

The Strategy of Islamic Religious Education in Facing the Challenges of Multiculturalism in the Muslim Community of Suro Lembak Village, Kepahiang Regency.

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strategies of Islamic religious education in addressing the challenges of multiculturalism in Suro Lembak Village, Kepahiang Regency, focusing on how Islamic education fosters harmony among religious communities amidst cultural and religious diversity. Using a qualitative approach and library research methods, the data sources include books and journals related to Islamic education and multiculturalism. Descriptive analysis was employed to identify relationships between categories and derive relevant theories. The main findings reveal that Islamic religious education in Suro Lembak Village is implemented through formal and non-formal educational institutions, religious outreach (dakwah), and collaborative interfaith activities. Institutions such as madrasas and Quranic learning centers (TPA) teach Islamic values that promote tolerance and respect for differences, while dakwah emphasizes the importance of coexistence and interfaith dialogue to strengthen social harmony. Collaborative activities between religious groups have also successfully enhanced community solidarity. Despite the effectiveness of these strategies, the study notes several limitations, such as a lack of educators with expertise in multiculturalism, insufficient local policy support, and limited societal perceptions of diversity. The study suggests that teacher training, the development of contextually relevant teaching materials, and local government policy support are essential to strengthening multicultural education in the village.

Keywords:
 Islamic Education;
 Multiculturalism;
 Social Tolerance.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi pendidikan agama Islam dalam menghadapi tantangan multikulturalisme di Desa Suro Lembak, Kabupaten Kepahiang, dengan fokus pada bagaimana pendidikan agama Islam dapat membangun kerukunan antarumat beragama di tengah keberagaman budaya dan agama. Menggunakan

Kata Kunci:
 Pendidikan
 Agama Islam;
 Multikulturalisme;
 Toleransi Sosial.

pendekatan kualitatif dan metode kepustakaan, data yang digunakan meliputi buku dan jurnal terkait pendidikan Islam dan multikulturalisme, dengan analisis deskriptif untuk mengidentifikasi hubungan antar kategori dan menyimpulkan teori yang sesuai. Temuan utama menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan agama Islam di Desa Suro Lembak diterapkan melalui lembaga pendidikan formal dan non-formal, dakwah, serta kegiatan kolaboratif antarumat beragama. Lembaga pendidikan seperti madrasah dan TPA mengajarkan nilai-nilai Islam yang mendukung toleransi dan penghargaan terhadap perbedaan, sementara pendekatan dakwah yang mengedepankan pentingnya hidup berdampingan serta dialog antaragama memperkuat keharmonisan sosial. Kegiatan kolaboratif antar kelompok agama juga berhasil meningkatkan rasa kebersamaan di masyarakat. Meski strategi pendidikan Islam efektif, penelitian ini mencatat beberapa keterbatasan seperti kurangnya pendidik yang memahami multikulturalisme, minimnya dukungan kebijakan lokal, serta persepsi masyarakat yang terbatas tentang keberagaman. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah perlunya pelatihan pendidik, pengembangan materi ajar yang kontekstual, dan dukungan kebijakan dari pemerintah daerah untuk memperkuat pendidikan multikulturalisme di desa ini.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia, as a country with diverse cultures, ethnicities, religions, and traditions, requires proper management to strengthen its diversity and contribute positively to the nation. With its rich cultural, ethnic, religious, and traditional diversity, Indonesia faces challenges in managing this diversity to create social harmony. In this context, Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in fostering interfaith harmony, particularly in areas with complex cultural and religious diversity. Suro Lembak Village, as an example, presents a multicultural dynamic that requires an effective educational approach to facilitate harmonious relationships between religious groups. This study aims to analyze how Islamic religious education strategies can contribute to addressing the challenges of multiculturalism in Suro Lembak Village, focusing on the application of Islamic values that promote tolerance and respect for religious differences.

Krismiyo and Kii (2023) state that diversity must be managed properly in order to create social stability that supports national progress. In this context, Islamic education plays a central role in fostering harmony in a multicultural society. Considering that Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Islam serves as the primary foundation for the values and norms of its society (Buzama, 2012; Jaelani, Jejen, & Sulistyanyingtyas, 2015; Simanjuntak, 2020). Islamic values, which include tolerance, justice, brotherhood, and respect for diversity, are key in building harmonious relationships between groups with different backgrounds.

Islamic education in Indonesia, both formal and non-formal, should serve as the primary platform for instilling values of tolerance and interfaith harmony. However, according to Yusuf (2008), Islamic education is often considered ineffective in

facilitating interfaith harmony because it tends to focus on symbolic and ritualistic practices. This overlooks the three basic components of education—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—which should be integrated into the learning process to build a deeper understanding of the importance of tolerance. Additionally, research by Ata et al. (2009) reveals that Islamic education often fails to foster a spirit of multiculturalism due to a lack of moral values that support interfaith harmony and insufficient attention to the diversity of other religions. As a result, Islamic education tends to be more exclusive and inadequate in promoting the creation of a harmonious society amidst diversity.

In Suro Lembak Village, Kepahiang Regency, which is an area with cultural and religious diversity, the community lives side by side despite their differences. This village is inhabited by the Lembak ethnic group, the majority of whom are Muslim, but there are also followers of Christianity and Hinduism. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for the Muslim community, particularly in maintaining their religious identity amidst the existing pluralism. Social conflicts and cultural prejudices often arise due to a lack of understanding of the importance of tolerance in communal living (Krismiyanto & Kii, 2023). Islamic education in this village must be able to address these challenges by equipping the community with a more inclusive understanding of diversity.

In facing the challenges of multiculturalism in Suro Lembak Village, Islamic education must adopt a broader approach, focusing not only on worship and theology but also on social aspects. Islamic education needs to instill an understanding of the importance of cooperation, respect for differences, and the creation of harmony among different groups. To achieve this, a specific and targeted educational strategy is required so that the values of tolerance, unity, and justice can be more effectively instilled. Islamic education can be a key solution in creating a peaceful and harmonious society amidst cultural and religious diversity, as is hoped for in the context of the community in Suro Lembak Village (Yusuf, 2008; Ata et al., 2009).

Although many studies have addressed the role of Islamic religious education in the context of multiculturalism, most research focuses more on the teaching of theory and basic practices in religious education, without highlighting the practical application at the village or community level in multicultural settings. Research by Yusuf (2008) and Ata et al. (2009) emphasizes the importance of moral values and tolerance in Islamic education, yet it provides limited discussion on the implementation of educational strategies in areas with significant diversity. This study fills that gap by focusing on the implementation of Islamic religious education in Suro Lembak Village, a village with distinct cultural and religious diversity.

Furthermore, previous studies have primarily focused on formal education, while this research also considers non-formal education and dakwah (Islamic preaching) as part of the Islamic educational strategy in fostering interfaith harmony. Another distinguishing factor of this study is its emphasis on interfaith collaboration in social and educational activities, a topic that has not been extensively explored in previous studies.

2. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a focus on library research, examining books and manuscripts relevant to the topic being investigated (Efendy et al., 1989). According to Sugiyono (2012), library research is a theoretical study and scientific reference related to culture, values, and norms within social situations, while Krippendorff refers to it as a data source that includes books, journals, and websites relevant to the research topic.

The data used are divided into two types: primary, which consists of core books discussing Islamic education and multiculturalism, and secondary, which includes other books relevant to the study (Arikunto, 1993).

The analytical method applied is descriptive analysis, aimed at identifying relationships between categories and interpreting the data according to the research objectives, in order to construct a theoretical framework that addresses the issues discussed (Surakhmand, 1980).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 General Overview of Suro Lembak Village

Suro Lembak Village, located in Kepahiang Regency, Bengkulu Province, is one of the areas with a highly heterogeneous society, both in terms of ethnicity and religion. The village is predominantly inhabited by the Lembak ethnic group, which is the indigenous ethnic group of the region. The Lembak people maintain their unique language and traditions, which are still preserved and serve as an important part of their daily lives. In addition to the Lembak ethnic group, the village is also home to other ethnic groups such as the Rejang, Javanese, and Malay, who have lived side by side for a long time, contributing to the social and cultural vibrancy of the village. This ethnic diversity enriches the community dynamics, creating both the potential for interesting interactions and challenges in maintaining social balance.

Religious diversity is also a significant characteristic of Suro Lembak Village. The majority of the village's population practices Islam, but there are also minority groups who follow Christianity and Hinduism. This religious difference adds a unique dimension to daily life, where tolerance and mutual understanding among religious communities become crucial to maintaining social harmony. Although the Muslim community is the majority, the presence of Christian and Hindu communities contributes to enriching the local culture and fostering interfaith harmony.

Geographically, Suro Lembak Village is a rural area surrounded by fertile land. The main livelihood of the community is agriculture, with a focus on coffee as one of the village's flagship products, alongside other food crops. Village life remains deeply rooted in local traditions, such as the conduct of customary events, village deliberations, and other social activities that are integral to community interaction. These traditions play a crucial role in shaping social networks and strengthening relationships among residents.

Behind the ethnic and religious diversity, Suro Lembak Village faces several social challenges, particularly in maintaining harmony amidst differing cultural values and beliefs. In such a pluralistic society, it is essential to cultivate a deep awareness of the importance of tolerance, respect for differences, and a commitment to maintaining peace among groups. While these challenges are complex, they also provide an

opportunity to create a more inclusive and harmonious community. According to Siregar (2016), Islamic education in Indonesia must be able to address the challenges of multiculturalism while preserving Islamic values that teach love and peace for all of humanity, and also develop an educational model that respects cultural diversity.

3.2 *Challenges of Multiculturalism in Suro Lembak Village*

The challenges of multiculturalism in Suro Lembak Village often manifest in the form of differing views related to religious practices, particularly when worship rituals conducted in public spaces or at specific times lead to misunderstandings between groups. For example, the use of shared spaces for different religious activities can be perceived as disruptive, especially if the timing or location overlaps. Additionally, differences in customs, lifestyles, and local traditions—though seemingly minor—often serve as triggers for tension within the community. Such tensions have the potential to affect social relationships, making it crucial to enhance understanding and appreciation of religious and cultural differences in order to foster harmony and prevent social fragmentation (Rachmadyastuti et al., 2020).

The community's perceptions of diversity in Suro Lembak Village are varied, with the majority of residents viewing diversity as an integral part of their lives and striving to maintain harmonious relationships with one another. However, certain factors can hinder the development of a responsive mindset, competitiveness, and the ability to enhance skills and work performance. One such factor is the inability to deeply appreciate diversity, which obstructs social integration and worsens cross-cultural understanding (Kholiq, 2020). The presence of non-Islamic ideologies also presents a challenge in rebuilding Muslim communities and their civilization (Saleh, 2020). Multiculturalism, as an ideology that acknowledges and accepts differences, requires understanding and cooperation between groups of different tribes, races, religions, and ethnicities to live peacefully side by side. However, in some cases, certain groups tend to be exclusive and reluctant to engage in dialogue with others, which can exacerbate social tensions (Al Husaini, Rosyada, & Abd Wahab, 2022).

On the other hand, the implementation of multicultural Islamic education in Suro Lembak Village faces significant challenges, particularly related to socio-cultural, political, and educational aspects. Resistance to multicultural education, which is perceived as potentially weakening faith, and the difficulty of designing a curriculum that accommodates diversity, are major obstacles. Islamic education, which is based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, faces considerable challenges in incorporating the concept of multiculturalism that involves various groups with different religious and cultural backgrounds (Muntaha & Wekke, 2017). This requires a more inclusive approach that is sensitive to diversity, so that Islamic education can better function in fostering interfaith and interethnic understanding.

A lack of understanding of multiculturalism is also a significant challenge. Although Islamic religious education is a routine part of community life, the values of tolerance and understanding within the context of multiculturalism have not yet been fully integrated into the educational process. Education that teaches the importance of respecting cultural and religious differences is still limited, and many members of the community are not fully aware that inclusive attitudes and interfaith and interethnic

dialogue are essential for creating social peace. Without adequate understanding of multiculturalism, society risks becoming trapped in tensions that could undermine social harmony. Tahir (2017) emphasizes the importance of a multicultural fiqh perspective for Muslims in Indonesia to address the challenges of diversity and build harmonious lives in the context of pluralism and religious moderation.

3.3 *Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Implemented*

3.3.1 Role of Formal and Non-Formal Educational Institutions

Islamic religious education in Suro Lembak Village is delivered through various formal and non-formal educational institutions that play a crucial role in shaping the religious and social understanding of the community. Formal educational institutions, such as madrasahs, incorporate universal Islamic values into their curriculum, such as justice, tolerance, and brotherhood, which are highly relevant to life in a multicultural society. The curriculum taught at madrasahs not only focuses on religious teachings but also emphasizes the importance of respecting differences between individuals and groups, in line with the fundamental principles of Islam that promote social harmony.

This formal education is expected to shape the character of the younger generation, who will not only be knowledgeable about religion but also capable of socializing and living in a diverse community. Chalimatus Sa'diyah et al. (2024) highlight the importance of including tolerance education in the national curriculum, which can serve as a means to foster inclusive attitudes and mutual respect in a pluralistic society. By integrating these values, schools can cultivate individuals who are more sensitive to differences and better prepared to face the existing social challenges.

In addition to formal education, non-formal institutions such as Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPA) and community study groups also play a significant role in conveying Islamic messages relevant to the dynamics of a multicultural life. These activities often serve as a space for the community to deepen their religious understanding while also strengthening a sense of togetherness among various groups. Multicultural-oriented Islamic education implemented through these non-formal institutions aims to raise awareness about the importance of differences and encourage the development of tolerance in social interactions.

As Aly (2015) states, multicultural-oriented Islamic education can serve as an alternative educational model that not only focuses on character development but also promotes an appreciation for and understanding of cultural diversity in society. This educational model can help address stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination, thereby creating a more inclusive and just Islamic education program, aligned with the needs of an increasingly plural society (Barella et al., 2023).

3.3.2 Da'wah Approach and Socialization of Tolerance Values

Religious leaders in Suro Lembak Village use da'wah (Islamic preaching) as the primary means to convey values of tolerance in daily life. Through religious sermons, Friday khutbahs, and study groups, they encourage the community to respect religious and cultural differences and to build good relationships with other groups, particularly non-Muslims. In this context, da'wah is not only focused on spreading Islamic

teachings but also aims to foster harmonious social relations between religious communities. Religious leaders take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of coexisting peacefully with mutual respect and reducing tensions that may arise due to differences in beliefs.

This approach aligns with the views of Sutralhis & Novaria (2023), who emphasize that socio-cultural diversity in Indonesia must be well-managed through education, one of which is by using a differentiated learning approach in the Merdeka Curriculum. This approach is expected to create an inclusive learning environment, which in turn can reduce the potential for social conflict in the community.

Furthermore, religious leaders in Suro Lembak Village also employ a dialogical approach to open up spaces for discussion between communities of different religions and cultures. Such discussions aim to reduce misunderstandings that often arise from ignorance or the inability to communicate with other groups. Through open dialogue, the community is expected to gain a better understanding of different religious views and practices, and find common ground to coexist peacefully.

This dialogical approach is crucial, as it not only helps build better understanding between groups but also teaches the importance of mutual respect in a pluralistic social life. Education that emphasizes the importance of interfaith and intercultural dialogue becomes a key method for forming a more tolerant and harmonious society, as suggested by Sutralhis & Novaria (2023) in efforts to reduce potential conflicts and create a more inclusive social atmosphere.

3.3.3 Collaborative Activities Supporting Social Harmony

In Suro Lembak Village, collaborative activities involving various ethnic and religious groups have become an effective way to strengthen social ties amidst diversity. Mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) in the construction of public facilities, joint celebrations of religious holidays, and village deliberations are some examples of activities that foster a sense of togetherness. These activities not only strengthen relationships among residents but also create opportunities to display symbols of harmony between groups. Religious leaders from different faiths, such as Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism, often participate in these joint forums to demonstrate that despite differences, unity and cooperation can still be successfully maintained.

This approach aligns with the views of Andika Aprilianto (2019), who asserts that multicultural education is a response to social phenomena and ethnic conflicts, aimed at producing a generation equipped with knowledge, skills, and the ability to live harmoniously in a plural society. Therefore, the collaborative activities in this village serve as a profound form of social education, helping to strengthen interfaith and interethnic relationships and reduce the potential for future conflict.

These collaborative activities also reflect the importance of education that teaches the values of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity within society. In this context, multicultural education is not only focused on classroom learning but also on social activities that involve all layers of the community. This allows for the formation of a more inclusive society, better prepared to face social challenges related to diversity. As Andika Aprilianto (2019) states, multicultural education aims to develop individuals

who not only possess academic knowledge but also the necessary social skills to live together in a plural society and appreciate cultural diversity.

Therefore, the collaborative activities in Suro Lembak Village not only serve as a means to strengthen relationships among residents but also as part of an educational effort to create a stronger and more sustainable social harmony.

3.4 *Evaluation of Strategies*

3.4.1 Lack of Educational Resources

The Islamic education strategy in Suro Lembak Village has shown promising results, particularly in increasing community awareness of the importance of tolerance and reducing open conflicts between groups. However, significant challenges remain, one of which is the lack of adequate educational resources. Many educators have not yet fully developed the competence to integrate multicultural values into Islamic education. This is often due to limitations in teacher training and the lack of relevant teaching materials to support the implementation of multicultural education.

As explained by Lusiana & Firdaus (2024), multicultural Islamic education offers great potential to enrich learning and foster tolerance. However, the main challenge to overcome is the variation in interpretations and the boundaries of tolerance within this education, which requires a more prepared and inclusive educational system.

Educational resources play a crucial role in shaping students' awareness and tolerance, as educators not only transfer knowledge but also shape students' character and behavior. Setiawati et al. (2020) and Wulandari et al. (2020) state that well-trained educators have the ability to effectively convey values of tolerance. Therefore, there is a need for more intensive training for educators to enhance their understanding of the importance of integrating multicultural values into Islamic education. Without this competence, it will be difficult for them to create an inclusive educational environment that encourages students to better understand and appreciate the cultural and religious diversity around them.

3.4.2 Lack of Formal Support

On the other hand, while the strategy of Islamic education in Suro Lembak Village has been fairly successful, formal support from local policies remains limited. The existing formal education curriculum often focuses more on theological aspects without providing sufficient space to address social issues related to diversity. This becomes a barrier to creating comprehensive multicultural education, as Islamic education should be able to develop a broader understanding of social and cultural diversity. Nor Muslim, Azis, & Zainab (2018) highlight the challenges of da'wah (Islamic preaching) in multicultural societies, which are influenced by various factors, both internal, such as da'wah methods and community acceptance, and external, such as political and religious dominance, which can hinder the development of inclusive da'wah. The lack of supportive government policies for multicultural education exacerbates the situation and delays the creation of Islamic education that can optimally accommodate diversity.

Therefore, there is a need for active involvement from local governments in developing policies that can strengthen multicultural education, both in the context of Islamic education and general education. This approach should be capable of

addressing existing challenges by providing space for diversity issues, while also creating an environment that supports interaction between different religious and cultural groups. With stronger support from local policies, Islamic education can become a more effective tool in promoting tolerance and social harmony. Without clear policy support, Islamic education in the village will struggle to achieve the inclusive goals it aims for.

3.4.3 Limited Perception

One of the main challenges faced in implementing Islamic education strategies in Suro Lembak Village is the limited perception among the community regarding the importance of social tolerance. Most people view tolerance as a formal obligation, without a deep understanding of its purpose and benefits in daily social life. This indicates that although Islamic education in the village has attempted to instill values of tolerance, the acceptance of these values in social practice remains quite limited. Asih et al. (2024) state that misconceptions about Sharia law and the community's lack of ability to filter valid religious information are key factors contributing to their inability to deeply understand the importance of tolerance. Therefore, despite efforts to educate the community about the importance of living together with mutual respect, many still have not fully realized or internalized these values.

To address this issue, further efforts are needed to enhance the community's understanding of the true meaning of tolerance, particularly through more targeted and sustainable education. In this context, religious leaders and educators play a key role in providing a deeper understanding of the principles of tolerance and social harmony. This strategy must be complemented by programs that can educate the community to not only formally appreciate diversity but also to internalize these values in their daily lives. Training and the provision of more contextual teaching materials on tolerance and multiculturalism are essential to create a more inclusive and harmonious society. Through these measures, it is hoped that Islamic education in Suro Lembak Village will become more effective in addressing the challenges of multiculturalism and improving the community's understanding of the importance of tolerance in their social lives.

4. Conclusion

Islamic religious education plays an important role in maintaining harmony within the multicultural community of Suro Lembak Village, which consists of various ethnicities and religions, such as Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. This diversity presents challenges in the form of conflicting values and differing understandings between groups. However, Islamic religious education can serve as a solution to address these issues. Through formal and non-formal educational institutions, preaching that emphasizes tolerance, and collaborative interfaith activities, Islamic religious education contributes to building understanding and fostering more harmonious relationships between groups.

However, although these strategies have been successful in improving social harmony, there are still challenges such as a lack of educators who understand multiculturalism, limited local policy support, and the community's narrow perception of the importance of diversity. Therefore, further efforts are needed, including educator

training, the development of contextual teaching materials, and policy support from the local government to strengthen multicultural education in the village. With these measures, Islamic religious education can be more effective in addressing the challenges of multiculturalism in Suro Lembak Village.

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