

Integrative-Inclusive Islamic Religious Education as an Effort to Build Multicultural Education in the Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

The diversity of social, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds in Indonesia requires an educational approach that is able to build tolerance and appreciation for differences. However, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning still faces challenges due to the tendency of exclusive religious understanding that is less responsive to the reality of a multicultural society. This study aims to analyze the concept of Integrative-Inclusive Islamic Religious Education as an effort to develop multicultural education in the modern era. Although previous studies have discussed multicultural education, research that specifically formulates the conceptual framework of integrative-inclusive PAI in responding to contemporary modern challenges remains limited. This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. Data were collected through documentation of relevant literature, including books, scientific articles, and previous studies, then analyzed using content analysis techniques. The results show that integrative-inclusive PAI demonstrates how Islamic values connect with social, cultural, and modern developments. This approach encourages the formation of students who are religious, tolerant, humanistic, and able to live harmoniously in a multicultural society.

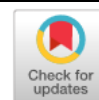
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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that has social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity that is the main characteristic of the life of its people. This diversity is the wealth of the nation, but at the same time it can also be a potential for conflict if it is not managed through proper understanding. In the context of education, this diversity requires a learning paradigm that is not only oriented towards knowledge transfer, but also able to form an attitude of tolerance, respect for differences, and awareness of living together in a multicultural society. Education has a strategic position in building a generation that is able to understand diversity as a social reality that must be appreciated (Khakim, 2017).

Although the values of diversity have long been echoed, the challenges of multiculturalism and the seeds of intolerance in the Indonesian education environment are still urgent issues. Empirical data from the SETARA Institute survey (2023) shows that as many as 24.2% of high school students are classified as passive intolerant, 5.6% are classified as active intolerant, and 0.6% have the potential to be exposed to radicalism. In fact, 56.3% of student respondents support the formal implementation of religious law in public life, and 20.2% admitted that it is difficult to refrain from committing acts of violence related to the issue of blasphemy. This phenomenon is strengthened by the findings of the National Assessment of the Ministry of Education and Culture which identified the potential for bullying and identity-based discrimination in the school environment. This reality confirms that the national education system, especially religious learning, is facing an effectiveness crisis in instilling inclusive awareness.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as one of the instruments of character education has an important role in building students' religious perspectives. PAI not only aims to provide

an understanding of Islamic teachings normatively, but also has the responsibility to form a moderate, humanist, and open religious attitude towards social reality. Islam as a religion that carries the mission of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* has universal values such as justice ('adl), respect for humans (*karamah insaniyyah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and balance (*tawasuth*) that are relevant to the needs of modern society. Therefore, PAI learning needs to be developed so that it does not stop at textual understanding, but is able to integrate Islamic values with the context of plural people's life (Arif, 2012).

However, in the practice of religious education, there is still a tendency to learn that is exclusive, namely religious understanding that emphasizes aspects of doctrine and group identity without providing enough space for dialogue, differences, and diversity. This kind of learning pattern has the potential to form a religious attitude that is less adaptive towards a multicultural society. In fact, students live in a social environment that brings together various cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and different views. This condition shows that religious education requires a more integrative and inclusive approach in order to be able to answer the challenges of modern life (Nugroho M., 2016).

Theoretically, the integrative approach in PAI is rooted in the Islamic epistemological paradigm that unites religious sciences (*ulum al-din*) with contemporary social, cultural, and scientific sciences, so that Islamic values are always in dialogue with the scientific and social context. Meanwhile, the inclusive approach is based on the theory of multicultural education – as initiated by James A. Banks – which emphasizes content integration, prejudice reduction, and equity pedagogy. The combination of these two approaches forms the Integrative-Inclusive PAI framework, where PAI not only functions as a form of individual piety (*hablum minallah*), but also as a means of building social piety (*hablum minannas*) through openness, equality, and respect for diversity (Hakim & Haris, 2024).

The modern era, characterized by advances in information technology, globalization, and increasing intercultural interaction, further reinforces the need for multicultural education. Today's students interact not only in local communities but also in digital environments where diverse cultural values, religious perspectives, and social identities intersect. In this context, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) needs to adapt to contemporary challenges by equipping students with critical thinking skills, openness to differences, and a strong foundation of religious values. Recent research emphasizes the importance of integrating digital innovation into Islamic religious education to foster students' religious tolerance and inclusive character (Yanuardianto et al., 2024). Furthermore, Hamzah et al. (2025) highlight the role of inclusive Islamic education in fostering tolerance among Generation Z in multicultural societies. These developments suggest that religious education should extend beyond the transmission of doctrinal knowledge to include the cultivation of responsible and respectful engagement with diversity.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between Islamic education and multiculturalism. Research on inclusive Islamic Religious Education demonstrates that inclusive learning practices can contribute to the development of students' religious tolerance and harmonious relationships within multicultural school environments (Hakim & Muhid, 2025). Similarly, multicultural-oriented PAI learning emphasizes the internalization of tolerance as a means of addressing the challenges of religious and cultural diversity (Muzaki et al., 2025). Other research highlights the importance of integrating multicultural values into inclusive learning practices that respond to students' cultural backgrounds and local contexts (Anisa' et al., 2026). These studies provide important foundations for understanding how Islamic education can promote inclusivity, respect, and social harmony.

Nevertheless, the growing influence of digital media introduces additional challenges for multicultural education. Students encounter diverse religious narratives online, which may promote mutual understanding but may also reinforce exclusionary attitudes and intolerance. A recent systematic literature review identifies the relationship between students' exposure to digital religious narratives and classroom learning as an area requiring further investigation (Subaidah et al., 2026). This concern reinforces the importance of developing educational approaches that connect religious understanding with critical engagement, dialogue, and

respect for differences. Although existing studies have examined inclusive Islamic education, multicultural learning, and digital-era religious tolerance, these themes are often discussed through distinct empirical or pedagogical perspectives. Consequently, further conceptual clarification is needed regarding how integrative and inclusive principles can be synthesized into a coherent framework for multicultural PAI in the modern era.

Based on these problems and research gaps, this study addresses the following research question: How can Integrative-Inclusive Islamic Religious Education be conceptually reconstructed, and through what mechanisms can it contribute to the development of multicultural education in the modern era? Specifically, this study aims to analyze and describe the concept of Integrative-Inclusive Islamic Religious Education as a strategic approach to strengthening multicultural education in contemporary society. This objective is consistent with the need to connect inclusive religious education with contextual learning strategies and the cultivation of tolerance among students (Hakim & Muhid, 2025; Hamzah et al., 2025).

This research offers two main contributions. Theoretically, it seeks to enrich Islamic education scholarship by synthesizing integrative and inclusive perspectives into a conceptual framework for multicultural-based PAI. Rather than treating integration and inclusion as separate pedagogical principles, the study examines how they may function together to connect religious values, cultural diversity, and contemporary social realities. Practically, the proposed framework may inform PAI teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing learning materials, teaching strategies, and educational environments that are responsive to diversity and digital-era challenges. In particular, the framework may help educators connect the cultivation of religious tolerance with contextual learning, intercultural dialogue, and responsible engagement with digital religious content.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory-conceptual type of library research. This method was chosen to comprehensively study, analyze, and reconstruct the concept of Integrative-Inclusive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the framework of multicultural education development in the modern era through the synthesis of various theories, empirical findings, and documented scientific thought (Widodo et al., 2023).

The data sources in this study are divided into primary data and secondary data. Primary data is sourced from fundamental works on multicultural education theory, religious moderation thinking, and PAI curriculum policy documents. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from reputable scientific journal articles, academic textbooks, and conference proceedings relevant to the topics of PAI, inclusivism, and multicultural education. To ensure the quality and novelty of issues, the literature selection strictly applies inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria include scientific publications focusing on PAI, inclusive education, multicultural education, or religious moderation published in the 2016–2025 range from Google Scholar, SINTA, DOAJ, and Scopus indexed journals. In contrast, the exclusion criteria include popular *non-peer reviewed publications*, articles outside the range of years of study (except for classical textbooks that are the basis of the main theory), and literature that lacks methodological procedural clarity.

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation by browsing various reputable scientific databases, namely Google Scholar, SINTA, DOAJ, and Scopus. The search process uses keywords with Boolean operators, such as "Islamic Religious Education" OR "Islamic Religious Education" AND "Integrative" AND "Inclusive" AND "Multicultural Education" OR "Religious Moderation". The data collection stage is carried out in a structured manner through four main steps, including identification of initial literature based on keywords, screening of titles and abstracts according to inclusion criteria, evaluation of *full-text eligibility*, and determination of the final literature analyzed (Subagiya, 2023).

The data analysis in this study uses *qualitative-thematic content analysis techniques*. The analysis stage begins with data condensation through critical reading of all selected literature and

coding key concepts. These codes are then categorized into the main themes of discussion, including the reconstruction of the integrative-inclusive concept of PAI, its position as the foundation of multicultural education, its implementation strategy in the modern era, and its relevance to plural society. Furthermore, a synthetic-critical interpretation of the data was carried out to analyze the inter-thematic relationship, compare conceptual patterns between literatures, and ended with the drawing of conclusions that formulated a new theoretical reconstruction for contemporary PAI.

The credibility and validity of the data are maintained through two main approaches, namely *theoretical triangulation* and literature *audit trail*. Theoretical triangulation is carried out by comparing and combining several theoretical frameworks – such as James A. Banks' theory of multicultural education, Islamic epistemology, and the concept of religious moderation – to analyze the same phenomenon to minimize interpretation bias. In addition, a literature audit is applied by documenting search flows, extraction criteria, article mapping matrices, and the process of drawing conclusions systematically so that all stages of research can be traced and accounted for their academic validity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the content analysis of various primary and secondary literature sources obtained through a systematic search process, the results of this study are grouped into four main themes that are interrelated. A summary of the synthesis of literature that forms the findings of this research is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Study Dimensions	Factual/Key Literature	Conceptual Synthesis of Findings
Integrative-Inclusive PAI Concept	Arif, (2012); Novayani, (2018)	Deconstruction of textual understanding towards the holistic integration of theological values (<i>hablum minallah</i>) and social piety (<i>hablum minannas</i>).
Principles of Multicultural Education	Hasnawati, (2020); Zakiah, (2018)	The appropriation of Islamic theological values (<i>tasamuh</i> , <i>ta'aruf</i> , <i>'adl</i> , <i>musawah</i>) as the foundation for reducing prejudice and strengthening the pedagogy of equality.
Learning Implementation	Ilya, (2025); Surya & Salman, (2024)	The instructional trajectory is through curriculum alignment (multicultural PAI material), dialogical-reflective methods, and the role of teachers as moderation agents.
The Challenges of the Modern Era	(Munarun & Astuti N., (2025); Nugroho M., (2016)	Response to dogma exclusivism, digital religious commodification, and identity disruption in the contemporary information society.

The Concept of Integrative-Inclusive Islamic Religious Education

The results of the literature synthesis show that the Integrative-Inclusive PAI is a paradigmatic reorientation that connects religious doctrine with social realities, science, and the development of the times. The integrative dimension emphasizes that Islamic teachings do not stand isolated from the domain of social sciences and humanities, but rather act as an ethical guide in responding to the dynamics of life. Meanwhile, the inclusive dimension emphasizes epistemological openness and normative obedience that does not trap students in rigid *monolithic truth claims*. Integrative-inclusive PAI positions Islamic teachings as a blessing for the whole of nature (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*), where spiritual piety culminates in the formation of social piety that respects Universal human rights (Novayani, 2018).

Principles of Multicultural Education in PAI

Literature review confirms the existence of a strong theological articulation between Islamic principles and the idea of multicultural education. The concepts of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'aruf* (knowing and understanding each other), *'adl* (justice), and *musawah* (equality of degrees) are found as normative foundations that are in line with the demands of a pluralistic society (Hasnawati, 2020). PAI with a multicultural perspective does not only teach the existence of other groups (*co-existence*), but encourages active involvement in building

harmonious relationships (*pro-existence*). This principle aims to disqualify racial, ethnic, and sectarian prejudices in the educational process (Zakiah, 2018).

Learning Implementation Trajectory

Findings on the implementation aspect indicate that the institutionalization of Integrative-Inclusive PAI requires a comprehensive transformation in three main domains, namely material development, learning methodology, and educator example. At the material level, the substance of the Qur'an Hadith, Fiqh, Aqidah Akhlak, and the History of Islamic Civilization is reconstructed by inserting a multicultural perspective and equal rights (Ilya, 2025). In the methodological realm, learning shifts from a doctrinal transmission model to a dialogical-interactive model based on case studies and social problem solving. In the institutional realm, educators act as facilitators and agents of religious moderation that exemplify a peaceful and inclusive school culture (Surya & Salman, 2024).

The Challenges of Implementing Integrative-Inclusive PAI in the Modern Era

Literature analysis identifies that the implementation of this paradigm is faced with the complexity of the digital era and globalization. The main obstacle stems from the spread of superficial religious literacy (*pop-culture religiosity*) due to social media algorithms that amplify the narrative of exclusivism and identity polarization (Munarun & Astuti N., 2025). In addition, there is still conservatism resistance from education stakeholders who are worried that an inclusive attitude can erode students' religious beliefs or identities as a challenge in itself (Nugroho M., 2016).

The conceptual reconstruction of the Integrative-Inclusive PAI in this study provides significant theoretical and practical implications for the development of multicultural education in Indonesia. When juxtaposed with the theoretical framework of multicultural education by James A. Banks, the findings of this study show a deep harmony, while offering a theological breakthrough. Banks emphasizes the importance of five dimensions of multicultural education, namely content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and school cultural empowerment. The findings of the Integrative-Inclusive PAI substantially fill these dimensions with the foundation of universal Islamic values, so that multicultural education in Islamic educational institutions is not perceived as a product of western secularization, but as an articulation of Islamic teachings themselves (Hasnawati, 2020).

A critical analysis of these findings shows that the main weakness of conventional PAI practices so far lies in the dichotomy between religious sciences (*ulum al-din*) and social-humanities sciences. Exclusive-textual learning patterns tend to give birth to rigid religious understanding, where religious identity is opposed to the reality of diversity (Nugroho M., 2016). By presenting an integrative paradigm, the values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* are deconstructed into a critical analysis instrument for the problems of discrimination and intolerance in society. This strengthens the view of Arif (2012) who states that PAI should not stop at the transfer of normative fiqh knowledge, but must be transformed into a means of forming humanist public ethics.

Compared to previous research that generally examined partial PAI inclusivism at the level of praxis in the classroom, the findings of this study contribute novelty in the form of the preparation of an Integrative-Inclusive PAI Epistemological Synthesis. The integrative approach solves the problem of scientific separation (epistemological split), while the inclusive approach solves the problem of social relations (sociological split). The combination of these two approaches has been proven to be conceptually able to stem the negative impact of the digital echo chamber in the modern era, where students are equipped with the ability to think critically-dialogically in filtering information that has the potential to divide social harmony (Munarun & Astuti N., 2025).

Nevertheless, the success of this conceptual synthesis in a practical context is highly dependent on the availability of systemic carrying capacity. The reinterpretation of religious texts in the PAI curriculum requires epistemological readiness from PAI teachers.

Unaccompanied by continuous training on moderate pedagogical methods and multicultural insights, the integrative-inclusive paradigm risks ceasing as a theoretical slogan without operational execution in the classroom (Surya & Salman, 2024). Therefore, the reconstruction of the Integrative-Inclusive PAI is urgent to be intervened in national curriculum policies and teacher professional education programs to ensure the sustainability of its social impact for the development of modern multicultural societies

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that Integrative-Inclusive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a strategic reorientation that unites Islamic theological values (*ulum al-din*) with social-humanitarian sciences to build multicultural education in the modern era. Through the pillars of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *'adl* (justice), and *musawah* (equality), this paradigm transforms PAI from an exclusive-textual pattern to a moderate and responsive understanding of diversity. Theoretically, these findings strengthen the epistemology of multiculturally minded PAI, while practically providing guidance for curriculum developers and educators in designing adaptive religious learning in the digital age. The limitations of literature study-based research open up opportunities for future empirical research to test and validate the effectiveness of the implementation of the Integrative-Inclusive PAI model directly in educational units.

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