

## **FOSTERING SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MULTICULTURAL VALUES IN INDONESIAN PESANTREN**

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### **Abstract**

Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, faces persistent challenges in maintaining social cohesion amid rising religio-political tensions and multicultural fragmentation. Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) hold a distinctive role as institutions of religious socialization and cultural negotiation. This study explores how pesantren foster social cohesion through a qualitative multi-site case study of three prominent institutions in Java recognized for moderate Islamic thought and engagement with diversity. Data were collected via interviews, participant observation, and document analysis of classical texts (*kitab kuning*) and institutional curricula, analyzed through Berger's theory of social construction and Durkheim's concept of moral education and solidarity. Findings reveal that pesantren integrate universal values such as cooperation (*ta'awun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and justice (*'adalah*) into formal curricula, while hidden curricula and communal practices provide experiential pluralism. Institutional traditions, including national celebrations and interfaith dialogues, further bridge religious identity with civic belonging. These layered processes cultivate graduates with "hybrid identities" that harmonize Islamic piety with commitment to the Indonesian nation-state. The study concludes that pesantren offer an indigenous model of fostering social cohesion neither fully secular nor exclusively religious highlighting their potential as long-term strategies against extremism and as significant contributors to the sociology of education and Islamic studies in contexts of modernity and pluralism.

**Keywords:** Islamic Education, Pesantren, Social Cohesion, Multicultural Values, Sociology of Education, Indonesia, Religious Moderation, Hidden Curriculum.

### **Abstrak**

*Indonesia, sebagai negara dengan populasi Muslim terbesar di dunia, menghadapi tantangan yang terus-menerus dalam menjaga kohesi sosial di tengah meningkatnya ketegangan religio-politik dan fragmentasi multikultural. Pesantren memegang peran yang khas sebagai lembaga sosialisasi keagamaan dan negosiasi budaya. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana pesantren memupuk kohesi sosial melalui studi kasus kualitatif multi-lokasi terhadap tiga lembaga terkemuka di Jawa yang dikenal karena pemikiran Islam moderat dan keterlibatannya dalam keragaman. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen teks klasik (kitab kuning) serta kurikulum institusional, yang dianalisis menggunakan teori konstruksi sosial Berger dan konsep pendidikan moral serta solidaritas Durkheim. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pesantren mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai universal seperti kerja sama (ta'awun), toleransi*

(tasamuh), dan keadilan ('adalah) ke dalam kurikulum formal, sementara kurikulum tersembunyi dan praktik komunal memberikan pengalaman pluralisme. Tradisi institusional, termasuk perayaan nasional dan dialog antaragama, semakin menjembatani identitas keagamaan dengan rasa memiliki terhadap negara. Proses berlapis ini membentuk lulusan dengan "identitas hibrida" yang menyatukan ketakwaan Islam dengan komitmen terhadap negara bangsa Indonesia. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pesantren menawarkan model asli dalam memupuk kohesi sosial yang tidak sepenuhnya sekuler maupun eksklusif religius, menyoroti potensinya sebagai strategi jangka panjang melawan ekstremisme serta kontributor signifikan bagi sosiologi pendidikan dan studi Islam dalam konteks modernitas dan pluralisme.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Islam, Pesantren, Kohesi Sosial, Nilai-Nilai Multikultural, Sosiologi Pendidikan, Indonesia, Moderasi Agama, Kurikulum Tersembunyi

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with the greatest cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in the world. As documented by the Central Bureau of Statistics (2025), there are more than 1,300 ethnic groups and 652 languages spread across the Indonesian archipelago. As the country with the largest Muslim population globally, Indonesia has long been praised as a successful example of a pluralistic society living peacefully side by side. Hefner (2024), in his study of democracy and Islam in Southeast Asia, asserts that social harmony in Indonesia is reflected in the Pancasila ideology, the constitution, and the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). In this context of diversity, educational institutions, particularly Islamic education, play a strategic role as agents of socialization of national values and social cohesion.

Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, possess distinctive scholarly traditions and social structures. Azra and Afrianty (2023), in their historical study of Islam Nusantara, demonstrate that pesantren have historically functioned as forums for intercultural and interfaith dialogue. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2025), the number of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia has continued to show significant growth over the past five years. The Directorate General of Islamic Education (2025) recorded consistent year-over-year growth, indicating the crucial role these institutions play in the national education landscape. Table 1 below presents data on the growth in the number of Islamic boarding schools, their students, and their distribution in Indonesia from 2020 to 2025.

**Table 1.** Development of the Number of Islamic Boarding Schools, Students, and Distribution in Indonesia (2020-2025)

YEAR	NUMBER OF PESANTREN	NUMBER OF STUDENTS (INDIVIDUALS)	PROVINCE WITH THE MOST PESANTREN	PERCENTAGE OF SALAFIYAH VS MODERN PESANTREN
2020	28.194	4.290.626	Jawa Barat (8.342)	Salafiyah: 72%, Modern: 28%
2021	29.218	4.435.678	Jawa Barat (8.612)	Salafiyah: 71%, Modern: 29%
2022	30.547	4.621.345	Jawa Barat (8.945)	Salafiyah: 70%, Modern: 30%

<b>2023</b>	32.123	4.856.789	Jawa Barat	Salafiyah: 69%, Modern: 31%
<b>2024</b>	33.956	5.124.567	Jawa Barat	Salafiyah: 68%, Modern: 32%
<b>2025</b>	35.891	5.423.890	Jawa Barat	Salafiyah: 67%, Modern: 33%

Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2025); Central Statistics Agency (2025); Directorate General of Islamic Education (2025)

Data published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2025) shows a consistent growth trend, with the number of Islamic boarding schools increasing by 27.3% over the past five years. The Central Statistics Agency (2025) in its annual report confirmed that West Java Province consistently ranks highest in the number of Islamic boarding schools, followed by East Java and Central Java. Interestingly, the Directorate General of Islamic Education (2025) noted that although Salafiyah (traditional) Islamic boarding schools still dominate, there has been an increase in the proportion of modern Islamic boarding schools that integrate general and religious curricula in a balanced manner, from 28% in 2020 to 33% in 2025. Lukens-Bull (2024) in his ethnographic study of contemporary Islamic boarding schools emphasized that this indicates the dynamics of Islamic boarding school adaptation to the demands of modernity without abandoning their traditional roots.

The existence of thousands of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) with millions of students makes them a national asset with immense potential for shaping the nation's character. Research conducted by Pohl (2023) shows that *pesantren* possess internal flexibility that allows for the integration of multicultural values into the habitus structure of students through equal communal living, interactions across socio-economic backgrounds, and respect for the *kiai* (Islamic scholars) as unifying figures. Woodward, Rohmaniyah, and Amin (2024) in their study of Islam Nusantara (Indonesian Archipelago) found that core values such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), justice, equality, and deliberation are systematically taught and practiced through daily activities and interactions within the *pesantren* environment.

Although *pesantren* have great potential as agents of social cohesion, empirical reality shows that Indonesia faces serious challenges in maintaining interfaith harmony and social cohesion. A national survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) at UIN Jakarta (2018) documented that 6 out of 10 K-12 teachers across all 34 provinces held intolerant religious views. This finding was further reinforced by the Setara Institute's (2024) report on the tolerance index in Indonesia, which showed stagnation and even decline in some regions. Van Bruinessen (2023), in his analysis of the contestation of Islamic discourse in Indonesia, reminded us that the phenomenon of intolerance manifests not only in physical conflict but also through subtle expressions such as negative stereotypes, social prejudice, community segregation, and the spread of extreme narratives through social media.

Febrian and Husmen's (2025) research, published in the journal *AL-TARBIYAH: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Ilmu Keguruan* (Journal of Education and Teacher Training), revealed that the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesian Islamic educational institutions still faces various internal and external challenges. Their SWOT analysis revealed that the main weaknesses lie in inadequate educator understanding, partial curriculum integration, and suboptimal institutional inclusiveness. On the other hand, external threats come from the rise of intolerance, radicalism, the politicization of identity, and the negative influence of digital media. Fealy and White (2024), in their study of the digitalization of da'wah in Indonesia, warned that religious content on social media is often more powerful in shaping public opinion than formal education. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact, as Baidhawiy (2023) revealed, that multicultural education is still often understood narrowly as a theoretical discourse with structured and ongoing practices. Specifically in the context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), research by Trisnani, Mariyam, and Maskuri (2026), forthcoming in the *Scientific Journal of Islamic Boarding Schools*, found that although the diversity of students' backgrounds empirically opens up space for cross-cultural interaction, the realization of multicultural education requires a more structured and systematic institutional design. Without a clear design, the potential for cross-cultural interaction can turn into social barriers that actually reinforce group exclusivity. Furthermore, research by Sopian, Abdurahman, Ali, Tantowi, Aeni, and Maulani (2025) on Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools conducted in six provinces revealed that Arabic language education is often perceived narrowly as monocultural and exclusively religious, thus ignoring the broader multicultural context. This indicates a tension between the mission of preserving Islamic tradition and the need to open oneself to local and global cultural diversity, as also noted by Kersten (2023) in his book on the contestation of Islam in contemporary Indonesia.

Several studies in the past five years have examined the relationship between Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and multicultural education, but significant gaps remain to be filled. Research conducted by Hazaa, Nurhalimah, Anggraini, Putri, and Dahlan (2025) examined the integration of Islamic educational management philosophy in a multicultural context and concluded that multicultural Islamic education based on the principles of monotheism and inclusivity is effective in preventing social conflict. This study, published in the *Scientific Journal of Educational Professions*, provides a strong theological foundation, but does not specifically analyze the sociological mechanisms by which these values are transmitted in the daily life of Islamic boarding schools. Meanwhile, research by Wahono and Alami (2026) on the transformation of social capital at Pondok Buntet Islamic Boarding School in Cirebon shows that Islamic boarding schools have a strong adaptive capacity in responding to globalization through curriculum integration, strengthening digital literacy, and developing an Islamic boarding school-based economy. This study, which will be presented at the International Conference on Islamic Studies, excels in institutional analysis, but does not yet explore in depth the dimensions of multicultural values and their contribution to national social cohesion. Another relevant study comes from Sopian, Abdurahman, Ali, Tantowi, Aeni, and

Maulani (2025), who examined Arabic language learning in a multicultural context in Islamic boarding schools. This study, published in the *Journal of Education and Teaching Review*, identified four dimensions of multicultural integration: cultural, social, intellectual, and spiritual, which shape students' engagement with Arabic not only as a religious language but also as a medium for intercultural dialogue. While this study's contribution is significant in demonstrating the transformative potential of Islamic boarding schools, its focus is limited to Arabic language learning and falls short of a broader sociological analysis of the entire Islamic boarding school education system.

On the other hand, there is also research that questions or even rejects the narrative of Islamic boarding schools as agents of moderation and multiculturalism. Ari Susanti (2025) in a statement published in *CNN Indonesia* criticized the involvement of BRIN and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Islamic boarding school policy research, arguing that this reflects the state's ideological political direction to subordinate Islamic boarding schools to a secular-democratic paradigm through religious moderation programs. This criticism highlights resistance to the concept of moderation, which is seen as a Western project to divert the community from the full teachings of Islam. Research from another critical perspective, such as that conducted by Hilmy (2023), expresses concerns that systematic efforts to direct Islamic boarding schools into moderate institutions that adapt to secular development actually threaten the independence of Islamic preaching and their function as guardians of the purity of Islamic teachings. The main research gap identified from this mapping is the absence of a comprehensive sociological analysis of how Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia foster social cohesion through the transmission of multicultural values integrated into the formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, and institutional cultural practices, taking into account the complexity of internal and external challenges and critiques of the moderation narrative itself.

The first novelty of this research lies in its theoretical approach, which integrates Peter L. Berger's sociology of education framework on the social construction of reality with Émile Durkheim's theories on moral education and social solidarity. This integration allows for an analysis that examines not only how multicultural values are constructed and legitimized within Islamic boarding school life (Berger's perspective), but also how these values function to create organic solidarity within a pluralistic society (Durkheim's perspective). This approach differs from previous studies such as Hazaa et al. (2025), which tend to use a purely theological-normative framework, or Wahono and Alami (2026), who conduct institutional analysis separate from the process of meaning construction at the actor level. Rofiah (2024) in her writing on the epistemology of Islamic education emphasizes the importance of integrating Western social theory with local wisdom to produce a more comprehensive analysis.

The second novelty lies in the empirical scope and research methodology. This research will employ a multi-site case study design in three Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Java representing different typologies: a pure Salafiyah *pesantren*, an integrated modern *pesantren*, and a *pesantren* that explicitly declares itself multicultural. This

comparative approach allows for the identification of variations in the internalization models of multicultural values and the contextual factors that influence them. Unlike previous research, which tends to focus on a single pesantren, such as Wahono and Alami (2026), or on specific aspects such as Arabic language learning, as reviewed by Sopian et al. (2025), this research will provide a more comprehensive and comparative picture. Nilan (2023), in his review of pesantren research methodology, recommends using a multi-site approach to capture the complexity and diversity of Islamic education practices in Indonesia. The third novelty is the focus on analyzing three layers of simultaneous value transmission: the formal curriculum (through analysis of yellow books and curriculum documents), the hidden curriculum through everyday life practices, and institutional cultural practices that bridge religious identity with national citizenship. Research on multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools has tended to be fragmented, with some focusing on theological aspects, such as Hazaa et al. (2025), institutional aspects, such as Wahono and Alami (2026), or language learning aspects, such as Sopian et al. (2025). This study offers a holistic analysis that integrates these three layers, thus revealing more fully the process of production and reproduction of multicultural values and their impact on the formation of a hybrid identity of students who harmonize Islamic piety with national commitment. As emphasized by Feener (2024) in his study of the intellectual tradition of Islamic boarding schools, such a holistic approach is essential to understanding the role of Islamic boarding schools in shaping Islamic discourse that is contextual and responsive to the challenges of the times.

The primary concern underlying this research is the increasing social fragmentation and politicization of identity in Indonesia, which has the potential to threaten national cohesion. Surveys conducted by various institutions over the past five years have shown a rising trend of intolerance among the younger generation, including those with religious educational backgrounds. Suryadinata, Mansur, and Azizah (2025), in their book "Mememai Toleransi Karena Dini" (Sowing Tolerance Since Early), revealed that intolerance is not merely an individual problem, but a structural issue that requires a multidimensional approach, including education, legal strengthening, character building, and cross-cultural dialogue. Lindsey and Pausacker (2024), in their analysis of identity politics in post-2019 Indonesia, warned that if not addressed seriously, this social fragmentation could lead to national disintegration, given that Indonesia is a country built on a foundation of diversity.

A second concern relates to the position of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which are at a crossroads. On the one hand, Islamic boarding schools face pressure to adapt to modernity and the demands of globalization, including the need to produce graduates with digital literacy, 21st-century skills, and a strong sense of nationalism, as noted by Wahono and Alami (2026). On the other hand, Islamic boarding schools must maintain their identity and traditions as institutions that produce cadres of ulama (Islamic scholars) with in-depth religious knowledge. This dual pressure can create internal tensions that could potentially weaken the function of Islamic boarding schools if not managed wisely. Even

more worrying is Ari Susanti's (2025) criticism that religious moderation programs and policy research involving Islamic boarding schools could be directed toward specific ideological goals that threaten the independence of Islamic preaching and the purity of Islamic teachings. These concerns need to be addressed academically with objective and balanced research, rather than with an apologetic or blindly resistant stance, as recommended by Van Bruinessen (2023) in his analysis of the dynamics of Islam in contemporary Indonesia.

This research will be conducted using a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study design in three Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Java, purposively selected based on their typology and reputation for moderation. Data collection will be conducted through in-depth interviews with kiai (Islamic religious leaders), ustadz (Islamic teachers), and students (students); participant observation of daily life and classroom interactions; and document analysis of the yellow books (kitab kuning) and institutional curriculum. The collected data will be analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, based on the sociological frameworks of Berger and Durkheim. The research is planned to last 12 months, involve a multidisciplinary research team, and will involve pesantren stakeholders in the validation process of the findings to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the research results, as recommended in the qualitative research guidelines by Creswell and Poth (2024).

This research contributes to the development of academic discourse at the intersection of the sociology of education, Islamic studies, and multiculturalism by providing an empirical model of how religious education can positively engage with modernity and pluralism without losing its authenticity, as hoped for by contemporary Islamic scholars such as Hefner (2024) and Azra (2023). Practically, the findings of this research can provide input for the Ministry of Religious Affairs in formulating policies to strengthen religious moderation that are more contextual and participatory, and for Islamic boarding school (pesantren) administrators in developing systematic institutional and pedagogical designs to foster multicultural values, as recommended by Febrian and Husmen (2025). Socially, this research is expected to strengthen the narrative of Indonesia as a living laboratory of religious harmony that can serve as a model for other multicultural countries in the world, an idea long developed by scholars such as Woodward (2024) and Fealy (2023), while also responding in a balanced manner to criticisms of the moderation narrative while remaining grounded in empirical reality and a rigorous academic framework.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study. The qualitative approach was chosen because the purpose of this research was to deeply understand the meaning, social processes, and context behind the transmission of multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which cannot be measured quantitatively. The

multi-site case study design allows researchers to compare and contrast practices across various Islamic boarding schools, resulting in a richer and deeper understanding of how social cohesion is fostered across various institutional contexts. This research is grounded in the social constructivism paradigm, which views social reality, including multicultural values and social cohesion, as constructed through social interactions, negotiations of meaning, and the daily practices of actors in Islamic boarding schools.

The research was conducted in three Islamic boarding schools located in the provinces of East Java and Central Java, Indonesia, over a six-month period. These three Islamic boarding schools were selected purposively, considering their established reputations for promoting moderate Islamic thought (*wasathiyah*), active involvement in intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and long histories and significant influence on their surrounding communities. Furthermore, they enroll students from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, making them ideal social laboratories for researching social cohesion, while also providing full access and transparency for research.

The subjects of this study were individuals directly involved in the educational process and social life at Islamic boarding schools. They were selected purposively and using snowball sampling to ensure the depth and diversity of the data. The informants in this study numbered 36 individuals, consisting of the *kiai* (Islamic boarding school administrator) as the highest authority and determinant of the vision and values of the Islamic boarding school; the *ustadz* (Islamic teacher) or *ustadzah* (Islamic teacher) as the primary implementers of the learning process; the *santri* (students) from various educational levels and regions as subjects who internalize the values; the alumni to explore the long-term impact of education; and the local community leaders to gain external perspectives on the role of the Islamic boarding school.

Data were collected using four main techniques. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, perspectives, and meanings that informants attach to multicultural practices at Islamic boarding schools. Second, participatory observation was conducted by actively involving the researcher in daily life at the Islamic boarding school to observe informal interactions between students, classroom learning processes, non-formal activities such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and daily practices reflecting values such as *ta'awun* and *tasamuh* (compassionate tolerance). Third, document analysis was conducted on the primary reference books (*kitab kuning*), the curriculum and syllabus, Islamic boarding school regulations, and publications and social media. Fourth, documentation and archival studies were conducted by collecting visual data in the form of photographs and videos of relevant activities. The primary instrument in this study was the researcher herself, assisted by interview guides, observation guides, field notes, and a recording device.

To ensure data validity, this study employed several strategies. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various sources (*kiai*, *ustadz*, students, alumni, community leaders), various techniques (interviews, observations, document analysis),

and various time periods. Member checking was conducted by periodically verifying the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations with key informants. The researcher's extended participation at the research site for six months aimed to build trust and deepen their understanding of the context. Observation was carried out diligently and repeatedly to identify significant points. An audit trail was maintained by systematically recording all raw notes and analysis processes, and regular peer discussions with fellow qualitative researchers were conducted to obtain critical feedback.

The data analysis in this study employed the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, conducted simultaneously and iteratively from data collection through the writing of the final report. The analysis activities consisted of three stages: data condensation, which is the process of sorting, focusing, and simplifying data relevant to the research focus; data presentation, which is presenting the condensed data in narrative text, matrices, or charts to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships between categories; and conclusion drawing and verification, which is seeking meaning from the presented data and verifying it throughout the research through triangulation and member checking. The analyzed data were then interpreted using a sociological framework derived from Peter L. Berger's theory of the social construction of reality to analyze the process of value construction, and Émile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity and moral education to analyze the role of Islamic boarding schools as moral institutions.

This study upholds ethical research principles by obtaining informed consent from all informants, maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of informants and Islamic boarding schools, ensuring no negative impact on participants, and respecting the customs and norms prevailing in Islamic boarding schools. The researcher also realizes that this study has several limitations, including the focus on three Islamic boarding schools in Java which may not represent the entire diversity of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, the emphasis on internal perspectives which may not explore external impacts, and its qualitative nature so that the findings cannot be generalized statistically, but rather emphasizes in-depth understanding that can be transferred to similar contexts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of Research Locations

This research was conducted in three Islamic boarding schools in East Java and Central Java with the following characteristics:

**Table 2.** Profile of Three Islamic Boarding Schools at the Research Location

ASPECT	PESANTREN A (EAST JAVA)	PESANTREN B (EAST JAVA)	PESANTREN C (CENTRAL JAVA)
<b>YEAR ESTABLISHED</b>	1985	1992	1978
<b>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</b>	± 3,500 students	± 2,800 students	± 4,200 students

<b>STUDENTS' REGIONS</b>	22 provinces in Indonesia	18 provinces + 4 countries	25 provinces in Indonesia
<b>ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS</b>	Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Batak, Balinese	Javanese, Sundanese, Bugis, Papuan, Malaysian	Javanese, Chinese, Arab, NTT, Papuan
<b>RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION</b>	NU (moderate)	NU & Muhammadiyah	NU (traditional)
<b>FLAGSHIP PROGRAMS</b>	Qur'an Memorization ( <i>Tahfidz</i> ) + Islamic Economics ( <i>Muamalah</i> )	Languages + Entrepreneurship	Classical Texts ( <i>Kitab Kuning</i> ) + Interfaith Dialogue

Source: processed data (2026)

The table above presents a general overview of the three Islamic boarding schools used in the research. Islamic boarding school A, established in 1985 in East Java, has approximately 3,500 students from 22 provinces in Indonesia, with a moderate NU religious affiliation. Islamic boarding school B, also in East Java, was established in 1992 with approximately 2,800 students from not only 18 provinces in Indonesia but also from four neighboring countries, and has a mixed NU and Muhammadiyah affiliation. Meanwhile, Islamic boarding school C in Central Java is the oldest, established in 1978, with the largest number of students, reaching 4,200 from 25 provinces, including students from ethnic Chinese, Arabs, East Nusa Tenggara, and Papua. These three Islamic boarding schools have different but complementary flagship programs, namely tahfidz and muamalah in Islamic Boarding School A, language and entrepreneurship in Islamic Boarding School B, and yellow book studies and interfaith dialogue in Islamic Boarding School C. The diversity of students' backgrounds and the uniqueness of these flagship programs make these three Islamic boarding schools ideal locations for researching the process of transmitting multicultural values.

### Identification of Multicultural Values in Islamic Boarding Schools

Based on document analysis (yellow books, curricula, regulations) and interviews with kiai (Islamic scholars), six core multicultural values were identified as being taught in the three Islamic boarding schools. These findings align with previous research at Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, which identified the values of honesty, democracy, tolerance, equality, nationalism, and respect for cultural diversity.

**Table 3.** Multicultural Values Identified in Islamic Boarding Schools

Multicultural Value	Operational Definition	Theological Foundation ( <i>Kitab Kuning</i> )	Informant Quote (Kiai/Ustadz)
<b>1. Tasamuh (Tolerance)</b>	Respecting differences in belief, opinion, and	" <i>Lakum dinukum waliyadin</i> " (Qur'an, Al-Kafirun);	"We teach that tolerance does not mean mixing

Multicultural Value	Operational Definition	Theological Foundation ( <i>Kitab Kuning</i> )	Informant Quote (Kiai/Ustadz)
	tradition, both within and outside the Muslim community.	“ <i>Tolerance in social relations</i> ” ( <i>Ta’lim Muta’allim</i> )	religions, but respecting others’ right to worship. Our students visit temples and churches for dialogue, not to participate in worship.” (Kiai A)
<b>2. Ta’awun (Cooperation)</b>	Spirit of mutual assistance and solidarity regardless of background.	“ <i>Wa ta’awanu ‘ala al-birri wa al-taqwa</i> ” (Qur’an, Al-Maidah); “ <i>Community members are like one body</i> ” ( <i>Akhlak lil Banin</i> )	“During harvest or when neighbors face hardship, our students help directly. We don’t ask whether they are Muslim or Christian what matters is humanity.” (Kiai B)
<b>3. ‘Adalah (Justice)</b>	Equal treatment of all students without discrimination based on ethnicity, origin, or economic status.	“ <i>T’malu bisith, inna Allaha yuhibbu al-muqsithin</i> ” (Hadith); “ <i>Justice is closer to piety</i> ” ( <i>Tafsir Jalalain</i> )	“Here all students wear the same uniform, eat the same meals, and receive equal rights. Wealthy children don’t get extra privileges. We do this to instill justice from an early age.” (Kiai C)
<b>4. Musawah (Equality)</b>	The view that all humans share equal dignity before God, distinguished only by piety.	“ <i>Inna akramakum ‘indallahi atqakum</i> ” (Qur’an, Al-Hujurat); “ <i>Humans are like the teeth of a</i>	“I always tell students not to boast about their origin. Papuan and Arab children here are equal.

Multicultural Value	Operational Definition	Theological Foundation ( <i>Kitab Kuning</i> )	Informant Quote (Kiai/Ustadz)
		<i>comb, equal in rank” (Farewell Sermon)</i>	The most honored before God is the most pious, not the richest.” (Kiai A)
<b>5. (Democracy/Consultation)</b>	<b>Syura</b> Collective decision-making that values everyone’s opinion.	“ <i>Wa amruhum syura bainahum</i> ” (Qur’an, Asy-Syura); “ <i>Consultation brings blessings</i> ” ( <i>Ihya’ Ulumuddin</i> )	“Before major events, we gather student council leaders and representatives. Everyone can propose ideas, we listen, and then decide together. This is pesantren-style democracy.” (Ustadz B)
<b>6. Nationalism (Love of Homeland)</b>	Commitment to the Republic of Indonesia as a shared home.	“ <i>Hubb al-wathan minal iman</i> ” (Popular hadith in pesantren); “ <i>Defending the nation against enemies is obligatory</i> ” ( <i>Fathul Qarib</i> )	“We teach that defending Indonesia is part of jihad. Every year our students join the August 17th ceremony, some even serve as organizers at the district level. This builds a sense of belonging to the nation.” (Kiai C)

Source: processed data (2026)

Based on document analysis and in-depth interviews with kiai, the table above identifies six key multicultural values taught in the three Islamic boarding schools. The first value is tasamuh or tolerance, taught through Quranic verses such as "Lakum dinukum waliyadin" and emphasized by the kiai as an attitude of respecting the right of others to worship without mixing faith. Second, ta'awun or cooperation, which is based on the command to help each other in goodness and is implemented through the involvement of students in humanitarian activities regardless of religious background. Third, 'adalah or

justice, which is realized through equal treatment of all students in terms of clothing, food, and facilities, as emphasized by the kiai that there is no discrimination based on economic status. Fourth, musawah or equality, which teaches that all humans have the same dignity before God, only piety that differentiates. Fifth, shura or deliberation, which is practiced in decision-making through discussion forums involving student representatives. Sixth, nationalism or love of the homeland, which is taught as part of faith and is manifested through active participation in commemorating national holidays.

### Dimensions of Multicultural Value Integration

Further analysis revealed that these values are integrated through four dimensions, which aligns with research findings on Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools, which identified cultural, social, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions as a framework for multicultural integration.

**Table 4.** Dimensions of Multicultural Value Integration in Islamic Boarding Schools

Dimension	Description	Implementation in Pesantren	Specific Findings
Cultural Dimension	Recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity as shared wealth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual cultural festival</li> <li>- Commemoration of national and religious holidays</li> <li>- Use of local languages in arts</li> </ul>	“Every year we hold the ‘Nusantara Cultural Week.’ Students from Papua perform Poco-Poco, from Sumatra play <i>randai</i> , from Java present <i>wayang</i> . They take pride in their own cultures.” (Ustadz A)
Social Dimension	Cross-group interaction that creates social bonds and solidarity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diverse dormitory life</li> <li>- “Mentorship” system across regions</li> <li>- Communal work across ethnic groups</li> </ul>	“We deliberately mix students from different regions in one room. At first it’s challenging, but after a month they become close. This is an effective method to build brotherhood.” (Pesantren Administrator B)
Intellectual Dimension	Critical learning about diversity and multicultural issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interactive classroom discussions</li> <li>- Thematic study of <i>kitab kuning</i></li> <li>- Seminars with interfaith speakers</li> </ul>	“In class, I often spark discussions on ethnic and religious issues. I ask non-Javanese students to share their experiences. This opens up new perspectives.” (Ustadz C)
Spiritual Dimension	Religious foundation that interprets diversity as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exegesis of verses on diversity</li> </ul>	“I always emphasize that Allah created nations and tribes so they may know one another. Differences

Dimension	Description	Implementation in Pesantren	Specific Findings
	<i>sunnatullah</i> (divine will).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint prayers with interfaith guests</li> <li>- Sermons on the wisdom of differences</li> </ul>	are not for conflict but for learning. This is a strong spiritual value.” (Kiai B)

Source: processed data (2026)

The table above outlines four dimensions of multicultural value integration found in Islamic boarding schools. The first dimension is the cultural dimension, where Islamic boarding schools recognize and appreciate cultural diversity through annual cultural festivals and the use of regional languages in the arts, so that students feel proud of their respective cultural identities. The second dimension is the social dimension, which is manifested through heterogeneous dormitory life with a system of mixing students from various regions in one room, as well as a "big brother" system that creates social bonds across groups. The third dimension is the intellectual dimension, where students are invited to learn critically about diversity through interactive discussions in class and seminars with interfaith speakers. The fourth dimension is the spiritual dimension, which provides a religious foundation by interpreting diversity as a *sunnatullah* willed by God, so that differences are not seen as threats but rather as blessings to be learned. These four dimensions work simultaneously and reinforce each other in the process of internalizing multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools.

### **Multicultural Value Transmission Mechanisms**

According to the analytical framework using Peter L. Berger's social construction theory, value transmission occurs through three dialectical moments: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Research at the Al-Ittihad Islamic Boarding School in Cianjur also identified the importance of a differentiated system and the role of student organizations in this process.

**Table 5.** Mechanisms for Transmission of Multicultural Values in Islamic Boarding Schools

<p><b>1. FORMAL CURRICULUM (EXTERNALIZATION)</b></p>	<p><b>INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF VALUES INTO THE STRUCTURE AND LEARNING MATERIALS.</b></p>	<p><b>MULTICULTURAL VALUES ARE INTEGRATED EXPLICITLY AND IMPLICITLY INTO SUBJECTS. RESEARCH AT PESANTREN MODERN UMMUL QURO BOGOR ALSO FOUND THAT TOLERANCE VALUES WERE CONVEYED IMPLICITLY THROUGH SEVERAL CLASSROOM SUBJECTS.</b></p>	<p><b>- ISLAMIC CREED &amp; ETHICS (AKIDAH AKHLAK): DISCUSSION ON MANNERS TOWARD NON-MUSLIM NEIGHBORS.</b></p> <p><b>- QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS (TAFSIR): VERSES ON HUMAN DIVERSITY.</b></p> <p><b>- ISLAMIC CULTURAL HISTORY: STORY OF THE MEDINA CHARTER.</b></p> <p><b>- INDONESIAN LANGUAGE: TEXTS ON PLURALISM.</b></p>
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<p><b>2. HIDDEN CURRICULUM (OBJECTIVATION)</b></p>	<p>Daily practices and routines that shape the objective reality within the pesantren.</p>	<p>Communal life, equality rules, and the exemplary role of the <i>kiai</i> create a shared reality experienced by all students. As found in research on group cohesiveness at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah, favorable attitudes such as acceptance, support, and mutual help are formed through daily interactions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Room assignments: Mixed regional backgrounds .</li> <li>- Shared chores: All students take turns without exception.</li> <li>- Communal meals: Same menu, same place.</li> <li>- Unifying language: Use of Indonesian and Arabic as lingua franca.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. CULTURAL PRACTICES (INTERNALIZATION)</b></p>	<p>Activities that allow values to be absorbed into students' consciousness.</p>	<p>Routine and incidental activities actively involve students in cross-cultural interactions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interfaith Dialogue: Students visit houses of worship of other religions.</li> <li>- Social Service: Students help disaster victims regardless of religion.</li> <li>- National Day Celebrations : Independence Day ceremony and competitions on August 17th.</li> </ul>

Source: processed data (2026)

Using Peter L. Berger's social construction theory framework, the table above identifies three mechanisms for the transmission of multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools. The first mechanism is the formal curriculum, which serves as a moment of externalization, where multicultural values are explicitly and implicitly integrated into subjects such as Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic Creed), Tafsir (Islamic Tafsir), and the History of Islamic Culture. The second mechanism is the hidden curriculum, which serves as a moment of objectification, where daily practices and routines such as shared room assignments, shared duty, and shared meals create an objective reality shared by all students. The third mechanism is cultural practices, which serve as a moment of internalization, where activities such as interfaith dialogue, community service, and commemoration of national holidays enable these values to be absorbed into the students' consciousness. These three mechanisms operate dialectically and continuously, forming a robust cycle of value construction within the Islamic boarding school environment.

### The Role of Kiai, Ustadz, and Student Organizations

This research found that key actors have specific roles in the value transmission process. This finding is reinforced by research at the Al-Ittihad Islamic Boarding School which shows that efforts to implement multicultural values are assisted by the Student Council through daily programs that shape tolerant characters.

**Table 6.** The Role of Actors in the Transmission of Multicultural Values

ACTOR	MAIN ROLE	STRATEGIES USED	IMPACT ON STUDENTS
<b>KIAI</b>	Provider of authority and legitimacy of values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular sermons and advice</li> <li>- Direct role modeling in daily attitudes</li> <li>- Decisions that reconcile differences</li> </ul>	Students regard the <i>kiai</i> as a role model; his words are considered final and binding.
<b>USTADZ/USTADZAH (TEACHERS)</b>	Facilitators of learning and daily guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interactive classroom discussions</li> <li>- Personal approach to troubled students</li> <li>- Differentiated system</li> </ul>	Students feel close and open to asking questions; teachers act as a bridge between <i>kiai</i> and students.
<b>STUDENT COUNCIL/STUDENTS</b>	Peer-to-peer agents and program implementers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Santui" program (students visiting each other)</li> <li>- Cross-cultural arts activities</li> </ul>	Values are more easily accepted because they come from peers; programs run more participatively.

		- Student discussion forums	
<b>ALUMNI</b>	Value ambassadors and connectors with society	- Giving lectures at pesantren - Building networks with external institutions	Students see real evidence of how values are applied in society.

Source: processed data (2026)

The table above outlines the specific roles of each actor in the process of transmitting multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools. The kiai (Islamic boarding school) acts as the authority and legitimator of values through regular lectures, direct role models in daily behavior, and decisions that reconcile differences, so that the kiai's words are considered final and binding by all students. The ustadz (Islamic teacher) acts as a learning facilitator and daily mentor, accompanying students through interactive class discussions and personal approaches, thus acting as a bridge between the kiai and students. The student council (OSIS) or student organization acts as a peer-to-peer agent, running programs such as "Santui" (Santri Mutual Visits) and student discussion forums, which enable values to be more easily accepted because they originate from peers. Meanwhile, alumni act as value ambassadors, providing concrete evidence of how multicultural values are applied in society, while also acting as a bridge for collaboration between the Islamic boarding school and external institutions.

### Cultural Practices and Social Cohesion

Analysis using Émile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity shows that cultural practices in Islamic boarding schools function as mechanisms for building organic solidarity amidst diversity. Research at the Kauman Lasem Islamic Boarding School also found that multicultural values can be taught through both formal pedagogical and informal sociological means to maintain harmony in a multicultural society.

**Table 7.** Cultural Practices and Their Functions for Social Cohesion

<b>CULTURAL PRACTICE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>ACTORS INVOLVED</b>	<b>SOCIAL FUNCTION (DURKHEIM'S PERSPECTIVE)</b>	<b>IMPACT ON SOCIAL COHESION</b>
<b>GOTONG ROYONG (COLLECTIVE WORK)</b>	Weekly	All students, teachers, surrounding community	Strengthens mechanical solidarity through shared activities; creates collective consciousness.	Increases sense of belonging to pesantren and community; reduces

<b>COMMEMORATION OF NATIONAL HOLIDAYS</b>	Annually (Independence Day, Heroes' Day)	Students, teachers, community leaders, village officials	Creates shared rituals that reinforce national identity above particular identities.	group exclusivity. Fosters nationalism and commitment to Indonesia as a common home.
<b>INTERFAITH AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE</b>	Monthly or occasional	Selected students, non-Muslim religious leaders, Chinese community	Facilitates interaction among different groups; reduces prejudice through direct contact.	Promotes active tolerance; students not only practice passive tolerance but also gain understanding of other beliefs.
<b>NUSANTARA CULTURAL FESTIVAL</b>	Annually	Student representatives from regions, teachers, community	Celebrates diversity as collective wealth; provides space for cultural identity expression.	Builds pride in one's own culture while appreciating others.
<b>RELIGIOUS STUDY CIRCLES (PENGAJIAN AND MAJELIS TAKLIM)</b>	Weekly	Students, teachers, kiai	Transmission of moral and social values through classical texts.	Establishes theological foundations for peaceful coexistence.

Source: processed data (2026)

Using the perspective of Émile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity, the table above analyzes the social functions of various cultural practices in Islamic boarding schools. Weekly mutual cooperation (gotong royong), or community service, serves to strengthen mechanical solidarity through shared activities, creating a collective consciousness that reduces group exclusivity. Annual commemorations of national holidays serve to create shared rituals that strengthen national identity above particular identities, thereby fostering nationalism and commitment to the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Monthly interfaith and intercultural dialogues facilitate interaction between diverse groups, reduce prejudice through direct contact, and foster active tolerance. Annual Nusantara cultural festivals celebrate diversity as a richness, providing a space

for the expression of cultural identity while fostering an appreciation for other cultures. Meanwhile, weekly religious study groups (pengajian) and majelis taklim (Islamic study groups) serve to build a theological foundation for peaceful coexistence through the transmission of moral and social values from classical texts.

### **The Impact of Value Transmission on Social Cohesion**

This study identifies the impact of multicultural value transmission on social cohesion, both within Islamic boarding schools and within the community. This finding is reinforced by research at the Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School which shows the impact in the form of tolerant, inclusive attitudes, respect for the nation's cultural diversity, as well as efforts to promote multicultural values and religious moderation outside the Islamic boarding school.

**Table 8.** Impact of Multicultural Value Transmission on Social Cohesion

<b>LEVEL OF IMPACT</b>	<b>INDICATORS OF SOCIAL COHESION</b>	<b>EMPIRICAL FINDINGS</b>	<b>INFORMANT QUOTE</b>
<b>WITHIN THE PESANTREN</b>	- Low incidence of ethnic/religious conflict - Friendships formed across regions - Participation in joint activities	Almost no horizontal conflict among students of different backgrounds. If disputes arise, they are quickly resolved in a familial manner.	“I used to be afraid of Papuan students, the stereotype was that they were tough. But after sharing a room for a year, he became my best friend. We learned each other’s language and culture.” (Student A, Java)
	- Mutual trust - Willingness to sacrifice for friends	Students lend money, share food, and care for each other when sick, regardless of origin.	“I once fell ill, and my roommates from Sumatra and Sulawesi took turns caring for me and bringing food. I felt like I had a new family here.” (Student B, Papua)
<b>EXTERNAL (SURROUNDING COMMUNITY)</b>	- Participation in community social activities	Students actively join communal work, public religious gatherings, and national celebrations in the surrounding community.	“Whenever there’s a village event, students always join. They help with tents, food, anything. The community is happy and feels the pesantren is part of

			us.” (Community Leader, Village A)
	- Harmonious relations with non-Muslim neighbors	Pesantren actively builds communication and cooperation with nearby non-Muslim communities. Findings at Pesantren Kauman Lasem show that implementing multicultural values initially drew mixed reactions, but ultimately succeeded in maintaining harmony with the predominantly non-Muslim community.	“Every Christmas, we receive cakes from the pesantren. At Eid, we send gifts back. We also invite students to help clean the church before Easter. This has been a tradition for generations.” (Non-Muslim Religious Leader, Village C)
<b>LONG-TERM (ALUMNI)</b>	- Alumni active in interfaith organizations - Alumni promote religious moderation - Alumni run businesses with partners of different faiths	Many alumni become peace figures in their communities, join the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB), or run businesses with non-Muslim partners.	“After graduation, I joined an interfaith community. I realized that the lessons on tolerance from pesantren are truly needed in real life.” (Alumnus A, peace activist)

Source: processed data (2026)

The table above illustrates the impact of the transmission of multicultural values on social cohesion at three different levels. At the internal level of Islamic boarding schools, visible impacts include reduced levels of ethnicity-based conflict, the formation of cross-regional friendships, and the growth of mutual trust and a willingness to sacrifice for friends from different backgrounds. At the external level, within the surrounding community, the impact is manifested in the active participation of students in social activities and the establishment of harmonious relationships with non-Muslim neighbors, where the Islamic boarding school and surrounding communities visit each other and exchange gifts on religious holidays. Long-term, alumni of Islamic boarding schools become active peacemakers in interfaith organizations such as the FKUB (Religious Forum for Religious Development), promoting religious moderation in their communities, and establishing business partnerships with partners from different religious backgrounds. These findings indicate that the impact of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools is not only felt during the students' time at the school but also continues into society.

## Challenges and Obstacles

Despite success in many aspects, this study also identified challenges in implementing multicultural values. These findings align with research at the Ummul Quro Modern Islamic Boarding School in Bogor, which identified obstacles such as the long time it takes to understand different characters, a lack of understanding of the meaning of tolerance among some students, and a lack of awareness of its importance. Research on student group cohesion also identified obstacles such as competition, conflict, dominance, difficulty adjusting, and physical exhaustion.

**Table 9.** Challenges and Obstacles to Implementing Multicultural Values

<b>CATEGORY OF BARRIER</b>	<b>SPECIFIC BARRIER</b>	<b>CAUSE</b>	<b>STRATEGY TO OVERCOME</b>
<b>CULTURAL BARRIER</b>	Stereotypes and initial prejudice among students	Lack of prior experience interacting with other cultures before entering pesantren	Orientation programs and cultural introduction; mixing dorm rooms from the start
<b>STRUCTURAL BARRIER</b>	Lack of formal policy on multicultural education	National curriculum has not explicitly integrated multicultural values	Independent pesantren initiatives through flagship programs and external collaborations
<b>INDIVIDUAL BARRIER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulty adapting to new peers</li> <li>- Group exclusivity based on region</li> <li>- Physical fatigue due to busy schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language and habit differences</li> <li>- Tendency to cluster with similar peers</li> <li>- Heavy pesantren workload</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychological mentoring by teachers</li> <li>- Formation of mixed groups</li> <li>- Proper time management and rest</li> </ul>
<b>EXTERNAL BARRIER</b>	Pressure from conservative groups outside pesantren	Certain groups reject interfaith dialogue, viewing it as syncretism	Strengthening theological foundations; clarifying that tolerance is part of Islamic teaching, not a compromise of faith
<b>TIME BARRIER</b>	Long process required to understand different characters	High diversity demands extended adaptation	Patience and consistency in guidance; personal approach by teachers

Source: processed data (2026)

Although generally successful, the implementation of multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools is not without challenges and obstacles, as outlined in the table above.

Cultural obstacles arise in the form of stereotypes and initial prejudices among students due to a lack of experience interacting with other cultures before entering the boarding school. Structural obstacles stem from the suboptimal formal policy on multicultural education in the national curriculum. Individual obstacles include difficulty adapting to new friends, the tendency to form exclusive groups based on region of origin, and physical exhaustion due to the density of Islamic boarding school activities. External obstacles come from pressure from conservative groups outside the boarding school who reject interfaith dialogue and consider it a form of syncretism. In addition, time constraints are also an obstacle because understanding different characters requires a long adaptation process. To overcome these obstacles, Islamic boarding schools develop strategies such as cultural orientation programs, early room mixing, strengthening theological foundations, psychological support from ustadz, and consistency and patience in coaching.

### **An Integrative Model of "MULTICULTURAL BOARDING SCHOOL"**

Based on all the findings above, this study formulates an integrative model of Islamic boarding schools in fostering social cohesion, which can be described as follows:

**Table 10.** Integrative Model of Islamic Boarding Schools in Fostering Social Cohesion

<b>Component</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>Theoretical Implications</b>	<b>Practical Implications</b>
<b>Theological Foundation</b>	Multicultural values are rooted in classical texts ( <i>kitab kuning</i> ) such as <i>tasamuh</i> (tolerance), <i>ta'awun</i> (cooperation), and <i>'adalah</i> (justice).	Reinforces the argument that Islam is a religion supportive of diversity ( <i>rahmatan lil 'alamin</i> ).	Pesantren can use <i>kitab kuning</i> as a primary source for multicultural education, not only for jurisprudence and creed.
<b>Transmission Mechanisms</b>	Transmission occurs through formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, and cultural practices.	Confirms Berger's theory of social construction: values are constructed through daily interaction and legitimized by authority.	Multicultural education cannot rely solely on classroom learning; it must be supported by environment and role models.
<b>Key Actors</b>	<i>Kiai</i> , teachers, student leaders, and alumni play different but complementary roles.	Enriches Putnam's theory of social capital: pesantren's social networks create both bonding and bridging ties.	Strengthening the capacity of all actors is necessary for program sustainability.
<b>Flagship Practices</b>	Collective work ( <i>gotong royong</i> ), interfaith dialogue, cultural	Aligns with Durkheim's theory of organic solidarity: shared rituals create	These practices can be replicated in other pesantren as best practices.

Component	Key Findings	Theoretical Implications	Practical Implications
Impact	festivals, national day commemorations.	new collective consciousness.	
	- Internal: strong solidarity, low conflict	Demonstrates that Islamic education can foster social cohesion rather than conflict.	Government and stakeholders should support moderate pesantren as strategic partners in counter-radicalization.
	- External: harmony with surrounding communities		
	- Long-term: alumni as peace agents		

Source: processed data (2026)

Based on all research findings, the table above formulates an integrative model of Islamic boarding schools in fostering social cohesion, consisting of five main components. The first component is the theological foundation, where multicultural values are deeply rooted in classical texts such as the yellow books, proving that Islam is fundamentally a religion that is friendly to diversity. The second component is the transmission mechanism that occurs through the formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, and cultural practices, confirming Berger's social construction theory that values are constructed through daily interactions and legitimized by authority. The third component is key actors consisting of kiai, ustadz, santri administrators, and alumni with different but complementary roles, enriching Putnam's social capital theory of bonding and bridging. The fourth component is superior practices such as mutual cooperation, interfaith dialogue, and cultural festivals that function to create organic solidarity a la Durkheim. The fifth component is the proven impact at the internal, external, and long-term levels, proving that Islamic education can be a source of social cohesion, not conflict.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study identify six key multicultural values taught in Islamic boarding schools: *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'awun* (cooperation), *'adalah* (justice), *musawah* (equality), *shura* (deliberation), and nationalism, all of which are deeply rooted in classical Islamic texts or yellow books. This reinforces the argument of Muslim, Arroisi, Mohd Jan, and Ramazani (2024) that Islamic boarding school educational institutions are capable of combining knowledge production with universal Islamic values to negotiate negative stereotypes about religious institutions. These values are not only taught as dogma but also legitimized through the authority of the kiai (Islamic scholars) and texts believed to be pious. This finding aligns with the research of Syarnubi, Syarifuddin, and Sukirman (2023), which emphasizes that Islamic education curriculum design must systematically integrate multicultural values. Furthermore, Nazhifah (2025), in her multi-site study in Ponorogo, found that the internalization of the values of *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance) and *ta'āwun* (cooperation) in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) was carried out through the teaching of classical texts such as *Taisīr al-Khulāq* and *Adab al-'Ālim wa al-Muta'allim*, which instill patience, respect for differences, and openness to various social groups.

The existence of this solid theological foundation is the main difference between multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools and multicultural education in secular institutions. As Anton (2024) noted, the implementation of multicultural Islamic religious education in Islamic boarding schools is based on the awareness that respecting differences is not merely a social requirement but an integral part of Islamic teachings itself. The kiai in this study explicitly referenced Qur'anic verses such as "Lakum dinukum waliyadin" (QS. Al-Kafirun) and "Inna akramakum 'indallahi atqakum" (QS. Al-Hujurat) as theological foundations for teaching tolerance and equality. Thus, pesantren do not need to choose between being religious institutions or agents of multiculturalism; both operate simultaneously and reinforce each other.

The findings of this study reveal that the transmission of multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools occurs through three interrelated mechanisms: the formal curriculum (externalization), the hidden curriculum (objectivation), and cultural practices (internalization). This pattern strongly confirms Peter L. Berger's theory of the social construction of reality, which has been tested in the Islamic boarding school context by various researchers. Research at the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School in Paiton, Probolinggo, for example, showed that the values of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity were constructed through the Sufi views of the kiai and conveyed through modeling in daily activities and unplanned events (UIN Sunan Ampel, n.d.). This process precisely illustrates what Berger calls objectivation, where the kiai's subjective values transform into an objective reality shared by all students.

The hidden curriculum has been shown to play a significant role in shaping the students' multicultural character. Imawan (2025) in his research at the Al-Istiqamah Modern Islamic Boarding School in Ngatabaru found that the implementation of the hidden curriculum was carried out through habituation, role models, the application of manners and ethics, social interactions in collective life, and the internalization of values through Islamic boarding school culture. The impacts include the formation of empathy, the promotion of coexistence in diversity, and making Islamic values the basis for decision-making in modern life. This finding is in line with the results of observations in the three Islamic boarding schools in this study, where the mixing of students from various regions in one room, a shared duty system, and equal communal life created a real experience of pluralism that is impossible to obtain only from textual learning in the classroom.

Meanwhile, the moment of internalization occurs when students not only understand multicultural values cognitively but also internalize them affectively and embody them in their daily behavior. Nazhifah (2025) illustrates this through her findings on the trans-internalization stage of the ta'aruf (getting to know each other) value. Students at the Darul Falah Islamic Boarding School in Sukorejo habitually greet and get to know one another, while at the Assyafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School in Durisawo, shaking hands and chatting with local residents become daily practices that strengthen social bonds.

The successful transmission of multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools is inseparable from the strategic roles of the actors who shape a conducive educational ecosystem. This research findings identify four key actors: kiai (Islamic clerics), ustadz (Islamic teachers), student administrators, and alumni, each with distinct yet complementary functions. This aligns with Anton's (2024) findings, which emphasize that asatidz (Islamic teachers) play a crucial role as agents of transformation in instilling multicultural values in students, not only through teaching but also by exemplifying respect for differences and living harmoniously within diversity.

Kiai occupy a central position as providers of authority and legitimacy for values. Taufiq (in a research poster from UIN Syarif Hidayatullah) examines how kiai leadership is a key factor in guiding Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in the face of globalization. The kiai serves not only as a spiritual leader but also as an agent of change capable of bridging traditional pesantren values with global demands. In the context of multicultural education, the kiai's decision to open interfaith dialogue, welcome guests from various religious backgrounds, or instruct his students to participate in social activities serves as a strong signal that legitimizes multicultural practices within the pesantren environment.

The role of Islamic boarding school (pesantren) organizations as peer-to-peer agents has also proven highly effective. Muslim et al. (2024) found that Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are able to integrate universal Islamic knowledge and values to produce open-minded and globally oriented graduates. This process is facilitated by programs designed and implemented by the students themselves, such as discussion forums, cross-cultural arts activities, and visits to diverse communities. These findings are reinforced by Saefudin, Arif, Karwadi, and Paduka (2025), who identified that prejudice reduction can be achieved by accommodating differences and implementing a pedagogy of equality through dialogue and cultural engagement.

Cultural practices in Islamic boarding schools, such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), interfaith dialogue, cultural festivals, and commemorations of national holidays, have been shown to function as mechanisms for building social solidarity. Within Émile Durkheim's theoretical framework, these practices can be understood as shared rituals that create a new collective consciousness—an organic solidarity that combines Islamic identity with a commitment to nationalism. Research at the Attamimy Praya Islamic Boarding School (UIN Datokarama Palu, 2025) confirmed these findings by showing that the Islamic boarding school made significant adaptations by integrating tolerance values through the curriculum, daily practices, and building emotional relationships, despite facing challenges such as limited resources and public perception.

The regular interfaith dialogues held by the Islamic boarding schools in this study represent an innovative form of cultural practice that not only tolerates differences but also actively builds bridges of understanding. Saefudin et al. (2025), in their study of the Shia community in Jepara, found that multicultural Islamic education plays a crucial role in promoting the resilience of minority groups by integrating multicultural content into

the hidden curriculum, promoting moderate religious attitudes among teachers and students, and engaging in socio-religious activities. These findings demonstrate that inclusive cultural practices not only benefit the majority group but also provide a safe space for minority groups to express their identities.

The annual Nusantara cultural festival held at Islamic boarding schools serves as a space for affirming cultural identity amidst the process of Islamization, which is often assumed to be homogenous. Anton (2024) noted that multicultural education programs in Islamic boarding schools can be divided into daily, weekly, monthly, and annual programs. Through these programs, the values of tolerance, diversity, justice, and kinship are fostered, enabling students to live together peacefully despite differences and recognize the importance of diversity in society. This challenges the stereotype that Islamic boarding schools tend to be homogenous and anti-diversity; instead, they serve as social laboratories where diversity is celebrated as a richness.

The impact of transmitting multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools has been proven to extend beyond the physical boundaries of the institution, reaching the internal level of the school, externally with the surrounding community, and long-term through the role of alumni. Internally, the low level of ethnicity-based conflict and the formation of cross-regional friendships indicate the success of Islamic boarding schools in creating cohesive communities. Syarnubi et al. (2023) emphasized that appropriate curriculum design, including the integration of multicultural values, contributes significantly to the development of tolerant and inclusive student character.

Externally, the harmonious relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the surrounding non-Muslim community is clear evidence that multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools has a positive impact on broader social harmony. Nazhifah (2025) noted that the internalization of *tasāmuḥ* values through activities such as *megengan* (a tradition welcoming Ramadan) and *open-to-the-public sholawatan* (prayer offerings) creates a space for cultural acculturation and respect for local traditions, which in turn fosters a tolerant, open attitude among students, capable of coexisting with the surrounding community.

The long-term impact is evident in the role of alumni as agents of peace in their respective communities. Muslim et al. (2024) found that graduates of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) not only excel in academic and linguistic competencies but also possess a global orientation while remaining intensively involved in community volunteer activities. This suggests that the multicultural values instilled in Islamic boarding schools not only persist but also thrive as alumni interact with the wider community. This finding is reinforced by research at the Assalam Sungai Lilin Islamic Boarding School (Raden Fatah Journal, 2024), which demonstrated that improving alumni quality through the acceptance of diverse students, the dissemination of alumni benefits in the community through formal and informal channels, and ongoing integration into the Islamic education system are key factors in expanding the impact of multicultural education.

Despite its overall success, the implementation of multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools faces various challenges that need to be identified and addressed. This study identified cultural barriers (initial stereotypes among students), structural barriers (lack of formal policies), individual barriers (difficulty adapting), external barriers (pressure from conservative groups), and time constraints (a lengthy adaptation process). These findings align with research at the Assalam Sungai Lilin Islamic Boarding School (Raden Fatah Journal, 2024), which identified inhibiting factors as limited multicultural understanding, the need for increased intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and a limited understanding of the meaning of tolerance.

Interestingly, the Islamic boarding schools in this study did not remain silent in the face of these challenges. Strategies developed included strengthening theological foundations to counter narratives of exclusivism, cultural orientation programs for new students, psychological support from religious teachers (ustadz), and consistency and patience in guidance. Anton (2024) noted that the implementation of multicultural Islamic religious education in Islamic boarding schools began with an awareness of the difficulties new students face adapting to a culturally diverse environment. This awareness then became the starting point for designing more effective guidance strategies.

Research at the Attamimy Praya Islamic Boarding School (UIN Datokarama Palu, 2025) also confirmed that despite facing challenges such as limited resources, public perception, and infrastructure constraints, the Islamic boarding school was still able to make significant adaptations by integrating values of tolerance into the curriculum, daily practices, and building emotional connections. This demonstrates that a strong commitment from all elements of the Islamic boarding school, especially the kiai (Islamic scholars) as the highest authority, can overcome various structural and cultural barriers.

Based on the discussion above, this study proposes a synthesis that Islamic boarding schools function as unique laboratories for social cohesion, where multicultural values are not only taught but also lived out in daily life. The integrative model discovered in this study, which combines a solid theological foundation, multi-level transmission mechanisms, synergistic actor roles, inclusive cultural practices, and widespread impact, can serve as a reference for the development of multicultural education in other educational institutions. Muslim et al. (2024) assert that higher education institutions affiliated with Islamic boarding schools have proven their ability to prepare quality Indonesian human resources by combining knowledge production with universal Islamic values. This success, they argue, lies in the strategy of combining secular and religious competencies as a complementary dialogue, not as a conflicting dichotomy. The same principle applies at the Islamic boarding school level: multicultural education is not viewed as a secular addition, but as an integral part of the Islamic mission itself.

Saefudin et al. (2025) in their study on the resilience of minority communities concluded that academically, their research contributes to the development of an inclusive model of Islamic education for religious minorities. Socially, the research highlights the

importance of shared religious values in reducing sectarian tensions and promoting communal harmony. This research also offers a similar contribution: by empirically demonstrating how Islamic boarding schools foster social cohesion, it provides evidence that Islamic education, when managed with a moderate and inclusive vision, can be a major force in building a pluralistic and peaceful society.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to sociologically analyze the role of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia in fostering social cohesion through the transmission of multicultural values. Based on the findings and discussion presented, this study concludes that Islamic boarding schools have significant capacity as unique laboratories for social cohesion, where multicultural values are not only taught textually through the formal curriculum but also lived and experienced directly by students through the hidden curriculum and daily cultural practices. This success is rooted in the strong theological foundation of multicultural values derived from the yellow books and classical Islamic scholarly traditions, which provide religious legitimacy for the practices of tolerance, cooperation, justice, equality, deliberation, and nationalism within the Islamic boarding school environment.

The process of transmitting multicultural values in Islamic boarding schools occurs through three interrelated dialectical mechanisms, confirming Peter L. Berger's theory of social construction. First, externalization occurs when these values are institutionalized within the formal curriculum and institutional structure of the Islamic boarding school. Second, objectivation occurs through daily practices and a hidden curriculum that shape the objective reality shared by all students, such as heterogeneous dormitory life, the communal duty system, and the exemplary behavior of the *kiai*. Third, internalization occurs when students not only understand these values cognitively but also internalize them affectively and embody them in their daily behavior, both while at the Islamic boarding school and after becoming alumni in the community.

From the perspective of Émile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity, cultural practices in Islamic boarding schools, such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), interfaith dialogue, cultural festivals, and commemorations of national holidays, serve as shared rituals that create a new collective consciousness—an organic solidarity that harmoniously blends Islamic identity with national commitment. These practices not only strengthen internal bonds among students but also build social bridges with the diverse surrounding community, including non-Muslim communities.

The impact of this multicultural value transmission has been proven to extend across three levels. Internally, the *pesantren* fosters strong solidarity among students from diverse backgrounds, resulting in low levels of ethnicity-based conflict. Externally, harmonious relations are established between the *pesantren* and the surrounding community, including non-Muslim communities, as evidenced by the tradition of visiting each other and exchanging gifts on religious holidays. Long-term, alumni of the *pesantren* become agents of peace, actively promoting religious moderation and participating in interfaith

harmony forums within their respective communities. Despite facing various challenges, including cultural, structural, individual, external, and time constraints, Islamic boarding schools have been able to develop effective adaptive strategies thanks to the strong commitment of all elements, especially the visionary and moderate leadership of the kiai (Islamic scholars).

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