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ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS' STRATEGIES TOWARDS INSTILLING MULTICULTURAL VALUES OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS 3 PALOPO

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the need to nurture multicultural values in increasingly diverse school environments. At SMP Negeri 3 Palopo, where students represent varied ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are central in fostering tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect. The research aims to explore and interpret the teachers' strategies to embed multicultural values and reveal the meanings attached to their practices. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, participants—comprising PAI teachers, students, and school leaders—were selected purposively. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document review, and then analyzed thematically with triangulation and member checking to ensure validity. Findings identify three interrelated strategies: integrating multicultural values into lesson content, applying interactive and participatory teaching methods, and consistently modeling inclusive behaviors in daily school life. These strategies mutually reinforce one another, shaping students' knowledge, attitudes, and social skills and transforming multicultural principles into real-life practices. The study concludes that effective multicultural education blends curriculum integration, active pedagogy, and exemplary conduct. Theoretically, it extends culturally responsive teaching to religious education; practically, it offers actionable guidance for schools aiming to build inclusive, harmonious learning spaces.

Keywords: *multicultural education, Islamic Religious Education, teacher strategy, culturally responsive teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a social reality inherent in the life of the Indonesian nation. Since its inception, Indonesia has been known as a multicultural country with diverse ethnicities, languages, customs, and religions stretching from Sabang to Merauke. This situation, on the one hand, is a source of cultural wealth and the



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nation's collective identity, but on the other hand, it can cause social friction if not managed wisely¹ Diversity requires a learning strategy that can internalize multicultural values in education so students have an inclusive, tolerant, and respectful attitude² Islamic Religious Education (PAI), especially in schools with a pluralistic student composition such as SMP Negeri 3 Palopo, plays a strategic role in shaping a moderate thinking paradigm and avoiding the emergence of an exclusive attitude³ PAI teachers function as conveyors of Islamic teaching materials and facilitators of peaceful, egalitarian, and respectful social interaction based on respect for diversity⁴

Sociologically, the city of Palopo in South Sulawesi represents a miniature plural society with a mixture of Bugis, Toraja, Makassar, Javanese, and Chinese ethnicities, as well as adherents of Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, and Hinduism. This diversity is also reflected in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo, which naturally becomes a space for cross-identity interaction. This phenomenon, if not accompanied by effective multicultural learning, has the potential to cause social segregation or negative stereotypes⁵ Multicultural education theory emphasizes that learning must contain the dimension of recognizing cultural diversity, strengthening the value of pluralism without discrimination, and developing

¹ Badrun Badrun and others, 'Multiculturalism of Indonesia's Multireligious Communities: The Portrayal of Multicultural Competence and Its Contributing Factors', *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 2024, pp. 1–20, doi:10.17583/rimcis.14199; Chang-Yau Hoon, 'Putting Religion into Multiculturalism: Conceptualising Religious Multiculturalism in Indonesia', *Asian Studies Review*, 41.3 (2017), pp. 476–93, doi:10.1080/10357823.2017.1334761; Budi Setyono and Handoyo Puji Widodo, 'The Representation of Multicultural Values in the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture-Endorsed EFL Textbook: A Critical Discourse Analysis', *Intercultural Education*, 30.4 (2019), pp. 383–97, doi:10.1080/14675986.2019.1548102.

² Hamam Burhanuddin, Sahri, and Ahmad Nafi, 'Multicultural Islamic Education Values at Vocational Secondary School', *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 9.1 (2025), pp. 200–15, doi:10.35723/ajie.v9i1.39.

³ Mustamir Mustamir and Muhammad Tang, 'Integrating Multicultural Values in Islamic Religious Education: A Case Study in Junior High Schools', *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 17.1 (2025), pp. 105–15, doi:10.35445/alishlah.v17i1.6296; Putri Ayu Lestari, 'Educating for Tolerance: Multicultural Approaches in Islamic Religious Education', *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2.2 (2024), pp. 96–108, doi:10.61194/ijis.v2i2.602.

⁴ Ulumuddin Ulumuddin and others, 'Advancing Islamic Education: Fostering Multicultural Values through the Implementation of Islamic Religious Education', *JURNAL ISLAM NUSANTARA*, 7.1 (2023), p. 82, doi:10.33852/jurnalnu.v7i1.471.

⁵ Yunus Yunus, 'Education in Learning Religious Education in College Education in Palopo City', *Journal on Education*, 3.2 (2021), pp. 186–95, doi:10.31004/joe.v3i2.349.



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students' critical awareness of social issues related to differences ⁶ Thus, local contexts and multicultural theories become important epistemological foundations for this research.

Previous studies at the national and international levels have shown that PAI teachers play a central role in internalizing multicultural values through various pedagogical approaches. Research by Mahmud and colleagues (2025) found that the integration of the values of tolerance, solidarity, and democracy in PAI learning can be carried out through sociodrama methods and case studies, which are effective in fostering students' empathy ⁷ Another study by Arlina (2023) emphasizes inquiry and contextual learning strategies that trigger open thinking and reflective internalization of tolerance values ⁸ These findings confirm the relevance of teachers' strategies in designing multicultural learning.

However, most of these studies have limitations in terms of context and method. Most of them are in high school or vocational schools, while studies at the junior high school level, especially in Eastern Indonesia, such as Palopo, are still minimal. In addition, previous research tends to use a simple quantitative or descriptive approach, so it does not delve deeply into the meaning of teachers' experiences in multicultural learning processes ⁹ This is where the gap in this research lies, namely the need for qualitative exploration that focuses on the strategies of PAI teachers in the context of local pluralism of SMP Negeri 3 Palopo.

This gap is important to fill because a contextual understanding of teachers' experiences can provide richer practical insights for developing learning strategies. The qualitative approach allows researchers to capture the nuances of interaction, value negotiation, and adapting teachers to diversity in the classroom

⁶ Muhaemin Latif and Erwin Hafid, 'Multicultural Attitudes in an Islamic Boarding School of South Sulawesi – Indonesia', ed. by Luis Tinoca, *Cogent Education*, 8.1 (2021), doi:10.1080/2331186X.2021.1968736.

⁷ Abdullah Mahmud, Zamroni, and Hamim Ilyas, 'Islam and Tolerance Education for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)', *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 25.02 (2025), pp. 387–404, doi:10.23917/profetika.v25i02.8510.

⁸ Arlina Arlina and others, 'Strategi Inquiry Dalam Mengajarkan Toleransi Beragama Di SMP IT Aziziyah Binjai', *Dakwatussifa: Journal of Da'wah and Communication*, 2.2 (2023), pp. 92–102, doi:10.56146/dakwatussifa.v2i2.82.

⁹ Seong-A Choi and Jung-Hee Ha, 'A Phenomenological Study on Secondary Teachers' Experiences with Multicultural Education', *Multicultural Education Studies*, 18.1 (2025), pp. 53–86, doi:10.14328/MES.2025.3.31.53.



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in greater depth ¹⁰ In other words, the study not only identifies "what" strategies are used, but also "how" and "why" those strategies are chosen and implemented.

The novelty of this research lies in two main aspects. First, the original novelty focuses on SMP Negeri 3 Palopo, which has a very heterogeneous composition of students in the South Sulawesi region, so the social context is unique and different from most previous studies. Second, methodological novelty through qualitative approaches based on participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and thematic analysis is expected to naturally capture the reality of learning. Thus, this research will provide a new perspective on PAI's multicultural learning strategy.

In general, this research aims to understand in depth the strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling multicultural values in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. This goal aligns with efforts to realize inclusive education and foster social harmony in a pluralistic school environment ¹¹ This understanding is also expected to contribute theoretically to developing multicultural education studies in Indonesia.

In particular, this study aims to describe the forms of PAI teachers' strategies in instilling multicultural values, identifying the values instilled, and analyzing the challenges and obstacles teachers face in the process. The research questions asked include: (1) What is the strategy of PAI teachers in instilling multicultural values in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo? (2) What values are internalized through learning? (3) What obstacles are faced in the process of instilling value? The research is expected to produce a comprehensive and applicable understanding of Islamic religious education in a multicultural school environment through this focus.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, which seeks to understand the experience and meaning constructed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in instilling multicultural values in SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. The selection of this design is based on a research objective that emphasizes an in-depth exploration of the subject's perspective in a natural social context, so that the researcher can capture reality as perceived by

¹⁰ Craig Deed and others, 'Teacher Adaptation to Flexible Learning Environments', *Learning Environments Research*, 23.2 (2020), pp. 153–65, doi:10.1007/s10984-019-09302-0.

¹¹ Chima Abimbola Eden, Oyebola Olusola Ayeni, and Nneamaka Chisom Onyebuchi, 'Inclusive Curriculum Design: Meeting the Diverse Needs of Students for Social Improvement', *International Journal of Frontiers in Science and Technology Research*, 6.2 (2024), pp. 050–59, doi:10.53294/ijfstr.2024.6.2.0037.



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the educational actors directly¹² The research was carried out at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo, which was chosen because it has a pluralistic environment—both in terms of religion, ethnicity, and culture—but still maintains social harmony. Participants were selected by purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the PAI learning process and understanding of multiculturalism, including school principals, PAI teachers, education staff, and students from grades VII A and VIII A. The number of participants was adjusted to the principle of data saturation, where data collection was stopped when the information obtained was deemed adequate.

Data collection techniques include participatory observation, unstructured in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted to capture the class's behavior, interactions, and dynamics directly, while interviews allowed researchers to explore participants' views and reflections freely¹³ Documentation is used as complementary data that reinforces the findings, including school archives, teaching modules, and activity records. In qualitative research, researchers play the main instrument that directs the data collection, processing, and interpretation process, assisted by supporting instruments such as interview guidelines, observation sheets, recording tools, and field notes¹⁴ The research procedure was carried out iteratively through the stages of preparation, data collection, recording, transcription, and validation, including member checking to ensure the accuracy of the data obtained from participants.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Reduction is carried out by selecting relevant data, presenting it as thematic narratives, and drawing temporary conclusions until field evidence is strengthened. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources, comparing information from interviews, observations, and documents, and cross-confirmation between participants to avoid perception bias. This process is strengthened with trial audits and peer debriefing so that the analysis

¹² Allan Køster and Anthony Vincent Fernandez, 'Investigating Modes of Being in the World: An Introduction to Phenomenologically Grounded Qualitative Research', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 22.1 (2023), pp. 149–69, doi:10.1007/s11097-020-09723-w.

¹³ Marjolein de Boer and Kristin Zeiler, 'Qualitative Critical Phenomenology', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 2024, doi:10.1007/s11097-024-10034-7.

¹⁴ Brian Bantugan, 'Qualitative Mindset behind Phenomenology: Implications to Qualitative Research Training', *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, IX.IV (2025), pp. 4627–41, doi:10.47772/IJRIS.2025.90400331.



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remains transparent and accountable¹⁵ With the combination of these strategies, this research is expected to produce an authentic, meaningful, and valid picture of the strategies of PAI teachers in internalizing multicultural values in the school environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the strategy of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo in instilling multicultural values is realized through inclusive learning planning, the implementation of interaction-based learning, and character-oriented evaluations. Teachers use a contextual approach that links teaching materials to the social reality of diversity in the school environment. For example, tolerance is integrated into learning moral beliefs, while the discussion of mutual cooperation is framed through fiqh materials. This strategy aligns with the principle of culturally responsive teaching, which places students' backgrounds as the primary source of learning¹⁶ In addition, it was found that multicultural learning occurs in the classroom and through extracurricular activities and informal interactions between students.

Furthermore, the study found that PAI teachers not only play the role of facilitators of material, but also as role models of multicultural behavior. Teachers consistently respect differences, provide equal opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to participate, and build warm communication with the entire school community. This approach is in line with Pavlova's (2020) research, which confirms that the success of multicultural education in schools is greatly influenced by the role models of educators¹⁷ Implementing this strategy at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo creates a conducive and harmonious learning environment.

The data coding analysis produced three main themes that represent the PAI teachers' strategy, namely: (1) Integration of Multicultural Values in Teaching Materials, (2) Interactive and Participatory Approaches, and (3)

¹⁵ Lesley Eleanor Tomaszewski, Jill Zarestky, and Elsa Gonzalez, 'Planning Qualitative Research: Design and Decision Making for New Researchers', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19 (2020), doi:10.1177/1609406920967174; Heath Williams, 'The Meaning of "Phenomenology": Qualitative and Philosophical Phenomenological Research Methods', *The Qualitative Report*, 2021, doi:10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4587.

¹⁶ Ayush Mehta, 'Culturally Responsive Teaching: Bridging the Achievement Gap', *Global International Research Thoughts*, 12.1 (2024), pp. 49–54, doi:10.36676/girt.v12.i1.112.

¹⁷ Svetlana A. Pavlova, 'Preparation of a Multicultural Teacher at a University', 2020, pp. 1959–68, doi:10.3897/ap.2.e1959.



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Habituation and Behavior Examples¹⁸ The first theme includes teachers' efforts to relate PAI concepts to the reality of school diversity, for example, through case studies and cross-cultural discussions. The second theme emphasizes learning methods that involve active student participation, such as debates, role plays, and group discussions. The third theme describes teachers' consistency in applying multicultural values through daily behavior, both inside and outside the classroom, which has a strong influence on the formation of student attitudes¹⁹

Each theme has a more specific subtheme. In the first theme, the subtheme includes preparing multicultural-based lesson plans and using contextual learning resources. The second theme includes project-based learning that involves collaboration between students from different backgrounds. Meanwhile, the third theme has a subtheme of rewarding tolerant behavior and handling conflicts between students through mediation. This thematic structure reflects the synergistic relationship between formal learning, social interaction, and multicultural school culture²⁰

Participant citations reinforce these findings. A PAI (G1) teacher stated: "We always associate the material with the reality of diversity in school, so that students understand that the value of religion is not only a theory, but also a way of coexistence." Meanwhile, the student (S3) said: "When learning about help-help, the teacher gave examples of interfaith activities in the school environment, so we understood and appreciated the differences better." The statement emphasizes that multicultural values are internalized through material relevance and exemplary teacher behavior²¹

¹⁸ Farid Haluti, Anik Mufarrihah, and Nimim, 'ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHER STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING STUDENT CHARACTER EDUCATION', *JURNAL PENDIDIKAN GLASSER*, 8.1 (2024), pp. 151–61, doi:10.32529/glasser.v8i1.3265.

¹⁹ Sri Wahyuni and Sanchita Bhattacharya, 'Strategy of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Increasing Student Learning Motivation', *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education*, 2.2 (2021), pp. 229–49, doi:10.31538/tijie.v2i2.22; Nurbayani Nurbayani and Amiruddin Amiruddin, 'Teacher Strategies in Implementing Religious Moderation Values in Islamic Educational Institutions', *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 8.2 (2024), p. 778, doi:10.35723/ajie.v8i2.672.

²⁰ Katarína Vanková, 'Discriminatory Practices in School Environment and Their Elimination Through School Mediation in Slovakia', *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH*, 15 (2020), pp. 62–72, doi:10.24297/jssr.v15i.8634; Lýdia Lešková and Lenka Haburajová Ilavská, 'Peer Mediation as a Means of Eliminating Conflict in the School Environment', *Journal of Education Culture and Society*, 14.1 (2023), pp. 161–84, doi:10.15503/jecs2023.1.161.184.

²¹ Ubadah Ubadah and others, 'The Process and Strategy of Internalizing the Value of Multicultural Education in Arabic Teaching', *British Journal of Education*, 10.6 (2022), pp. 46–55, doi:10.37745/bje.2013/vol10n6pp4655.



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Another quote from the Principal (KS) adds a dimension to the school's leadership: "We encourage all teachers, including PAI teachers, to be role models in the attitude of respecting differences, because that is what makes this school peaceful." While another student (S7) revealed: "We are free to express our opinions in class, not afraid of being wrong, because the teacher always responds positively." This testimony shows that the school environment supports the PAI teacher's strategy, thereby strengthening the process of internalizing multicultural values. Here is a tabulation of the relationships between themes:

Table 1. Relationship Between Themes and Subthemes of PAI Teacher Strategy

Main Theme	Subtopic	Form of Implementation	Impact on Students
Integration of Multicultural Values in Teaching Materials	multicultural-based lesson plans; Contextual learning resources	Relating PAI material to the reality of diversity in schools	Increased understanding and acceptance of differences
Interactive and Participatory Approach	Group discussions, Project-based learning	Collaboration between students from different backgrounds	Improve communication and empathy skills
Habituation and Behavior Examples	Awarding, Conflict mediation	Teachers become role models of tolerant attitudes	Inclusive behavior in everyday interactions

Table 1 shows the close relationship between learning strategies, the dimensions of teacher behavior, and their impact on the formation of student attitudes. Each central theme does not stand alone, but instead reinforces each other through a series of subthemes that focus on the process of internalizing multicultural values. For example, integrating multicultural values in teaching materials forms a student's cognitive foundation, which is then strengthened through an interactive approach to building social skills, and nurtured through habituation and exemplary teacher behavior. These findings indicate that effective multicultural education requires synergy between material planning, learning methods, and school daily practices²²

²² Arif Muzayin Shofwan, 'Multicultural Education Learning Methods for Early Childhood, Elementary School, and Middle School', *Journal of Education Method and Learning Strategy*, 3.02 (2025), pp. 222–37, doi:10.59653/jemls.v3i02.1557.



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Based on the relationship between themes and subthemes in Table 1, visualizations are needed to describe the logical flow of internalizing multicultural values. The following concept map is designed to show how the three main themes are interconnected, from integrative planning to the formation of inclusive student behaviors. This visualization maps linear relationships and shows the cyclical interconnectedness that is a hallmark of multicultural learning at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. Here is a visualization of the concept map.

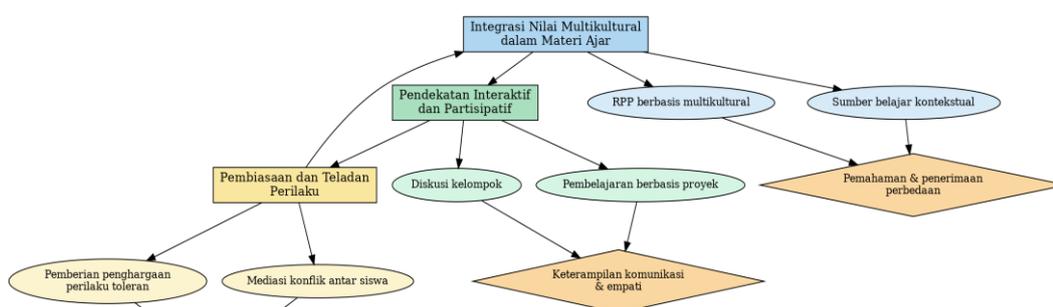


Figure 1. Concept Map of PAI Teachers' Strategies in Instilling Multicultural Values

The concept map above shows a cyclical relationship pattern, where each central theme reinforces and brings to life the other. Integrating multicultural values in teaching materials serves as an entrance to instill an initial understanding in students. This understanding is then deepened through an interactive approach that engages students in discussions, project collaborations, and reflective activities. Furthermore, the habituation and example of teacher behavior become a medium for internalizing values emotionally and affectively, so that these values are understood and lived in daily behavior. This pattern supports the findings of Farid and colleagues (2024) that effective multicultural education must involve cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in an integrated²³

In addition to showing the connection of the theme, this concept map also makes it clear that the strategies of PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo are adaptive to class dynamics and student backgrounds. Themes and subthemes not only run in sequence, but they can also replace each other or run in parallel as needed. For example, the habituation of tolerant behavior does not always wait for mature cognitive understanding, but can begin at the beginning of learning through concrete examples provided by the teacher. This adaptive approach

²³ Mujahidin Farid and others, 'Enhancing Cultural Inclusivity in Primary Schools: Insights from Springer Multicultural Education Data', *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 13.4 (2024), p. 2083, doi:10.11591/ijere.v13i4.27972.



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ensures that multicultural values not only become theoretical discourse but grow organically in the school environment through practices that are consistent and relevant to students' lives.

The findings of this study directly answer the research gap identified in the introduction, namely the lack of an in-depth study of the strategies of PAI teachers in the context of junior high schools with high diversity but harmonious social situations. Previous research has primarily been conducted on schools with homogeneous backgrounds or areas with potential conflicts, so they do not adequately describe the dynamics of multicultural value management in a conducive environment. The results of this study show that PAI teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo utilize the integration of values in learning planning, participatory methods, and examples to internalize a tolerant attitude in students. Thus, this study closes the gap by presenting in-depth descriptions based on real teacher experience, which has rarely been revealed in qualitative literature at the junior high school level (Banks & Banks, 2019).

In addition, this research contributes to understanding how multicultural strategies can be applied in large urban areas, international schools, and medium-scale cities such as Palopo²⁴ The discovery that teachers can combine inclusive material planning, learning techniques that embrace diversity, and everyday exemplary practices is evidence that multicultural education can run effectively in various geographical and social contexts²⁵ This finding also provides a renewed perspective that the existing social harmony is not a reason to ignore the cultivation of multicultural values, but instead becomes a capital to strengthen the sustainability of these values²⁶

When associated with James Banks' multicultural education theory, this study's results align with the concept of curriculum integration and the development of positive interactions between groups. Integrating multicultural values in teachers' planning and practice of learning at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo represents the application of content integration and prejudice reduction. This

²⁴ Sri Sundari and others, 'Building Multicultural Teams: Strategies and Challenges in Cross-Cultural Human Resource Management', *Jurnal Cakrawala Akademika*, 1.6 (2025), doi:10.70182/JCA.v1i6.5.

²⁵ Chinasa Iroabughichi Evurulobi, Adebukola Olufunke Dagunduro, and Olanike Abiola Ajuwon, 'A Review of Multicultural Communication Dynamics in the U.S.: Highlighting Challenges and Successful Strategies in a Diverse Society', *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 23.3 (2024), pp. 2204–19, doi:10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.3.2850.

²⁶ Teri A. Kirby, Marco Silva Rego, and Cheryl R. Kaiser, 'Colorblind and Multicultural Diversity Strategies Create Identity Management Pressure', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 50.6 (2020), pp. 1143–56, doi:10.1002/ejsp.2689.



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shows the compatibility between field findings and theory, where teachers play the role of facilitators who deliver material and facilitate healthy cross-identity interactions ²⁷.

Compared to previous research, such as that conducted by Halse (2022), this study found a similar pattern in using discussion methods and case studies to build multicultural awareness. However, the difference lies in consistently implementing strong exemplary strategies outside the classroom and using non-formal activities to instill value. The emphasis on habituating cross-cultural interaction in the school environment is a unique feature rarely highlighted in other studies at the junior high school level ²⁸

Contextually, these findings show that the local social and cultural factors of Palopo—which are thick with family values and cooperation—support the natural implementation of multicultural strategies. Teachers and students live in an environment where interfaith and tribal interactions are already part of everyday life, making multicultural learning more acceptable. This local culture that upholds harmony strengthens the internalization of the value of tolerance taught in the classroom, while minimizing resistance to diversity-related materials ²⁹

However, a harmonious environment also brings its challenges. There is a tendency for some parties to consider that multicultural education is no longer urgent, thus reducing the seriousness of developing innovative learning strategies. In this context, PAI teachers play a role in ensuring that the values of diversity are maintained and strengthened as a bulwark against social changes that can give rise to potential conflicts in the future ³⁰

Another challenge is the limitation of resources to enrich contextual learning media and methods. Although exemplary strategies and participatory

²⁷ Andrea Khalfaoui, Rocío García-Carrión, and Lourdes Villardón-Gallego, 'A Systematic Review of the Literature on Aspects Affecting Positive Classroom Climate in Multicultural Early Childhood Education', *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 49.1 (2021), pp. 71–81, doi:10.1007/s10643-020-01054-4; Moch. Yusuf Efendi and Hsi Nancy Lien, 'Implementation of Multicultural Education Cooperative Learning to Develop Character, Nationalism and Religious', *JOURNAL OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (JTLEE)*, 4.1 (2021), p. 20, doi:10.33578/jtlee.v4i1.7817.

²⁸ Christine Halse, 'Building a Collective Multicultural Consciousness', *Multicultural Education Review*, 14.1 (2022), pp. 1–12, doi:10.1080/2005615X.2022.2040144.

²⁹ Tri Susanto, 'Ethnography of Harmony: Local Traditions and Dynamics of Interfaith Tolerance in Nglinggi Village, Indonesia', *Asian Anthropology*, 24.2 (2025), pp. 146–50, doi:10.1080/1683478X.2024.2434988.

³⁰ Reno Dumilah, Yuliana Syahputri, and Azizah Hanum, 'Islamic Religious Education Teacher Strategies in Implementing Multicultural Values in Darurrahmah Sepadan Junior High School', *JASNA : Journal For Aswaja Studies*, 5.1 (2025), pp. 117–32, doi:10.34001/jasna.v5i1.7759.



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methods have been working well, the development of more creative teaching tools, such as technology-based simulations, is still minimal. The theoretical implication of these findings is the need to expand the dimension of multicultural education not only on aspects of social interaction, but also on the adaptation of educational technology to adapt to the development of the current generation of students ³¹

Practically, the results of this study provide a foothold for teachers, principals, and policymakers to design training programs that integrate curriculum dimensions, participatory methods, and the habituation of multicultural values outside the classroom. The model found in this study can be used as a reference to develop inclusive PAI learning guidelines in other multicultural schools, both in areas with high and medium levels of diversity ³²

The contribution of this research lies in strengthening the multicultural education theory through empirical evidence that social harmony can be a strategic capital to instill the value of diversity sustainably. At the practical level, this study offers an integrative model between planning, participatory methods, and exemplars that can be replicated in schools with similar characteristics. In the policy realm, the results of this research can encourage local and central governments to develop education policies that are not only reactive to conflict but also proactive in maintaining and developing existing social harmony ³³

To clarify the relationship between the research gaps identified in the introduction, the main findings obtained, the theories that are the foundations, and the contribution to previous research and education policy, it is important to present the synthesis in the form of a table. This table is expected to help readers see the logical relationship between the research focus, the field results, and their implications concisely but thoroughly. With this format, every aspect of the discussion previously explained narratively can be understood more quickly without losing the depth of the analysis.

³¹ Ruslan Kravets and others, 'Pedagogical Design of the Technology of Students' Multicultural Competence at Higher Education Institutions', *Journal of Education Culture and Society*, 12.2 (2021), pp. 264–93, doi:10.15503/jecs2021.2.264.293.

³² Nurul Iman and others, 'Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Inclusive Schools in Indonesia', *Journal of Research in Education and Pedagogy*, 2.1 (2025), pp. 73–81, doi:10.70232/jrep.v2i1.24.

³³ Alberto Ciferri and Cinzia Bongianni, 'Balancing Well-Being and Social Harmony. An Interdisciplinary Educational Approach', *Journal of Education and Development*, 8.3 (2024), p. 16, doi:10.20849/jed.v8i3.1437.



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Table 2. Synthesis of Research Gap Relationships, Findings, Theories, Previous Research, and Contributions

Component	Synthesis Description
Research Gap	Lack of qualitative studies at the junior high school level in a harmonious multicultural environment; the meaning and experience of PAI teachers have not been explored in depth.
Research Findings	Three main strategies: integration of values in learning planning, participatory and contextual methods, and exemplification through formal and non-formal interactions.
Relevance to Theory	This aligns with James Banks' multicultural education theory (<i>dimension of content integration & prejudice reduction</i>) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay).
Comparison with Previous Research	In line with Halse (2022) regarding the discussion/case study method, there is a difference in emphasis on habituation of cross-cultural interaction and strengthening values through non-formal activities.
Theoretical Contributions	Strengthening the theoretical framework that social harmony can be a strategic capital in multicultural education.
Practical Contribution	Offer an integrative model of PAI learning strategies that can be replicated in multicultural schools in various regions.
Policy Contributions	Encourage proactive education policies to maintain social harmony through multicultural-based PAI learning programs.

The synthesis in the table above shows that this research has succeeded in filling the literary gap while strengthening the multicultural education theory with empirical evidence from the unique context of SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. The field findings not only underscore the relevance of Banks and Gay's theories in local practice, but also demonstrate innovations in the integration of exemplary and non-formal activities as a strategic part of learning. The connection between research gaps, empirical results, and practical contributions shows that multicultural education does not have to be born from conflict situations, but can develop optimally in harmonious conditions. This is an important message for



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curriculum developers and policymakers to view social harmony not as a static condition, but as a dynamic resource that needs to be nurtured through inclusive and contextual education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research, the strategy of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo in instilling multicultural values is realized through the integration of diversity values in teaching materials, the application of an interactive approach that facilitates active student involvement, and the habituation of tolerant behavior through teacher examples. These three strategies complement each other in shaping students' cognitive understanding, affective attitudes, and social skills, so multicultural education is a theoretical concept and a real practice that shapes character. The meaning of these findings confirms that PAI learning can be a space for the formation of a harmonious social identity if it is designed contextually, participatory, and based on real examples from educators.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in strengthening the concept of culturally responsive teaching in the context of religious education, showing that the principles of cultural responsiveness can be implemented effectively in high schools with religious and cultural diversity. Practically, the results provide strategic guidance for teachers, principals, and policymakers to design learning that focuses on knowledge transfer and the formation of inclusive social attitudes. These findings can serve as a reference for other schools facing similar challenges in managing diversity and serve as a foothold for developing teacher training programs that emphasize multicultural education as a core competency.

In the future, the results of this research will be relevant to developing a harmonious school culture amid the social and cultural complexity of modern society. Similar strategies can be applied to other subjects, extending their positive impact on the school climate. Further research is suggested to explore the role of parents and local communities in supporting multicultural education, thereby creating a continuity of values between the school and home environment. For education practitioners, it is recommended that teacher training in cross-cultural dialogue facilitation techniques be strengthened, and proactive school policies should be developed in response to diversity dynamics. Thus, this research's results contribute academically and offer concrete directions for a more inclusive educational transformation.



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