religious education in Indonesia still faces several challenges. These obstacles include uneven teacher competency, a text-dominated learning process, ideological resistance from certain groups, and limitations in curriculum integration. This situation indicates that teachers' suboptimal knowledge of multicultural concepts is a significant obstacle to the implementation of Islamic religious education in the field.

The implementation of multicultural-based Islamic religious education in Indonesia requires more in-depth analysis, particularly in several key aspects. Epistemologically, this relates to efforts to transform the paradigm of Islamic religious education from an exclusive approach to a more inclusive one. Methodologically, an interdisciplinary approach is needed that integrates the fields of education, sociology, and Islamic studies to understand and develop Islamic religious education. (Nieto 2017) Meanwhile, in practice, this implementation encourages curriculum reform based on multicultural values and strengthens religious moderation in the educational process.

Multicultural Islamic religious education in Indonesia is a strategic necessity for maintaining social stability. This approach plays a role in shaping students' character to be tolerant, inclusive, and able to adapt to existing diversity. The success of its implementation is largely determined by the quality of the curriculum used, the competence of educators, and consistent and sustainable educational policy support.

### **Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education in Malaysia**

Malaysia has a multiethnic and multireligious society, comprising Malay, Chinese, Indian, and various other ethnic groups. Within the national education system, Islamic education is provided to Muslim students while still taking into account the reality of societal diversity. The approach employed emphasizes a balance between strengthening religious identity and fostering social harmony. (Bahri et al. 2025)

The Islamic education curriculum in Malaysia incorporates moral values, tolerance, and social responsibility, aiming to shape citizens capable of peaceful coexistence. The government has also developed various policies to support social integration through education. (Achmada and Pratama n.d.) The successful implementation of multicultural education in Malaysia is supported by relatively strong policy support, although issues of ethnic and religious identity remain challenges in building more inclusive social interactions.

Multicultural Islamic education is developing rapidly in Malaysia, an ethnically diverse country home to Malays, Chinese, Indians, and several other minority groups. Islam is the official state religion, yet Malaysian society lives within a pluralistic social structure. This situation makes Islamic education a key tool in maintaining social harmony amidst this diversity. (Bin Jamil 2022)

In its implementation, Islamic religious education in Malaysia has distinct characteristics compared to other countries, as it is closely linked to national identity and state policies. This situation results in Islamic religious education functioning not only as a religious subject but also as part of the community's social identity formation system. Therefore, implementing a multicultural approach in Islamic religious education (PAI) is a strategic necessity to address the increasingly complex social dynamics of a diverse society.

Multicultural Islamic education in Malaysia is based on the integration of Islamic values and the theory of multiculturalism. Conceptually, multicultural education emphasizes the importance of recognizing cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in the learning process. This approach considers diversity as an essential

part of education that must be understood and appreciated by students. (Ismail et al. 2024)

Multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Malaysia is crucial because the country has a history of ethnic tension influenced by economic, political, and colonial factors. In this context, education is a crucial tool for building social integration. The role of multicultural PAI includes building interfaith tolerance, reducing identity exclusivism, and strengthening social stability.

The characteristics of the PAI system in Malaysia encompass several aspects. First, integration with state policy, where PAI is part of the national curriculum and is mandatory for Muslim students. This demonstrates that religious education is not only pedagogical but also ideological in shaping national identity. Second, educational dualism, with the existence of national schools, religious schools, and vernacular schools. This situation opens up space for multicultural interaction, but also has the potential to reinforce social segregation. Third, the dominance of cognitive aspects, where PAI learning still emphasizes knowledge rather than internalizing social values, resulting in suboptimal tolerance. (Ilham Hidayat and Syahrul 2026)

The implementation of multicultural PAI in Malaysia is evident in a curriculum that integrates values of tolerance, religious moderation, and respect for diversity. This curriculum serves as an instrument for inclusive character building in a pluralistic society. In terms of the learning process, the approaches used include intercultural dialogue, contextual learning, and the integration of social values into religious materials. (Bin Jamil, Mohd Khambali. Hambali, and Badar 2025) This approach aims to connect Islamic teachings with the realities of life in a multicultural society. Malaysia has also developed the concept of moderation in Islamic education to reduce extremism and strengthen social harmony.

However, the implementation of multicultural Islamic education in Malaysia faces various challenges, including a textual learning approach, limited teacher competency in multicultural issues, tensions between religious identity and social plurality, and the potential for segregation within the education system. Multicultural Islamic education in Malaysia is a strategic necessity for maintaining the stability of a pluralistic society. This approach integrates Islamic values with diverse social realities. However, successful implementation still depends on curriculum reform, improved teacher competency, and a balance between the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

### **Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education in Thailand**

The implementation of Islamic education in Thailand is mostly found in the southern region, where the majority of the population is Muslim. In this context, Islamic education has developed as part of an effort to maintain the cultural and religious identity of the Muslim community. The implemented curriculum generally combines religious education with general education established by the government. The main challenge faced is how to build harmonious relations between the Muslim community and the wider society. Multicultural-based education is crucial for reducing the potential for social conflict and strengthening mutual understanding. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions in Thailand have begun to develop a

more open approach to cultural and religious diversity in the learning process. (Lee and Kennedy 2024)

Southern Thailand, particularly the Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat regions, is a predominantly Malay Muslim region living in a non-Muslim majority state. This situation creates a complex social dynamic between religious identity, culture, and state policy. In this context, Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role as a means of transmitting religious values and as a social instrument for maintaining identity and building harmony in a multicultural society. (Attijani et al. 2025)

Multicultural-based PAI in Southern Thailand is built on the integration of Islamic theological values and the social realities of the Muslim minority. Theoretically, this approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing cultural and religious diversity, strengthening an inclusive Islamic identity, and developing attitudes of tolerance and moderation. Recent studies indicate that multiculturalism in Southern Thailand is closely linked to issues of religious identity and moderation within the Muslim minority community. (Anshori Anshori 2023)

Multicultural PAI in Southern Thailand is crucial because Southern Thailand has a history of social conflict influenced by political factors, ethnic identity, and religion. In this context, education plays a strategic role in reducing conflict and building peace. Multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is crucial because it strengthens interfaith tolerance, prevents radicalism and exclusivism, and fosters a sense of coexistence. Research shows that a multicultural approach to PAI can foster tolerance in students and make them agents of peace in society. Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) in Southern Thailand has the following characteristics: (1) Traditional and Modern Basis (the Islamic education system in Southern Thailand has undergone a transformation from a traditional, pondok-based model to a modern, integrated school system); (2) Curriculum Integration (Islamic schools combine religious curricula with general education to develop holistic competencies); and (3) Minority Context (As a minority community, Islamic education serves as a means of maintaining Malay-Muslim cultural identity). (Abdul Hadi Lubis, Helmiati, and M. Nazir Karim 2024)

The implementation of Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) in Southern Thailand includes Tolerance-Based Learning (PAI teachers instill the value of tolerance through a dialogical and inclusive approach); Religious Moderation Education (educational institutions develop a concept of moderation to balance identity and openness); and a Contextual Approach (Learning is adapted to local socio-cultural conditions for greater relevance). (Syamsul Aripin et al. 2025)

The Pedagogical Strategy of Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) in Southern Thailand includes Integration of religious and general curricula to balance knowledge; (3) Active and participatory learning; (4) Strengthening character education based on social values; and (5) Community-based Approach. (Khaldia, Anshari, and Sateemae 2024) Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) in Southern Thailand faces challenges such as national policy pressures, limited resources, identity conflicts, and low student motivation to learn. Research shows that motivation and discipline are the main challenges.

## **Multicultural Islamic Religious Education in Singapore**

Singapore is known as a country that places a strong emphasis on social harmony in its society. Although Muslims are a minority group, Islamic education continues to be provided through formal and non-formal educational institutions. The government implements policies that encourage intergroup interaction and reinforce values of tolerance from an early age. (Hairon 2024)

In the context of Islamic education, learning focuses not only on rituals and beliefs, but also on character development in citizens who respect diversity. Islamic educational institutions strive to instill an understanding that religious identity can go hand in hand with a commitment to national unity. This model demonstrates that religious education can serve as a means of social integration without diminishing students' religious identities. (Daulay and Salminawati 2022)

Islam in Singapore is a minority religion, practiced by approximately 15% of the population, with the majority of adherents coming from the Malay community. Despite their minority status, Muslims have the freedom to practice their religion and receive considerable institutional support from the state within the framework of a multicultural and multireligious society. One of the key institutions governing Islamic affairs in Singapore is the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore). MUIS is responsible for managing *zakat* (alms), *waqf* (endowments), halal certification, religious education, and fostering the religious life of Muslims. (Tan 2009) The existence of this institution demonstrates the state's recognition of the needs of the Muslim community and serves as a bridge between the Islamic community and the government.

In education, Muslims receive religious education through madrasahs (Islamic schools) and non-formal Islamic educational institutions. Some madrasahs integrate the religious curriculum with the national curriculum, ensuring graduates possess Islamic competencies and academic skills appropriate to modern needs. Furthermore, Islamic education in Singapore emphasizes the values of moderation, tolerance, and the ability to coexist with other religious groups. (Bunga et al. 2025)

Muslim life in Singapore thrives in a relatively harmonious atmosphere. The government has implemented various policies to maintain interfaith relations and encourage interfaith dialogue. Because Singaporean society comprises diverse ethnic and religious groups, Muslims are accustomed to interacting with Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Taoist, and other faith groups. This situation encourages the development of an understanding of Islam that adapts to a pluralistic society without abandoning the principles of religious teachings. (Tan 2007)

However, Muslims in Singapore also face challenges, particularly in maintaining their religious identity amidst modernization, globalization, and their position as a minority group. Therefore, Islamic institutions in Singapore continue to develop educational, da'wah, and community development programs oriented towards developing religious, moderate Muslims who are able to contribute to national development.

In the context of research on Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education, Singapore is often cited as an example of how religious education can align with state policies that emphasize social harmony. This model demonstrates that Islamic education not only serves to strengthen religious understanding but also to shape citizens who value diversity and are able to live peacefully in a multicultural society.

## **Multicultural Islamic Religious Education in Southern Philippines**

The Southern Philippines, particularly the Mindanao region and the Sulu Archipelago, is home to the Muslim community known as the Bangsamoro. Despite being the majority in the region, Muslims remain a minority nationally in a secular, predominantly Catholic state. This situation creates a complex social dynamic between religious identity, local culture, and the national education system. In this context, Islamic Religious Education serves a dual function: as a means of transmitting religious values and as a social instrument for maintaining cohesion in a multicultural society. (Gamon and Tagoranao 2022)

Multicultural-based PAI in the Southern Philippines is built on the integration of Islamic theological values and the social realities of minorities. Conceptually, this approach emphasizes the recognition of religious and cultural plurality, the strengthening of an inclusive Islamic identity, and the development of values of tolerance and peace. In the context of a secular state, Islamic education coexists with a Western-oriented general education system. This creates an epistemological dualism between religious and secular knowledge. (Sali 2023)

Multicultural-based PAI in the Southern Philippines is crucial because the region has a history of conflict between the central government and the Moro Muslim community. This conflict is influenced by political, economic, and religious identity factors. In this context, multicultural Islamic education is crucial because it fosters a sense of coexistence, reduces identity-based conflict, and strengthens the values of peace. Research shows that Islamic education in Mindanao plays a role in building a culture of peace through the internalization of non-violent values. (Milligan 2020)

The characteristics of the Islamic education system in the Southern Philippines include: first, the Madrasah System (Islamic education in the Southern Philippines is generally based on madrasas, which develop in formal, non-formal, and integrated forms with public schools); second, integration with the national system (the Philippine government has integrated madrasah education into the national system, although implementation still faces limitations); and third, educational dualism (there is a separation between religious and general education, creating a dualism within the education system). The implementation of multicultural Islamic education in the Southern Philippines includes Peace Education has begun integrating the concept of peace education through the values of tolerance, dialogue, and non-violence, a contextual approach (learning is adapted to the socio-cultural conditions of the Moro community); and strengthening inclusive identity PAI builds both religious identity and national awareness. (Latif 2014)

Multicultural Islamic Education in the Southern Philippines uses Pedagogical Strategies that include Integration of religious and general curriculum to reduce the dichotomy of knowledge, Dialogic Learning, Value-based Education and Community-based Approach. The main challenges of Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) in the Southern Philippines include the dominance of the secular system, limited quality of madrasahs, identity conflicts, and inequality in access to education. Research shows that Islamic education in the Philippines still faces

limitations in producing competitive graduates. Multicultural-based PAI in the Southern Philippines is a strategic approach in overcoming social conflict and strengthening the cohesion of plural society.

### **Comparative Analysis of Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education**

The study results show that Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand share relatively similar goals in developing Islamic Religious Education: to develop students with a sound religious understanding and the ability to coexist in a pluralistic society. However, there are differences in implementation strategies influenced by the social, political, and demographic conditions of each country. (Mudzill, Munandar, and Nuratika 2025) Multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education developed as a response to global social changes marked by increasing cross-cultural and religious interactions. Comparative studies in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe show that the implementation of PAI is strongly influenced by the social, political context and the position of Muslims in the structure of society. (Sinulingga, Daulay, and Lubis 2026)

In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education is aimed at strengthening social cohesion in pluralistic societies. Indonesia emphasizes an inclusive approach through the integration of tolerance values into the curriculum and dialogic learning. However, the main challenge lies in teacher competence and a tendency toward a textual approach. Malaysia exhibits a different character because PAI is integrated with state policy and national identity. While this strengthens social stability, it also has the potential to create segregation due to the dualism of the education system. (Institut Agama Islam Negeri Syekh Nurjati (IAIN) Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia 2022) In the context of the development of modern Islamic education, Zainal Efendi Hasibuan emphasized that Islamic education must move from a normative approach to an adaptive approach to social and cultural realities, so that Islamic values can function contextually in a pluralistic society. (Hasibuan 2016)

Southern Thailand and the Southern Philippines present the context of a Muslim minority in a non-Muslim country. In these conditions, PAI not only functions as religious education, but also as a tool to maintain identity and build peace. The implementation of multicultural PAI in these two regions tends to be more contextual and community-based. The main focus lies on education of tolerance, religious moderation, and conflict resolution. However, limited resources, national policy pressures, and identity conflicts are significant obstacles. (Nur Vambudi et al. 2026)

Indonesia prioritizes religious moderation as a primary focus in developing its Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Malaysia emphasizes social integration in a multiethnic society through its national education policy. Singapore develops religious education oriented toward social harmony and national cohesion, while Thailand strives to make Islamic education a means of strengthening identity and a bridge for intercultural dialogue. (Azmira 2026)

These differences demonstrate that the multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education model is not a single model but is tailored to the needs and characteristics of each country's society. Nevertheless, all countries studied share a common view

of education as a crucial instrument for instilling values of tolerance, respect for differences, and preventing identity-based conflict.

### **Implications of Multicultural-Based Islamic Religious Education**

The findings of this study indicate that the success of multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education is greatly influenced by government policy support, curriculum quality, teacher competence, and a social environment that supports diverse values. Integrating the values of tolerance and religious moderation into the learning process has proven to be a crucial step in developing an inclusive and democratic character in students. (Rahmawati et al. 2024)

The experiences of Southeast Asian countries provide a lesson that religious education serves not only as a means of spiritual development but also as an instrument of social development capable of strengthening unity within a pluralistic society. Therefore, the future development of Islamic Religious Education needs to continue to be directed at strengthening multicultural insights, increasing educator capacity, and creating spaces for constructive dialogue so that the values of Islam, a blessing for the universe, can be effectively realized in community life.

Comparatively, several key patterns emerge. First, all regions demonstrate a shift from a normative approach to a contextual and dialogical approach. Second, successful implementation depends heavily on curriculum integration, teacher competency, and policy support. Third, the position of Muslims as a majority or minority significantly influences the orientation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). (M. Yusuf and Wahyuni 2025)

Furthermore, theoretical approaches such as multicultural education, social constructivism, and Islamic humanism have proven relevant in explaining Islamic Religious Education practices in various regions. The integration of normative Islamic values with social realities is key to building adaptive and inclusive education. Multicultural Islamic Religious Education functions not only as an educational process but also as an instrument of social transformation in a pluralistic society.

### **Conclusion**

The findings indicate that Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand share a common commitment to integrating multicultural values into Islamic Religious Education, although each country adopts different implementation strategies based on its educational policies, socio-cultural contexts, and national priorities. Indonesia emphasizes religious moderation, Malaysia promotes social integration in a multiethnic society, Singapore prioritizes social cohesion and national unity, while Thailand utilizes Islamic education to strengthen identity and encourage intercultural dialogue.

Despite these contextual differences, all four countries aim to cultivate tolerance, mutual respect, and social responsibility among students. The study also reveals that the effectiveness of multicultural Islamic Religious Education is influenced by inclusive educational policies, curriculum design, teacher competence, and supportive learning environments.

These findings suggest that strengthening multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education requires continuous curriculum development, teacher professional development, and sustained policy support. Such efforts are expected to enhance students' intercultural competence and contribute to the development of peaceful, inclusive, and socially cohesive societies across Southeast Asia.

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