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BUILDING CHARACTER: the Inclusiveness of Character Education In Islamic Boarding Schools

Zamharil,¹ Yek Amin Aziz,² Ahlan³

¹²³Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram

Jl. Gajah Mada No. 100 Jempong Baru Mataram,

230406032.mhs@uinmataram.ac.id

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Abstract

Islamic boarding schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, have an important role in character building of the younger generation. The background of this study is to explore how pesantren implement inclusive and multicultural educational characters amidst the increasing need for tolerance and diversity in society. This study aims to analyse the role of pesantren in teaching multicultural values as well as the challenges faced in the process. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analyses in several Islamic boarding schools that have implemented multicultural education. The focus of the research is on the application of multicultural values such as tolerance, justice, empathy, respect for equality, and equality in education and daily social interactions in pesantren. The results showed that the pesantren have integrated multicultural character education through various programs, such as interfaith dialogue, cross-cultural social activities, and a curriculum that includes knowledge about religious and cultural diversity. The main values taught in pesantren include tolerance, cooperation, mutual respect, and social justice. Santris are taught to appreciate differences and live in harmony with others, regardless of religious or cultural backgrounds. However, challenges such as resistance to change and the influence of globalisation remain obstacles. In conclusion, multicultural education in pesantren plays a significant role in forming a generation that is inclusive and has a strong character, ready to face poverty and global challenges.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Building multicultural character has become an important topic and issue in the world of education today, the diversity that Indonesia has as a country with the motto *bhineka tunggal ika* (different but still one) demands innovation in the character building of its citizens. In the face of increasing ethnic and religious diversity in many regions, there is an urgent need to rethink educational approaches to foster greater understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. (Warsah, 2017, p. 209) The idea of inclusiveness in education can be one solution that provides education about the principles of living in a multicultural society. In addition, a deep understanding from an early age of inclusiveness can be applied thoroughly in educational institutions at every level, including Islamic boarding schools.

Islamic boarding schools play an important role in shaping the character and values of Muslim students in Indonesia. The institution has a long-standing tradition of integrating Islamic teachings with diverse educational approaches, creating a pluralistic environment for character development. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (DEPAG RI) defines Islamic boarding schools as centres of Islamic education where there is interaction between scholars (*kiai*) and students (*santri*), usually taking place in a mosque or dormitory hall. (Sugiharto, Japar, & Kesuma, 2020, p. 270). *Pesantren* is not only a place to study religion, but also serves as a centre for the transmission of cultural values and the development of *santri* character. The strategic role of *pesantren* in the nation's development in the future is expected to continue to increase, as evidenced by the increasing interest of the community to entrust their children's education to this institution. (Misdah, 2020, p. 378). However, the traditional focus of *pesantren* on religious instruction alone sometimes results in a narrow perspective that fails to prepare students to face the realities of a diverse and globalised world. (Buhori, Sujiarto, Nurjaman, & Khori, 2022, p. 1863). To overcome this problem, *pesantren* must actively foster the spirit of national unity and inclusiveness, and minimise the spread of deviant ideas that can endanger the life of the nation. (Misdah, 2020, p. 380)

In the dynamic nuances of contemporary education, the role of Islamic boarding schools in developing multicultural understanding has taken a big part in overcoming the ethnic and religious diversity that develops in modern society. (Mursyidi, Helmi, Musbani, Nufus, & Faisal, 2019, p. 233) Based on research conducted by Achmad Yusuf, that Islamic boarding schools play a significant role in the process of inclusive character building in each learner to see the plural patterns of life, this is reflected in the lives of students from diverse backgrounds, ethnicity, language, race and social status are placed in a multicultural environment (Yusuf, 2019, p. 9). Also in the research conducted by Kurniawan and Marzuki, one of the things that must exist in pesantren is civic education in guiding multicultural citizenship characters in pesantren. In addition, pesantren culture also plays an important role in guiding multicultural citizenship character by emphasising compliance with rules, equality through uniforms, role models, and extracurricular activities (Kurniawan & Marzuki, 2021, p. 198). Also in the article written by Yusuf, multicultural education has been identified as an important factor in shaping the character of santri, as seen in Pondok Pesantren Buntet. The implementation of inclusive curricula and programmes is known to increase understanding and tolerance of cultural and religious diversity. (M. Yusuf, 2023, p. 136) In the end, character education is needed in building an attitude of tolerance in appreciating differences. Meanwhile, an open view or inclusiveness elaborated in character education can be a bridge that can lead santri towards multicultural character in today's global era, both when in pesantren and in real life in society.

B. METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods, this qualitative research was chosen because it is suitable for exploring research that demands a more detailed description of the results. While the approach in this research uses case studies, this approach is used because it is suitable for exploring the uniqueness of an existing case. The data in this research comes from two sources, namely: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources in this study are data obtained from observations and interviews with teachers and

students in pesantren. While the secondary data that will be used in this study is literature consisting of journals, books, theses and others that have a relationship with the research study. After the data is collected, researchers use data analysis techniques according to miles, huberman and saldana. This analysis involves the process of data condensation, data reduction and conclusion drawing. (Dasarja, 2023, p. 1760) This research will answer the research questions, how is the importance of an inclusive mindset in character education in pesantren, and how does pesantren play a role in producing students with multicultural characters? Before the research process is completed, it is better for a research to end by checking the validity of existing data. In this study, checking the validity of the data was carried out using the technique of extending the presence of researchers, triangulation (sources, methods and theories) and reference adequacy. Triangulation is a data validity checking technique that utilises something other than the data for the purpose of checking or comparing the data. (Moleong, 2014, p. 330).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An Overview of Multicultural Character in an Islamic Boarding School Setting

In the large dictionary of the Indonesian language, multicultural is defined as culturally diverse. ("Arti kata multikultural - Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) Online," t.t.) Multicultural is the nature of cultural diversity or a society consisting of people of different nationalities and cultures. In everyday life, a multicultural society is also known as a pluralistic society. In the world of education, multicultural is an important approach in shaping the character of a nation that respects diversity. Its implementation in schools includes self-development, integration in subjects, and school culture. (Hasanah, 2018, p. 36)

Multicultural character is the character of individuals who are able to appreciate, understand, and accept differences in culture, language, religion, ethnicity, and social values from various community groups. Within the scope of pesantren, multicultural character is reflected in the diverse lives of

students with different cultural backgrounds. Pesantren is a traditional Islamic school in Indonesia that has long been known as a bastion of religious and cultural diversity. This institution has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt to the changing social and political landscape, incorporating modern educational practices while still maintaining their Islamic identity. (Arif, Fatonah, & Billah Faza Mb, 2020, p. 46) As noted in the literature, the dynamic leadership of kiai, or ulama, has played an important role in shaping the evolving character of pesantren, translating Islamic principles into contextually relevant actions. (Ridwan, 2020, p. 366)

The pesantren ecosystem is a mix of diverse backgrounds, where students from different regions, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds gather to seek religious and academic knowledge. (Ridwan, 2020, p. 368) This diversity is a testament to the inclusive nature of this institution, which has long served as a centre for the spread of Islam, as well as a catalyst for social and cultural integration. A person with multicultural character usually has an attitude of openness to differences, empathy and tolerance towards others who come from different cultural backgrounds. This character is particularly important in the context of an increasingly globalised and pluralistic society, where intercultural interactions are increasingly common.

The adaptability of pesantren, as explored in existing sources, has enabled them to incorporate modern educational approaches without compromising their traditional values. This convergence of modernity and tradition has resulted in a unique educational model that simultaneously preserves the core principles of Islamic learning and equips students with the necessary skills to navigate the contemporary world. (Mohamed, 2019, p. 39) The incorporation of non-religious subjects into the pesantren curriculum, as highlighted in these sources, is a prime example of this dynamic adaptation. By expanding its educational offerings, the pesantren has demonstrated its ability to meet the evolving needs of its santri, preparing them for a diverse future while maintaining a strong foundation in Islamic knowledge and practice.

Analyse the traditional focus of pesantren and its limitations

Pesantren as a traditional Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, has long been recognised for its unique approach to teaching and learning. These institutions have historically focused exclusively on religious subjects, which sets them apart from the more secular national education system. (Ridhwan, Nurdin, & Samad, 2018, p. 1) The traditional pesantren curriculum emphasises the study of Islamic scriptures, Arabic language, and various religious disciplines, reflecting their primary role as centres for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge and values. Over the centuries, pesantren have maintained their distinctive identity and played an important role in preserving Islamic traditions and values in Indonesian society. (Ridwan, 2020, p. 371) However, this traditional focus has also led to some limitations, as pesantren face challenges in adapting to the changing educational landscape and the demands of society.

One of the main limitations of the traditional pesantren focus is its limited scope in terms of subjects taught. (Arif dkk., 2020, p. 50) By focusing on religious subjects, pesantren often neglect the inclusion of more general academic subjects, such as science, mathematics, and humanities, which are crucial to prepare students for the modern world of work and the needs of society. (Isbah, 2020, p. 82) This narrow focus sometimes results in the lack of relevance and adaptability of pesantren graduates to the contemporary social context.

Another limitation of the traditional pesantren approach is its lack of relevance to the modern world. The emphasis on religious subjects and the neglect of practical and secular skills have resulted in the perception that pesantren graduates are not prepared to compete in the globalised world of work. (Hamruni, 2016, p. 414) Traditional pesantren curricula are often criticised for their lack of emphasis on subjects such as science, technology, and practical skills that are increasingly needed in the modern world of work. (Purnama, Zirmansyah, & Fitriyana, 2021, p. 2) In addition, the traditional pedagogical approach of pesantren, which relies heavily on textual memorisation, has been questioned for its ability to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The traditional focus on textual study and the scholarship of classical Islamic texts may also limit the ability of santri to

engage with contemporary issues and challenges. (Isbah, 2020, p. 84) Another limitation of the traditional pesantren approach is its isolation from the wider social and educational landscape. Although pesantren have played an important role in preserving Islamic traditions and values, their insular nature has sometimes led to a disconnect between the knowledge and skills acquired within the pesantren and the demands of the outside world. (Sulton, Sirait, & Arif, 2022, p. 35).

Pesantren as traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia have an important role in preserving Islamic traditions and values, but also face various challenges in the context of modern education. Although their curriculum emphasises the study of religion and scriptures, this approach is sometimes considered too limited, especially in preparing graduates to face the increasingly complex world of work. Traditional curricula that focus on religious subjects often neglect general sciences such as science, technology and practical skills, which are much needed in today's globalised era. Therefore, efforts are needed to adapt pesantren to the times without neglecting their core values.

Inclusivity in Character Education

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have long been recognised for their role in character education, instilling values of discipline, leadership, and religious observance in their students. (Baehaqi & Murdiono, 2020, p. 64) However, as institutions evolve to meet the changing needs of modern society, there is a greater emphasis on promoting inclusivity and meeting the diverse needs of students. One key aspect of this change is the recognition that character education must be structured and programmed to meet the unique backgrounds and learning styles of each student. This involves adjusting instructional methods, subject content, and extracurricular activities to ensure that all students regardless of their socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, or physical/cognitive abilities, can actively participate and feel valued. (Alfauzi & Choiriyah, 2021, p. 51)

Several studies have shown that the most effective character education programmes in pesantren use a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from fields such as psychology, sociology, and neuroscience to develop a complete

curriculum. (Syarifuddin, Akmal, Shofiyah, Chairunnisa, & Maulitaj Daffa, 2023, p. 122) This approach allows for the incorporation of inclusive practices, such as differentiated teaching, cooperative learning, and the use of assistive technology to support the diverse needs of students. In an effort to create highly inclusive students, one of the most effective strategies is to implement differentiated learning. Differentiated learning emphasises the need to select appropriate learning methods based on students' needs, motivations, and learning styles. (Ade Sintia Wulandari, 2022, p. 683) For example, some students may find it more difficult to learn by using visual aids, while others may find it easier to learn through kinesthetic or auditorial methods. By adapting these teaching methods, teachers can help students maximise their potential without using methods that may not suit their needs. This will ensure that each student is challenged and supported throughout their learning process.

Finally, it is important to realise that inclusivity in character education is not only to meet the needs of teaching methods, but also to foster inclusive beliefs in society. It addresses how people differ in terms of social rank, religious affiliation, and so on. An inclusive boarding school will encourage their children to learn and grow, which will ultimately result in better characters, not only in their own lives, but also in their social interactions with the wider community.

Students' attitudes towards diversity in boarding schools

The issue of students' attitudes towards diversity in pesantren has become an increasingly interesting topic in recent years. These educational institutions, which combine traditional Islamic teachings with modern academic curricula, play an important role in shaping the worldview and values of young Muslims. Research shows that pesantren can foster an "Islamic wisdom-based cultural environment" that promotes learners' holistic development, including in the areas of ethics and aesthetics. At the same time, they must face the challenge of operating in a pluralistic Western society, where questions arise about the purpose and impact of these institutions.

The dynamic interaction between traditional Islamic teachings and contemporary academic frameworks in Indonesian pesantren shapes students' attitudes towards diversity and raises questions about adaptability in a global context. Pesantren implement multicultural education, integrating religious teachings with cultural values to foster tolerance and diversity awareness among students. (Wava et al., 2024) As these institutions strive to maintain religious integrity while integrating modern educational practices, they must also consider how to effectively instil the values of tolerance and inclusiveness among students. Successful management and leadership in pesantren can play an important role in fostering an environment where mutual respect for diverse perspectives is developed, ensuring that graduates are well equipped to navigate the diversity of a pluralistic society. Traditional pesantren in Indonesia, play an important role in maintaining religious harmony and addressing contemporary challenges. Santri (students) in pesantren contribute significantly to interfaith activities and peacebuilding efforts. (Aksa & Hakim, 2023)

This requires a commitment to ongoing communication and collaboration with various stakeholders, including educators, community leaders, and policy makers, to create a curriculum that reflects both traditional teachings and the needs of contemporary society. This collaborative approach can enhance the educational experience, making it more relevant and engaging for students while promoting critical thinking and empathy towards others. Thus, pesantren in Indonesia play an important role in shaping knowledgeable and socially responsible future leaders. These institutions encourage multicultural education, promoting diversity and inclusiveness among students from different backgrounds. (St. Rodliyah, 2022)

Discussion

Multicultural Character in an Islamic Boarding School Setting

Islamic boarding school is one of the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia that has an important role in shaping the character of the nation. Pesantren not only functions as a centre for religious education, but also as a place for the formation of social and cultural values that are very diverse.

Multicultural character in the pesantren environment is one aspect that is very important to understand and apply, especially in the era of globalisation which is marked by high social and cultural mobility.

In the context of education in pesantren, multicultural character can be interpreted as an attitude of openness, tolerance, and respect for differences that exist in society. This is very relevant to the condition of Indonesia as a country that has ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity. As an educational institution based on Islamic values, pesantren has a strategic role in instilling multicultural attitudes in santri, so that they can coexist harmoniously with people from different backgrounds.

Islamic Boarding School as a Miniature of Diversity

Pesantren is often a miniature of the diversity of Indonesian society. Santri who come from various regions in Indonesia bring their own culture, language, and traditions. For example, a santri from Java may have different habits from santri from Sumatra, Sulawesi, or Papua. In the pesantren environment, these differences are part of the dynamics of daily life that must be faced and addressed wisely by all parties, be it the caregivers, ustadz, or the students themselves.

The diversity that exists in pesantren is an excellent platform to teach the values of togetherness, respect for differences, and mutual understanding. Through intense social interaction in pesantren life, santri learn that differences are not a barrier to brotherly friendship and cooperation, but rather a wealth that must be celebrated and utilised for mutual progress.

Islamic Values that Support Multicultural Character

Islam as the religion of most pesantren communities has teachings that are very supportive of the formation of multicultural characters. One important concept in Islam that is relevant to the issue of multiculturalism is the concept of *ukhuwah*, or brotherhood. Islam teaches that humanity comes from the same descendants, namely Prophet Adam and Eve, so that differences in race, ethnicity, and nation are not a reason to understand each other, but instead to get to know and learn from each other.

In the Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, it is mentioned that Allah created humans in tribes and nations so that they would know each other

(ta'aruf). This verse emphasises the importance of mutual respect between different groups. Islamic boarding schools, as institutions that teach Islamic values, have a great responsibility to internalise these teachings to the students, so that they can appreciate differences and make them a means to strengthen unity.

In addition, the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which means Islam as a mercy for the entire universe, is also a strong foundation in the formation of multicultural character in *pesantren*. Islam is not only for one particular group or nation, but for all humanity. This teaches that every human being, regardless of their background, has the same right to live in peace and prosperity. Therefore, *pesantren* must be able to teach *santri* that Islam is an inclusive religion, open to differences and ready to establish harmonious relationships with anyone.

Multicultural Education in *Pesantren*

One way to form multicultural characters in *pesantren* is through multicultural education. This education aims to raise awareness about the importance of respecting differences, be it religious, cultural, or ethnic differences. In *pesantren*, multicultural education can be implemented through various methods, such as dialogue between students, teaching history, and introducing diverse local cultures.

For example, *pesantren* can organise activities that invite students to get to know more closely the cultures and traditions of various regions in Indonesia. Through this activity, *santri* are invited to see that each culture has its uniqueness and positive values that can be taken as lessons. In addition, *pesantren* can also introduce religious or historical figures who come from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, so that students can see that diversity is an integral part of the history of Islamic civilisation and the Indonesian nation.

On the other hand, Islamic religious teaching in *pesantren* must also be adapted to the spirit of multiculturalism. For example, in *tafsir* or *hadith* lessons, teachers can raise themes related to tolerance, brotherhood, and mutual respect among human beings. This is important to instil in *santri* that

Islam is a religion that highly values differences and encourages its followers to live in harmony amid diversity.

The Role of Kyai and Ustadz in Multicultural Character Building

In pesantren, kyai and ustadz have a very important role in shaping the character of santri, including in terms of multicultural character formation. Kyai and ustadz are role models who are respected by santri, so their attitudes and actions will greatly influence the way santri view social and cultural issues. If the kyai and ustadz are able to show an attitude that is inclusive, open, and respectful of differences, then the santri will follow this example.

As spiritual and intellectual leaders in pesantren, kyai and ustadz are expected to teach santri about the importance of mutual respect in the midst of differences. They must also be able to provide wise explanations when sensitive social issues related to diversity arise, so that santri are not easily influenced by extreme views that can damage community harmony.

In addition, kyai and ustadz also act as a bridge between traditional values in society and modern values that are developing today. In facing social and cultural changes that occur in the era of globalisation, kyai and ustadz must be able to show an adaptive attitude without sacrificing religious principles. Thus, pesantren can remain relevant in providing education that suits the needs of the times, while maintaining the traditional values that are its identity.

Challenges in Multicultural Character Building in Pesantren

Although pesantren have great potential in shaping multicultural characters, there are several challenges that must be faced in this process. One of the biggest challenges is the tendency of some parties to prioritise exclusive attitudes and intolerance towards other groups. In some cases, pesantren actually become a place for the development of narrow views that do not respect differences, be it religious, ethnic, or cultural differences.

These narrow views are often influenced by rigid and textualist interpretations of religion, which do not relate to the existing social and cultural context. Therefore, it is important for pesantren to continue to make updates in terms of religious teaching methods, so that the Islamic teachings

conveyed can be accepted and applied in the context of plural and multicultural life.

In addition, another challenge is the resistance from some parties who feel that multicultural education is contrary to Islamic values. They assume that multicultural education can encompass religious identity and threaten the essence of religious teachings. To face this challenge, pesantren need to provide a deeper understanding of the importance of an open and inclusive attitude in dealing with differences, and emphasise that multicultural attitudes do not contradict Islamic teachings, but rather are in line with the spirit of Islam which is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Pesantren and the Future of Multicultural Character

In the future, the role of pesantren in shaping multicultural characters will be increasingly important, especially in facing the challenges of globalisation and rapid social change. Pesantren must be able to become educational institutions that not only teach Islamic values, but also prepare santri to become citizens who are able to live in an increasingly diverse society.

For this reason, pesantren need to continue to innovate in terms of curriculum and teaching methods, so that multicultural values can be properly internalised by santri. The use of information technology, for example, can be one of the means to introduce santri to the diversity of cultures and traditions that exist throughout the world. Pesantren can also collaborate with other educational institutions, both at home and abroad, to broaden santri's horizons about the importance of harmonious life in the midst of diversity.

In the end, the multicultural character instilled in pesantren will not only benefit the lives of santri in the pesantren environment, but will also have a positive impact when they return to society. By having an inclusive, tolerant, and respectful attitude towards differences, santri will become agents of change who are able to create a harmonious and peaceful life in the midst of a diverse society. This is in line with the vision of pesantren as an educational institution that not only teaches knowledge, but also forms noble characters to be owned.

The Importance of Inclusivity for Multicultural Character Education

Character education in the context of an increasingly diverse and globalised society demands an inclusive and multicultural approach. This is important because the character of education not only forms morally good individuals, but also individuals who are able to live and work in diverse environments. Inclusiveness in multicultural education means that every individual, regardless of cultural, religious, ethnic or racial background, is valued and given equal opportunities to contribute to the educational process.

The Importance of Inclusivity in Multicultural Character Education

Inclusiveness in multicultural education is essential as it reflects efforts to create a learning environment that respects differences and supports the development of students' character in various aspects. According to Banks, multicultural education aims to help students develop the attitudes and skills necessary to participate effectively in a pluralistic society. This includes the ability to interact with people from different backgrounds, appreciate differences and build an inclusive attitude. Inclusiveness in multicultural education ensures that students understand not only their own culture, but also the cultures of others, which is key to creating a harmonious and just society. (Banks, 2009, p. 43)

In the context of learning, multicultural character includes the development of values such as tolerance, fairness, empathy and respect for differences. This is in line with Nieto's view, who emphasises that multicultural education must include more than just an introduction to other cultures; there must be a deep understanding of the social injustice and discrimination faced by minority groups. (Nieto, 2010, p. 78) In other words, inclusiveness in multicultural education is not only about cultural diversity, but also about overcoming systemic barriers that prevent equal opportunities for all students.

Strategi Implementasi

In the context of the character of education, inclusivity implementation strategies can be done in various ways. Firstly, the curriculum developed should reflect the cultural diversity and experiences of students. This means

that subject matter and teaching methods should be inclusive, include the perspectives of different groups, and not be limited to one dominant culture. For example, Ladson-Billing emphasises the importance of culturally relevant teaching, where teachers not only teach the curriculum content, but also use students' cultural backgrounds to enrich their learning experiences. (Ladson-Billing, 1995, p. 468)

Secondly, the development of an inclusive learning environment is also important. Teachers should create a space where every student feels valued and listened to, and develop teaching approaches that are sensitive to individual needs. This can be done through collaborative learning approaches, where students from different backgrounds can work together and learn from each other.

Benefits of Multicultural Character Education

Inclusive multicultural character education provides great benefits in shaping students who have high social awareness. According to Banks, students educated in an inclusive multicultural environment are more likely to show empathy towards others, have a better understanding of social justice, and be able to contribute positively in a diverse society. In addition, they are also better prepared to face the challenges of globalisation and become responsible global citizens. (Banks, 2009, p. 48)

Inclusivity in multicultural character education is not only important, but also urgent in the context of an increasingly globalised and diverse world. By ensuring that every individual is valued and given equal opportunities, multicultural character education can shape students who not only possess moral integrity, but also have the ability to live in harmony with others from different cultural backgrounds. Inclusive education creates space for dialogue, understanding and cooperation, all of which are the foundations of a peaceful and just society.

Pesantren as a Container in Building Multicultural Character

Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution, has long served as a centre for character building. In addition to being a place for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, pesantren also play an important role in building student character, especially in the context of multiculturalism.

Pesantren have great potential to support harmonious living in a plural society because the Islamic values they teach include the principles of inclusiveness, tolerance, and respect for differences.

Pesantren and Tolerance Values

In many pesantren, especially those that adopt a moderate approach, the values of tolerance are taught explicitly or implicitly. One of the hadiths that is often used as a foundation is the hadith about *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all nature), which emphasises the importance of love and harmony between people, regardless of ethnicity, race, or religion. This principle becomes a strong foundation in building multicultural character in pesantren.

For example, pesantren such as Pesantren Darul Falah Pagutan and Nurul Hakim Kediri in Lombok do not only focus on religious education, but also on the introduction of local cultures and the teaching of peaceful coexistence with different backgrounds. These pesantrens teach the importance of respecting local traditions and how to accommodate differences without losing Islamic identity Inclusive Learning in Pesantren.

The pesantren curriculum has evolved rapidly to meet the challenges of modernity. Many pesantren have expanded their curriculum to include general subjects such as English, maths, and science, allowing santri to be better prepared to participate in a globalised world. Pesantren also open up discussion on social issues such as social justice, gender equality, and human rights, all of which support inclusive and multicultural character building.

The findings show that pesantren that integrate the modern curriculum with the traditional curriculum have a greater opportunity to build awareness of the importance of multicultural life. Pesantren Ulul Albab Mataram, for example, makes efforts to integrate Islamic values with the principles of inclusive education, where every student is encouraged to appreciate differences in terms of beliefs, ethnicity, and culture.

Kiai and Tradition in Strengthening Multicultural Character

In pesantren culture, kiai have a central role as educators and spiritual leaders. Kiai not only teach religious knowledge, but also provide examples of tolerant and fair attitudes towards differences in society. Kiai charisma and leadership are often effective tools in shaping santri's views on plurality and

peaceful living with other groups. According to Ali Maksum, pesantren is one of the institutions that successfully accommodates equality, with kiai often playing the role of maintaining harmony in an ethnically and religiously diverse society. The pesantren tradition emphasises the importance of the relationship between personal morality and social responsibility, which becomes the foundation for multicultural character development. (Maksum, 2010, p. 57)

Multicultural Character Education in Pesantren

Multicultural character education in pesantren takes place informally through parenting patterns that reflect universal Islamic values. According to Tilaar, character education in a multicultural context includes the formation of mutual respect, tolerance, and openness to different views and beliefs. These values are applied in the daily life of santri through direct teaching and intense social interaction between them. (Tillar, 2004, p. 59)

Pesantren, as religious-based educational institutions, have a special approach in internalising these values through religious teachings that emphasise the importance of ukhuwah Islamiyah (brotherhood in Islam) and rahmatan lil 'alamin (compassion for all nature). In this case, santri teach that Islam is not only a teaching for certain groups, but has a mission to bring goodness and peace to all humanity, regardless of racial, ethnic, or cultural differences. (Zarkasyi, 2010, p. 24).

However, pesantren also face challenges in building multicultural characters. One of the main challenges is resistance to modernisation and pluralism, which arises from more conservative groups. However, opportunities remain open for pesantren to continue to be a place for character building that respects diversity, especially with the encouragement from the government and non-governmental organisations to strengthen multicultural education in the pesantren environment.

In this context, the maqasid sharia approach (sharia objectives) which maintains the preservation of life, honour, and social justice can be the basis for encouraging pesantren to be more open to ideas of multiculturalism without abandoning religious principles.

D. CONCLUSION

Islamic boarding schools are places of learning for students with different cultural backgrounds and experiences. An inclusive curriculum not only provides space for diversity, but also encourages santri to think critically about social issues, such as discrimination, injustice, and human rights. This research emphasises the importance of Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions that not only focus on teaching religion, but also on inclusive and multicultural character building. Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in forming a generation that is tolerant, respects differences, and has a deep understanding of cultural and religious diversity. Character education in pesantren prioritises universal values, such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy, which are applied in the daily lives of santri. This education process is carried out through formal teaching, moral guidance, and social activities that involve intercultural and interreligious interactions. This aims to form an inclusive attitude, where santri are taught to respect differences and coexist harmoniously. In addition, pesantren also function as dialogue spaces that facilitate understanding and tolerance between groups. Through this approach, pesantren are expected to be able to produce individuals who are not only proficient in religious knowledge, but also have social sensitivity and openness to plurality. The implementation of multicultural education in pesantren faces various challenges, such as resistance to change and external influences that can threaten traditional values. However, with curriculum adaptations that integrate religious knowledge and multicultural values, pesantren have the potential to become pioneers in inclusive character education in Indonesia. In conclusion, Islamic boarding schools play a key role in building a tolerant, inclusive, and multicultural society through holistic character education.

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