INTEGRATING MULTICULTURAL VALUES TO FOSTER TOLERANCE AND INCLUSIVITY IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Muhajir Muhajir[1], Umi Kultsum[1], Moh. Miftachul Choiri[2], Siti Mustonah[3], Heramb Kulkarni[4], Abdul Karim[5]*

[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, Serang, Indonesia

[2]Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo, Indonesia

[3]Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) I Kota Cilegon, Indonesia

[4]Technology University of Tampere, Finland

[5]Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Indonesia

*Corresponding Email: abdul.karim@umc.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Multicultural education plays a vital role in enhancing religious tolerance within Islamic Religious Education (IRE), particularly in Indonesia, where religious exclusivism and intolerance remain ongoing challenges. The objective of this research was to explore the understanding and application of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education among junior high school and madrasa students. A mixed-method approach was utilized, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Through open-ended interviews and surveys, data were collected from students in two junior high schools in Cilegon and one madrasa in Serang, Indonesia. The qualitative data were analyzed using a descriptive-exploratory approach, while quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. The study found that integrating religious education with multicultural values fostered a strong sense of interfaith tolerance, cultural appreciation, and inclusivity. This integration helped students embrace diversity, respect differences, and build mutual trust, thereby minimizing conflicts and promoting a harmonious learning environment. The findings underscore the significance of effective multicultural education in shaping an inclusive Islamic education system, ultimately enhancing both the social and academic outcomes of students in Indonesia.

Keywords: Inclusivity, Islamic Religious Education, Multicultural Education, Religious Tolerance, Social Harmony

INTRODUCTION

Tolerance, in the context of socio-cultural and religious settings, refers to attitudes and actions that prevent discrimination against diverse groups (Sulyman, 2024). In religion, tolerance means the majority religious group allowing other religious groups to coexist peacefully. However, this concept remains controversial and is often criticized from both liberal and conservative perspectives (Fahrullah & Hazmirullah, 2020; Rodríguez et al., 2020). Religious tolerance, which includes respecting other religious groups, aligns with the Islamic principle of being a *rahmatallil 'alamin* (a mercy to all the worlds). Islam emphasizes mutual respect and recognizes the validity of other beliefs, although it faces criticism for perceived exclusivity (Usman et al., 2022). Critics argue that Islam's exclusivism challenges integration with broader societal norms.

Exclusivism is visible in society, places of worship, and educational institutions, including IRE, where multicultural education is necessary. The Indonesian government acknowledges this need, as reflected in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, which promotes democratic, non-discriminatory, and pluralistic education (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021). Despite this acknowledgment, Islamic educational institutions often face criticism for promoting pluralism, inclusivism, and tolerance in a way that appears dogmatic

rather than moral (Akbar, 2023). Critics argue that these institutions prioritize doctrinal teachings over moral and inclusive values, even though Islam encourages respectful interactions with followers of other religions. True tolerance, however, involves mutual respect without requiring validation of other religions' beliefs (Rodríguez et al., 2020).

The focus of IRE on academic standards rather than moral or social sensitivity worsens the issue. Critics assert that focusing too narrowly on religious knowledge neglects character development, which is essential for fostering genuine tolerance and understanding (Ezzani et al., 2021). The Wahid Institute reports increasing religious intolerance in Indonesia, with conflicts and regional regulations arising in recent years (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021). Integrating multicultural insights into IRE is crucial for fostering democratic attitudes and respect among students. While multicultural education is part of the curriculum, its implementation is often insufficient (Aji et al., 2020; Karim, 2016; Madakir et al., 2022). Many students do not fully grasp the embedded multicultural values, limiting their practice application. This study seeks to bridge the gap between curriculum content and its real-world application, with a focus on the dimensions of tolerance from a multicultural perspective within IRE.

This research focuses on the integration of multicultural insights into IRE as a means of promoting tolerance in a diverse society. The novelty of this study lies in its approach to conceptualizing IRE with a multicultural perspective, which has been underexplored in previous studies. Previous research on religious tolerance has mainly explored aspects of religious freedom (Foua & Diriwari, 2020; Zhang et al., 2019) and interfaith tolerance (Jeon et al., 2013). This study is distinctive in its emphasis on multicultural education within Islamic schools and madrasas and how it fosters genuine tolerance, which is still insufficiently implemented in practice (Renzi & Klobas, 2008; Wurdinger et al., 2007).

METHOD

This study examines the implementation of religious tolerance from a multicultural perspective in three schools: Fatahillah Public Junior High School (PJHS), State Junior High School (SJHS) 4 in Cilegon, and MTs Negeri 1 in Serang, Indonesia. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining qualitative (Guest et al., 2020; Tomaszewski et al.,2020) and quantitative methods (Rahayu et al., 2024) to understand how multicultural education is integrated into IRE. The study applied Banks' Multicultural Education Framework (2006) to analyze aspects such as content integration, prejudice reduction, and empowering cultural groups in schools.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions with students, and structured questionnaires. The sample included 24 students from Fatahillah PJHS, 23 from SJHS 4, and 72 from MTs Negeri 1. The case study methodology was employed to explore the implementation of multicultural education, using both inductive and deductive reasoning to identify key themes and test hypotheses. The researchers administered a structured questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, ensuring reliability, and analyzed the data using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis (Susilawati et al., 2025). Triangulation was used to ensure validity by comparing data from multiple sources, with data reduction and verification techniques applied to focus on the most relevant information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Concept of Islamic Religious Education with a Multicultural Insight

The study explored the implementation of multicultural education in Islamic schools, focusing on the goals of multicultural education. As shown in Figure 1, three primary objectives emerged: attitudinal goals aimed at fostering respect for cultural identity, tolerance, and sensitivity to differences. Although students showed respect for other cultures, deeper tolerance remained a challenge. Cognitive goals focused on raising awareness of cultural perspectives and

enhancing students' analytical skills. Survey results showed that 70% agreed that the IRE curriculum included diverse cultural perspectives, with 50% expressing increased interest in learning about other languages and cultures. Informational goals aimed to equip students with the knowledge for intercultural communication and engagement in a pluralistic society. Findings indicated that students gained a better understanding of ethnic and social diversity, developing skills to interact with diverse communities.
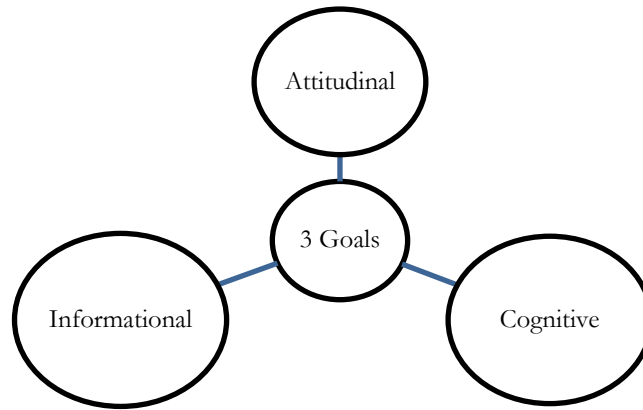

Figure 1. Goals of multicultural education

Multicultural education is not a separate subject but a paradigm that should be embedded in all subjects, including IRE (Tilaar, 2004). Multicultural values should permeate every area of education rather than being taught as a standalone topic. The indicators of multicultural values can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Multicultural values in Islamic religious education

Multicultural Value	Application in Islamic Religious Education
Respect for cultural diversity	Teaching the diversity within Islamic teachings and its application in social life.
Tolerance of different religions	Promoting mutual respect among different religious groups.
Gender equality	Raising awareness of men's and women's rights in Islam.
Active role in a plural society	Encouraging students to care about ethnic and social diversity in their communities.

Table 1 presents key multicultural values that can be integrated into IRE. As Tilaar (2004) emphasizes, multicultural education should be a paradigm embedded across all disciplines, including IRE. Table 1 illustrates how values such as respect for cultural diversity, tolerance of different religions, gender equality, and an active role in a plural society can be applied within Islamic education. These values promote mutual respect and awareness of rights and encourage students to engage with and care about ethnic and social diversity, fostering a more inclusive and respectful learning environment.

Multicultural values that Need to be developed in the learning process of Islamic Religious Education in Schools

The application of multicultural values in IRE emphasizes several core principles. *First*, living in difference is an inherent reality that must be understood and respected. *Second*, mutual trust is seen as the most important social capital in society, and efforts should be made to build

and nurture this trust. *Third*, mutual understanding is essential in social life, where different values should contribute to creating vibrant and dynamic relationships. This involves understanding that others' values may differ from our own, and such differences should complement one another. Finally, mutual respect is a crucial multicultural value that must be upheld in all interactions (Rohmah et al., 2023). These values help build an inclusive and harmonious society where diverse cultures and beliefs coexist peacefully. The following table 2 summarizes the multicultural development within schools.

Table 2. The multicultural perception

Question Number Table	PJHS Fatahillah	Answer SJHS 4 Cilegon	MTs N 1
1	Developed	Developed	Developed
2	Developed	Excellent	Developed
3	Developed	Well developed	Developed
4	Enough	Well developed	Enough
5	Well developed	Enough	Developed
6	Enough	Developed	Well developed
7	Well done	Well done	Enough
8	Enough	Enough	Developed
9	Developed	Enough	Developed
10	Enough	Enough	Well developed

Table 2 presents the multicultural perception ratings from the three schools based on the answers provided for each question. The responses indicate the level of development and understanding of multicultural values in IRE across the three schools. The answers range from "Developed" to "Excellent" and "Well developed," showing varying degrees of multicultural understanding, with PJHS Fatahillah and SJHS 4 Cilegon generally scoring higher in some areas compared to MTs Negeri 1.

Implementation of Multicultural Insight Islamic Religious Education in PJHS, SJHS 4, & MTsN 1

The following Table 3 provides an overview of the implementation of multicultural education in three schools: Fatahillah PJHS, SJHS 4 Cilegon, and MTs Negeri 1 Serang. It includes key indicators related to students' engagement in IRE, the delivery of religious tolerance material, and the practice of religious tolerance in daily life. The table further explores the involvement of Muslim and non-Muslim students in IRE, as well as their participation in worship practices across different religions. These metrics provide valuable insights into the degree of multicultural integration within the school environment.

Table 3. The grill of multiculturalism implemented in schools

No	Statement	Fatahillah %	SJHS 4 %	MTsN 1 %
1	Active role of students in IRE learning	65%	64%	63.9%
2	Delivery of material on religious tolerance in IRE learning	74%	100%	54.2%
3	Delivery of material on religious tolerance in subjects other than IRE	56%	97%	45.8%
4	Practice of religious tolerance in daily life	12%	3%	56.9%
5	Discriminatory treatment in learning based on students' different ethnicity, religion, and race backgrounds	76%	64%	59.7%
6	Discriminatory behavior towards students	6%	3%	75%
7	Participation of Muslim and non-Muslim students in IRE subjects	76%	94%	45.8%
8	Religious tolerance in worship practices	3%	3%	54.2%
9	How is social empathy towards the difficulties faced by the community in the madrasah environment?	62%	45%	57%
10	Participation of students in worship in other religions	38%	36%	93%

Table 3 summarizes the findings on the implementation of multicultural education in the three schools. The data shows that the active role of students in IRE learning is fairly consistent across the schools, with Fatahillah PJHS (65%), SJHS 4 Cilegon (64%), and MTs Negeri 1 Serang (63.9%) reporting similar levels of participation. However, there is a noticeable difference in the delivery of religious tolerance material in IRE, with SJHS 4 Cilegon scoring the highest at 100%, followed by Fatahillah PJHS at 74% and MTs Negeri 1 Serang at 54.2%. The practice of religious tolerance in daily life varies significantly, with MTs Negeri 1 Serang showing the highest rate (56.9%), compared to much lower percentages in the other schools (Fatahillah PJHS 12%, SJHS 4 Cilegon 3%). Furthermore, the data reveals that discriminatory behavior remains an issue, particularly at MTs Negeri 1 Serang, where 75% of students report experiencing discrimination. Participation in worship practices of other religions is high at MTs Negeri 1 Serang (93%), indicating a strong interfaith engagement. Overall, these findings reflect both strengths and areas for improvement in fostering a fully inclusive and multicultural educational environment.

Based on interviews conducted at several schools, it can be concluded that IRE, with a multicultural perspective, is effectively implemented. At Fatahillah PJHS Cilegon, the IRE teacher reported no significant obstacles to the implementation of multicultural education despite the school having a predominantly Muslim student body. Non-Muslim students, including two Christian students, are treated equally and are given the option to attend IRE lessons. These students often chose to participate, demonstrating the successful application of multicultural perspectives in fostering religious tolerance (Masrurin, personal communication, November 2020). Similarly, at SJHS 4 Cilegon, the IRE teacher confirmed that tolerance-related

material had been taught since grade VII, with no discrimination against non-Muslim students. Non-Muslim students were free to choose whether to attend the lesson and in practice, all students engaged with the content (Muhajir, personal communication, November 2024).

At MTs Negeri 1 Serang, multicultural practices were strongly embedded in IRE, particularly in promoting tolerance towards external guests and cooperation. Non-Muslim visitors were allowed to enter the school without wearing a hijab, though they were encouraged to wear one provided by security, reflecting the school's inclusive environment. The school also accepted students from diverse religious backgrounds, including those with parents who have converted to Islam or belong to other faiths, fostering a supportive atmosphere despite religious differences (Kultsum, personal communication, February 2025). Shared use of prayer rooms and respect for various religious practices, such as *qunut, tahlil*, and *iftitah*, further demonstrates the commitment to fostering religious tolerance. Additionally, the practice of religious moderation extends to mutual respect between teachers and students, particularly as many students come from different regions with their own cultures. The school also promoted gender equality, with women holding significant roles, including the principal, and engaging in social responsibility activities such as donations for orphans and people experiencing poverty. This inclusive approach enhances community engagement and reinforces the school's commitment to religious tolerance and inclusivity (Marta, personal communication, February 2025).

According to informants, Muslim and Christian students at three schools in Cilegon continued to learn together, which enhanced their understanding of IRE with a multicultural perspective. They enjoyed the material taught, supported by the principal, who notes that Cilegon reflects diversity (Sudiono, personal communication, November 2020). This shows that teachers, principals, and students agree that learning with a multicultural perspective promotes religious tolerance (Fauzi, personal communication, November 2020).

The following Table 4 presents the results of student responses from three schools: PJHS Fatahillah, SJHS 4 Cilegon, and MTs Negeri 1 Serang. It summarizes their views and experiences related to IRE, religious tolerance, discrimination, and social empathy. Each item reflects the response rate (R), percentage score (PS), and its corresponding score category (CS), providing insight into how students perceive and engage with these values in their school environments.

Table 4. Results of students' Responses at Fatahillah junior high school, Cilegon

Statements	Responses (E)	Percentage of Score (PS)	Category of Score (CS)	R	PS	CS	R	PS	CS
		PJHS Fatahillah		SJHS 4 Cilegon			MTs N 1		
1	A	65%	E	A	64%	E	A	63.9%	G
2	A	74%	G	A	100%	VG	A	54.2%	G
3	A	56%	L	A	97%	VG	B	45.8%	E
4	A	12%	VL	A	3%	VL	A	56.9%	G
5	D	76%	G	D	64%	E	D	59.7%	G
6	A	6%	VL	A	3%	VL	D	75%	VG
7	A	76%	VG	A	94%	VG	D	45.8%	E
8	C	3%	VL	C	3%	VL	A	54.2%	G
9	A	62%	E	A	45%	L	A	57%	G
10	C	38%	VL	C	36%	VL	D	93%	VG

The survey results from Fatahillah PJHS, SJHS 4 Cilegon, and MTs Negeri 1 Serang reveal a strong focus on IRE and religious tolerance in all three schools. Over 60% of students at Fatahillah PJHS and SJHS 4 Cilegon actively engage in IRE, with 74% and 100% reporting that tolerance material is effectively taught. While tolerance is included in other subjects, its

frequency is lower. MTs Negeri 1 Serang shows similar participation in IRE but less so in other areas. Students across all schools generally practice religious tolerance, with minimal instances of discrimination; over 60% at Fatahillah PJHS and SJHS 4 Cilegon report no unfair treatment, and similar patterns are observed at MTs Negeri 1 Serang. Religious tolerance in worship is highly upheld, especially at Fatahillah PJHS and SJHS 4 Cilegon, where over 90% of students observe it, compared to 54.2% at MTs Negeri 1 Serang. While Muslim student engagement in IRE is high, non-Muslim participation is notable at Fatahillah PJHS and SJHS 4 Cilegon but less so at MTs Negeri 1 Serang. Social empathy is present, particularly toward peers' struggles, but interfaith interactions remain limited and could be further strengthened, especially at SJHS 4 Cilegon.

Respondent accumulation of multicultural implementation in schools

To provide a more straightforward overview of the findings, Figure 2 below presents the data on multicultural education (X) practice for promoting religious tolerance (Y) in IRE lessons. This visualization highlights the relationship between the integration of multicultural values in the curriculum and the observed outcomes in fostering religious tolerance among students.
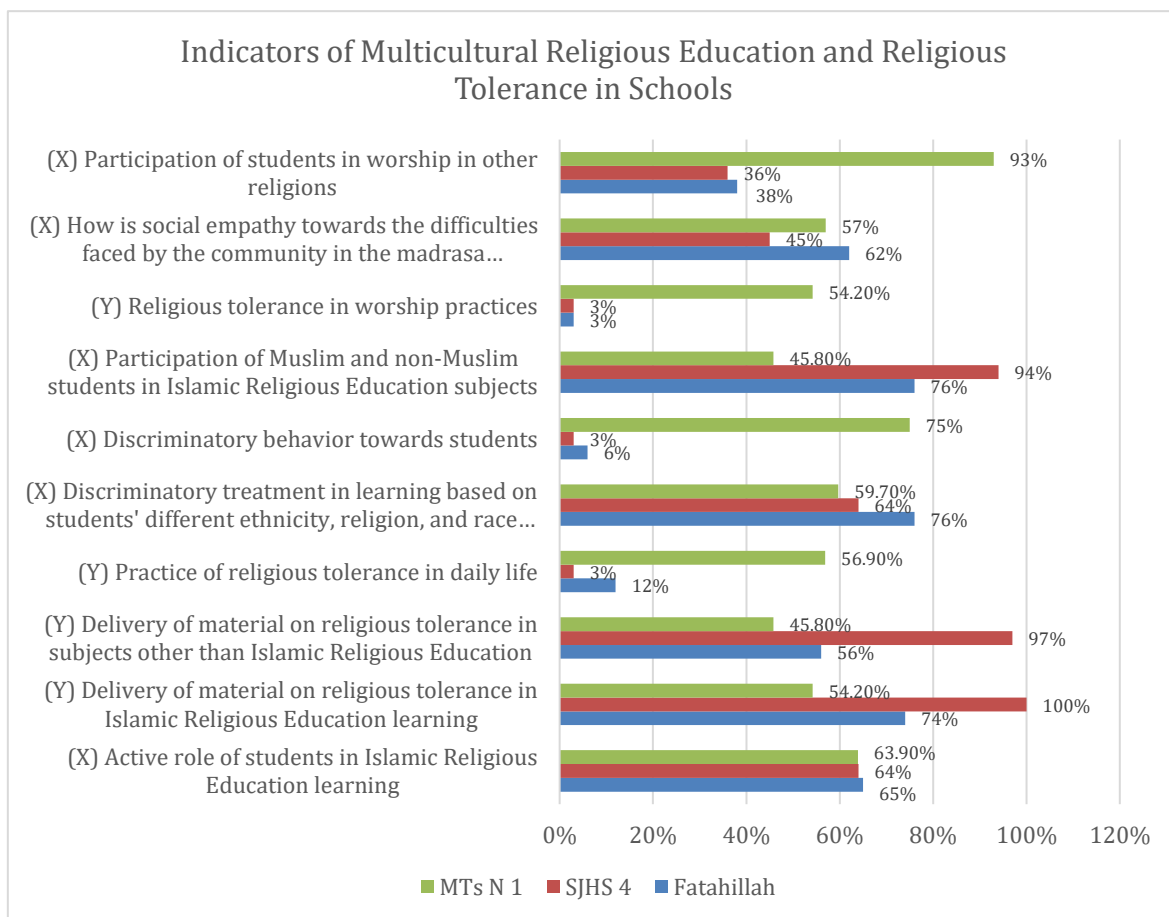

Figure 2. Practice of multicultural education (X) for religious tolerance (Y) in IRE lessons

To summarize the data for a more straightforward interpretation, Figure 2 presents the results of the study. At SJHS 4 Cilegon, multicultural education values are generally applied in daily life, with a strong focus on religious tolerance. Students are free to practice their respective religions, and the school has implemented supportive policies to ensure this. However,

challenges remain, particularly concerning non-Muslim students' access to religious education. Despite these challenges, the practice of religious tolerance is evident, particularly in how IRE is taught from a multicultural perspective. Data from the questionnaire on school policies for new student admissions and teacher-student interactions will further confirm that religious tolerance is effectively implemented in IRE.

The findings from the study on the implementation of multicultural IRE at Fatahillah PJHS and SJHS 4 Cilegon indicate positive progress but also reveal areas for improvement. The survey results show a strong commitment to eliminating discriminatory practices and promoting mutual respect. However, social tolerance has not been fully maximized, as reflected by an average score of 46.8% in deepening tolerance material within IRE and other subjects, suggesting that further efforts are needed to reinforce tolerance principles across the curriculum. At SJHS 4 Cilegon, multicultural IRE has succeeded mainly in fostering respect and coexistence, with an average score of 50.9%. While efforts to enhance religious tolerance material are underway, challenges remain in implementing tolerance in daily life, with the practice being categorized as "insufficient." Most students demonstrated positive attitudes toward religious tolerance, with 181 informants actively practicing tolerance in their daily lives, but further attention is needed, especially in non-IRE subjects, to deepen understanding and reduce discrimination, as reflected in the average score of 55.15%.

The findings from the present study highlight several key points about the implementation of multicultural education in IRE. First, the study emphasizes that differences are a natural part of life that must be embraced and studied. Second, it underscores the importance of mutual trust as a fundamental element of social life, which must be actively nurtured. Third, mutual understanding is critical for societal harmony, requiring ongoing preservation. Additional key characteristics include respecting individuals as a form of honor, fostering open thinking, and encouraging appreciation for one's work and independence (Fajrussalam et al., 2020). Moreover, addressing conflict and promoting reconciliation is essential for resolving disputes and preventing violence (Brubaker, 2020). Multicultural education in IRE can be successfully applied when these principles are tailored to the specific needs and conditions of each school, creating a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment (Syarif et al., 2024).

Integrating multicultural values into IRE is essential for promoting social responsibility and respect for diversity. According to Dreyer et al. (2014), multicultural education should not be seen as a separate subject but embedded within all subjects, including IRE. This integration promotes respect for cultural and social differences, human rights, and global social responsibility (Karim et al., 2022). Further research supports the need for mutual respect, understanding, and trust as essential components for fostering an inclusive society, highlighting the value of diversity as an opportunity for social harmony rather than division (Zhu et al., 2022). The integration of multicultural values can be realized through various models, such as the contextual learning model (Parhan et al., 2024). Project-based learning (Purnomo et al., 2022). It is possible to use virtual and the latest technology to implement multicultural values in IRE (Daniel & Paul, 2019).

Implementing multicultural-based IRE presents challenges. It is crucial to acknowledge that differences are natural and should be accepted. IRE should not only focus on spirituality but also develop inclusive and adaptive character traits. Studies indicate that incorporating multicultural values into the curriculum enhances its relevance and responsiveness to societal changes (Karim et al., 2020). To support diversity and prevent discrimination, educators should use learning theories emphasizing cultural and social diversity while fostering social solidarity (Batugal, 2020). Moreover, education leaders should improve their resources to provide better educational services (Sahrodi & Karim, 2024; Bayraktar & Jiménez, 2020).

This study identified four core multicultural values integral to IRE: (1) Respect for cultural and societal diversity, (2) Recognition of human dignity and human rights, (3) Development of global community responsibility, and (4) Fostering social solidarity and preventing racism (Karim et al., 2022; Karim et al., 2023; Karim et al., 2025). These values are fundamental for cultivating a multicultural mindset and promoting tolerance, respect, and understanding among students within Islamic education (Parhan et al., 2020). Those values develop children's characteristics (Metta et al., 2023). On the part of schools, they should manage their teachers to optimize digital technologies (Monteiro et al., 2023; Nagel, 2020) and train their teachers in interpersonal communication (Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008).

The discussion of the present study highlights the key steps needed to implement a successful multicultural education framework, particularly in IRE. To achieve the goals of multicultural education, the development of an inclusive curriculum should follow six essential steps: (1) aligning the curriculum philosophy with the goals of multicultural education, (2) focusing curriculum content on moral values and practical skills rather than mere facts, (3) prioritizing cultural, political, and social diversity in learning theory, moving beyond individualistic psychological theories, (4) setting learning objectives that address the social realities students face, (5) ensuring curriculum synergy between objectives, content, and evaluation methods to foster holistic student development, and (6) recognizing the unique nature of each student to accommodate individual learning needs (Näsman, 2018). It can be applied to any Islamic schools (Kultsum et al., 2022) that demonstrate transformational leadership (Kitur et al., 2020; Pires et al., 2023) and promote ethical leadership behaviors (Osafo et al., 2021).

Multicultural education is rooted in three fundamental principles: it promotes human equality, recognizes the cultural rights of different groups, and challenges artificial distinctions created by historical events. It also emphasizes the development of a strong cultural identity while fostering global community responsibility and motivation (Manzoor et al., 2021). Finally, multicultural education should not be hindered by globalization; instead, it should support and coexist with local cultural traditions, fostering creative cultural exchanges and community initiatives. It requires education leaders to be able to implement this multicultural education (Liu et al., 2022; Martin, 2021). This dynamic interaction between local and global cultures is vital for sustaining a vibrant, inclusive society. These principles are central to the development of multicultural education in Indonesia, ensuring that global culture enriches rather than diminishes local traditions (Rodríguez et al., 2020).

The study found that at MTs Negeri 1 Serang, religious tolerance is actively practiced. Non-Muslim students are allowed to enter the school without a hijab, signaling an inclusive attitude that promotes understanding between different faith groups (Muijs & Bokhove, 2020). The school's commitment to diversity is also reflected in its policies, such as allowing non-Muslim students to choose subjects based on their faith and offering religious education tailored to their beliefs. These efforts, supported by the Cilegon Ministry of Education and Culture, create equal learning opportunities and promote inclusivity (McSherry & McAnee, 2022). The school's implementation of religious moderation further demonstrates how positive teacher-student relationships, particularly between different faiths, can promote respect and reduce extremism (Rodríguez et al., 2020; Fitriani, 2023).

Applying Banks' Multicultural Education Framework (2006) to the findings of this study reveals significant insights into the implementation of IRE with a multicultural perspective across three schools. Banks' framework identifies five key dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering cultural groups (Jeynes, 2019). In the study, content integration is reflected in the incorporation of tolerance-related material within IRE lessons. Schools like Fatahillah PJHS Cilegon and SJHS 4 Cilegon

successfully embed multicultural values in their curricula. Prejudice reduction is evident in the minimal instances of discrimination, with schools such as MTs Negeri 1 Serang practicing inclusivity by ensuring non-Muslim students are treated equally and with respect. Knowledge construction is addressed through the diverse religious and cultural perspectives taught in IRE, fostering students' broader understanding of society (Martinez & Scott, 2014). The equity pedagogy dimension is evident in policies allowing non-Muslim students to choose whether to participate in IRE lessons, creating a more inclusive environment. Finally, the empowerment of cultural groups is demonstrated by the acceptance of students from diverse backgrounds and encouragement of social solidarity, notably at MTs Negeri 1 Serang. These practices align with Banks' framework, which promotes inclusivity, respect, and understanding of diverse cultural perspectives within the educational setting.

Despite these positive outcomes, challenges remain, particularly concerning the participation of non-Muslim students in IRE lessons. Some non-Muslim students may feel uncomfortable or lack understanding of the religious teachings presented, highlighting the need for a more inclusive approach to encourage active participation (Broms & Rothstein, 2020). While 75% of students reported no discrimination, a small number still reported feeling marginalized, indicating the necessity for further work to fully achieve the goals of multicultural education (Holandyah et al., 2022). Additionally, the gender equality observed in the school, with a predominantly female staff, including the principal, signals progress in addressing gender inequality, as highlighted by Li & Liu (2022). The school's social initiatives, such as donations to orphans and the unprivileged, reinforce its commitment to diversity and human values (Li et al., 2021). Future research should focus on expanding the sample size to include schools from various regions, urban and rural areas, and different religious and cultural backgrounds. This would enhance our understanding of how multicultural IRE is implemented across Indonesia and in other Muslim-majority countries. Teacher training in multicultural education is another crucial area for future investigation (Pujaningsih & Ambarwati, 2020). As Rodríguez et al. (2020) argue, the preparation of teachers to address religious and cultural diversity is essential for creating inclusive learning environments. The teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and commitment to diversity play a pivotal role in the success of multicultural education programs. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on religious studies in educational contexts, as evidenced by Mamirjonovna (2024), Chano et al. (2024), Karmaker & Rahman (2024), Situngkir et al. (2024), and Hidayat et al. (2024).

Despite these positive outcomes, the study's limitations, such as its focus on a single school, limit the generalizability of the findings. The impact of multicultural education may vary depending on local policies, cultural norms, and student demographics, as noted by Nguyen et al. (2017). When implemented appropriately, it can be applied in various activities (OK et al., 2023). In the long run, it strengthens community solidarity in Indonesia (Abdullah et al., 2023). Future research should consider these contextual factors and investigate how multicultural values manifest in students' interactions within their communities. As Lavy (2020) suggests, a comprehensive evaluation of multicultural education should include not only the curriculum but also the social dynamics that influence student behavior. Expanding the sample size in future studies would enhance the external validity of these findings, as recommended by Eungoo & Hwang (2023).

CONCLUSION

The data and discussions presented on the concept of IRE from a multicultural perspective, the planning by school principals for multicultural education programs, and the implementation of such programs in Islamic schools lead to several key conclusions. First, IRE, with a multicultural perspective, integrates values of diversity and inclusivity into religious learning. This approach

respects and accepts cultural and religious differences while maintaining the core teachings of Islam. The study found that this approach emphasizes tolerance and diversity, integrating multicultural values into the curriculum. Second, principal planning for multicultural education in Islamic schools involves several crucial elements to effectively implement inclusivity and diversity. These include the development of an inclusive curriculum, student admission and placement policies, and teacher training and development. Third, the implementation of multicultural education in IRE at Fatahillah PJHS, SJHS 4 Cilegon, and MTs Negeri 1 Serang, Indonesia, is evident in several key practices: (1) the non-discriminatory student admission policy, which accepts students from diverse ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds; (2) the deepening of tolerance material in the curriculum, focusing on mutual respect, reducing violence, and resolving disputes; (3) the realization of multicultural values, demonstrated through mutual respect for religious practices within the school community; and (4) the successful implementation of IRE with a multicultural perspective, fostering interfaith tolerance, cultural appreciation, and inclusive policies.

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