

Multicultural-Based Character Education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro, Burau District, East Luwu Regency

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ABSTRACT

In the context of Indonesia's multicultural society, multicultural-based character education becomes a relevant and strategic approach to instill values of tolerance, justice, and togetherness amidst ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. This study aims to describe the implementation of multicultural-based character education and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro, Burau District, East Luwu Regency. This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with informants consisting of the head of the madrasa, teachers, and students. The research results show that multicultural-based character education is implemented through inclusive learning, habituation of tolerance values in school activities, and the exemplary behavior of teachers in building a school culture that appreciates differences. The main supporting factors come from the social diversity of students, the commitment of teachers and school principals, and the community environment that is open to pluralism. Meanwhile, the obstacles faced include the lack of theoretical understanding among teachers regarding multicultural education, minimal professional training, and low parental involvement. This research concludes that the success of multicultural character education is greatly determined by the synergy between schools, families, and communities in creating an inclusive and transformative educational ecosystem.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia not only serves as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a tool for nation-building. In the context of Indonesia's multicultural identity, education plays a central role in instilling values of tolerance, justice, and togetherness amidst the diversity of ethnicities, cultures, religions, and languages. With more than 17,000 islands and hundreds of ethnic and religious groups living side by side, Indonesia is a highly pluralistic country. In this context, multicultural-based character education is not just a choice, but an urgent necessity to maintain national integration and prevent social conflicts due to ignorance or intolerance. (Herlambang, 2021)

Character education itself is a process aimed at shaping individuals who are noble in character, possess integrity, responsibility, and high social sensitivity. In Ki Hajar Dewantara's view, education is not merely an intellectual teaching process, but also the formation of noble character and morals. (Banks & Banks, 2010) Therefore, if character education is focused on the

formation of ethical and cultured personalities, then multicultural-based character education provides an additional dimension that is highly relevant in the context of a pluralistic society: namely, habituation to living together in diversity and appreciation of cultural diversity. (Suwardani, 2020).

Madrasah, as an educational institution based on Islamic values, has great potential in instilling multicultural character education. Islamic values such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) are very much in harmony with the spirit of multiculturalism. Islam views differences as a divine decree that should be addressed through mutual recognition and respect, as stated in Allah SWT's words in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13: "O mankind! Indeed, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another." (Mochtar & Rasyid, 2022). Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro, located in an area with a diverse socio-cultural background, serves as a real example of how multicultural-based character education can be implemented in an Islamic school environment. In this madrasah, the students come from various ethnic backgrounds, such as Bugis, Makassar, Konjo, and Toraja, and have different cultural lifestyles. In such conditions, the presence of multicultural education is very important in fostering the awareness that differences are not to be contested, but rather celebrated as social wealth.

Moreover, the challenges of the globalization era also demand that the younger generation possess high social and cultural competencies. The openness of information and increasingly intensive cultural exchange can be both an opportunity and a threat to the character of the younger generation. If not fortified with strong and inclusive character education, the younger generation will easily be influenced by foreign values that do not align with the nation's culture. Multicultural-based character education serves as a strategy to strengthen national identity while also broadening global thinking horizons. (Saputra et al., 2023). It is important to note that the strengthening of multicultural values is not only realized through classroom teaching but also through a school culture that is consciously and consistently developed. For example, the application of the principle of equality, appreciation for regional languages, inclusion of cross-cultural activities, and student involvement in collaborative activities across backgrounds. At Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro, the development of these values is reflected in daily habituation programs, social interactions among students, and the active role of teachers in guiding inclusive and constructive communication.

From the curriculum perspective, the instillation of multicultural values can be integrated into subjects such as PPKn (Civics Education), Islamic Cultural History, Indonesian Language, and Social Fiqh. However, this approach will only be effective if supported by the internalization of values through teacher exemplarity, strengthening the madrasah culture, and the involvement

of parents and the community. Thus, multicultural-based character education is not only the responsibility of teachers but also a shared responsibility of the entire educational ecosystem. (Mulyasa, 2021). This research is important to identify models, strategies, and challenges in the implementation of multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of contextual, applicable, and relevant character education models in line with local and national dynamics. In addition, the results of this research are also expected to serve as a reference for other madrasahs in developing similar approaches as part of strengthening the role of madrasahs in national character building.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative research type with a phenomenological approach aimed at describing multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro, Burau District, East Luwu Regency. Qualitative research aims to understand the object in depth and comprehensively through the collection and analysis of descriptive data in the form of words, writings, or observed behaviors. The phenomenological approach was chosen because the research focuses only on one location, namely Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro, Burau District, East Luwu Regency. This research was conducted on Jln. Poros Trans Sulawesi Laro, Laro, Kec. Burau, Kab. Luwu Timur, South Sulawesi.

The selection of the location was based on initial observations indicating that this madrasa plays an active role in the development of multicultural-based character education. The data sources in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained directly from the research subjects through interviews with informants such as the Head of the Madrasah, teachers, and students. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from documents or other references that support and reinforce the findings in the field. Data collection techniques include observation, open interviews, and documentation. Observation is conducted by directly observing activities at the madrasah, interviews are conducted flexibly using open-ended question lists, and documentation is carried out by collecting data in the form of written notes, images, or other works related to the research object.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Implementation of Multicultural-Based Character Education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro in the School Learning Environment and Culture

The implementation of multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro is reflected in various aspects of the learning environment and school culture. In the learning

process, teachers not only deliver the lesson material but also instill values of tolerance, justice, and mutual respect amidst the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the students. (Karadona & Sari, 2025) These values are internalized through inclusive class discussions, collaborative learning approaches, and the practice of greeting and communicating politely across ethnicities. Additionally, the integration of multicultural values is also evident in subjects such as Citizenship Education, History, and Moral Education, where teachers emphasize the importance of appreciating diversity as part of the Islamic teachings of rahmatan lil 'alamin. Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro builds an environment that encourages harmonious interactions among students from various backgrounds. Religious activities, flag ceremonies, community service, and the celebration of national and religious holidays are used as means to foster a sense of togetherness and solidarity across ethnicities and groups.

Teachers and madrasa heads also serve as role models in applying multicultural values through open-mindedness, fair treatment, and responsiveness to differences. The school strives to create a socially safe learning environment where every student feels valued and accepted as they are. (Saptadi et al., 2023) Theoretically, this implementation aligns with James A. Banks' approach to multicultural education, which emphasizes the importance of curriculum reform, teaching strategies that are responsive to diversity, and the development of a school culture that supports diverse values. (Arikarani et al., 2025) Furthermore, Ki Hajar Dewantara's thoughts on education as an effort to liberate the soul and character of humanity serve as the philosophical foundation for madrasahs in shaping students who are characterful, tolerant, and love their homeland. This theory is further reinforced by an intercultural pedagogical approach, which emphasizes empathy skills, cross-cultural communication, and social awareness as part of the ideal educational outcomes in a multicultural society. (Zunnurraïn, 2021)

The results of interviews with the head of the madrasa, teachers, and several students revealed that the implementation of multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro occurs naturally and is integrated into daily routines. The head of the madrasa emphasized that "we always stress the importance of unity in diversity to teachers and students, because we live in a diverse society, and Islam highly values that. The Akidah Akhlak subject teacher stated that they often use examples from the local community's life to instill the value of mutual respect. A class XI student also admitted that "even though my friends are from different ethnicities and speak differently, we still get along well because the teacher also teaches us to respect each other.

In conclusion, the implementation of multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro is effective because it is supported by the inclusive attitude of the teachers, the exemplary leadership of the madrasah, and school habits that foster empathy, cooperation, and appreciation for differences. An open learning environment and a school culture that prioritizes the

values of Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin serve as a strong foundation in shaping students' tolerant and peace-loving character.

3.2. Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Implementation of Multicultural-Based Character Education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro

The implementation of multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro is influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors that directly determine its success. The most dominant supporting factor is the commitment from the madrasah, particularly the principal and the teachers, in creating a learning environment that values diversity. This commitment is realized through the development of inclusive learning programs, the reinforcement of tolerance values in extracurricular activities, and the exemplary behavior of teachers who show appreciation for the cultural, linguistic, and background differences of students. In addition, the diversity that naturally exists in the social environment of the community around the madrasah also supports the strengthening of multicultural values. (WICAKSONO, n.d.) Students are accustomed to interacting with friends from various ethnicities and cultures, so the values of mutual respect and cooperation grow organically in their daily lives.

The implementation of multicultural character education also faces several obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the limited understanding of teachers regarding the concept of multicultural education both theoretically and pedagogically. (Agustian, 2019) Some teachers do not yet have specialized training or sufficient resources to systematically integrate multicultural values into learning. Another obstacle is the presence of prejudices or stereotypes that still develop, both implicitly and explicitly, towards certain groups. In addition, the lack of parental involvement in the character education process also poses a significant obstacle, as some parents still hold exclusive cultural values that do not always align with the spirit of inclusivity that the madrasah aims to instill. (Ramdhan & Arifin, 2025)

Theoretically, this aligns with James A. Banks' multicultural education theory, which emphasizes that for multicultural education to be successful, it must be supported by curriculum reform, teacher training, and consistent school cultural support. (Hidayat, 2022) This theory emphasizes the importance of a "transformative approach," which involves changes not only in the content but also in the mindset of educators and institutional policies. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's theory of developmental ecology states that an individual's character is shaped by the interaction of various systems, including school, family, and society. (Luckett & Shay, 2020) Therefore, collaboration between madrasah, families, and the surrounding environment becomes very important in strengthening multicultural values among students.

Based on interviews with the head of the madrasah, teachers, and several students, it was found that the main supporting factor at Al-Furqan Laro is the social diversity of the students, which creates a dynamic and open learning environment. A teacher expressed that: "We do not have difficulty instilling the value of tolerance, because our students come from different cultural backgrounds. We just need to guide and reinforce that value in the learning process." However, one of the challenges acknowledged by the head of the madrasah is the limited training for teachers: "Our teachers still need guidance to better understand the concept of multicultural education, not just as a formality." Meanwhile, a student revealed that sometimes there are still jokes or stereotypical comments directed at ethnicities, even if not meant to be malicious: "Sometimes friends joke about accents or habits, but we are immediately advised by the teacher not to cross the line."

In conclusion, the implementation of multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro is supported by the socio-cultural diversity of the students and the school's commitment to creating an inclusive environment. However, challenges such as limited teacher training, minimal multicultural literacy, and the persistence of cultural stereotypes indicate that strengthening educator capacity and family involvement remain key to the sustainability of this program.

4. CONCLUSION

From several interview results above, the researcher can conclude that the implementation of multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro is running effectively and is integrated into the school's daily life. Values such as tolerance, justice, and mutual respect are internalized through inclusive learning, the integration of multicultural values into various subjects, and the habituation of behaviors that appreciate differences within the school environment. This success is supported by the strong commitment of the head of the madrasa and teachers in creating an open learning atmosphere, exemplary behavior, and the socio-cultural diversity of students, which naturally fosters mutual respect and cooperation. However, the implementation of multicultural character education also faces several obstacles, such as the limited understanding of teachers regarding the multicultural concept in depth due to a lack of training, the persistence of cultural prejudices and stereotypes among students, and the minimal involvement of parents in the character education process. Theoretically, this implementation aligns with the multicultural education approach according to James A. Banks and Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory, which emphasizes the importance of collaboration between schools, families, and communities. Thus, the sustainability of multicultural-based character education at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Furqan Laro highly depends on strengthening the capacity of educators, enhancing multicultural literacy, and the active involvement of all school and community components in building an inclusive school culture that appreciates diversity.

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