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BEYOND RHETORIC AND RESISTANCE: INSTITUTIONAL PATHWAYS OF MULTICULTURALISM IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
In an era of increasing cultural and religious diversity, higher education institutions worldwide are under pressure to foster inclusive environments that prepare students for pluralistic societies. This study examines how Islamic higher education in Indonesia navigates multiculturalism by analyzing three institutional cases through the lens of leadership agency, socio-religious context, and institutional culture. Drawing on document analysis, interviews, and classroom observations, the findings reveal three distinct pathways of institutional response. Case A represents a symbolic type in which inclusivity is expressed rhetorically but remains limited to events and public statements. Case B illustrates a substantive type in which multiculturalism is embedded in curricula, mentoring, and campus activities despite minimal rhetorical emphasis. Case C demonstrates a resistant type in which theological orthodoxy and structural homogeneity limit diversity initiatives and reinforce exclusionary practices. Together, these trajectories highlight that meaningful multicultural engagement depends not only on vision statements but also on the alignment of leadership commitment, curricular design, and institutional culture. The study implies that for Islamic education to move beyond rhetoric or resistance, it must embed multicultural values at both structural and cultural levels, thereby preparing students to engage constructively with diversity while remaining grounded in their religious identity.

Keywords: Curriculum Integration, Institutional Culture, Islamic Higher Education, Multiculturalism

INTRODUCTION
In an era of growing global mobility and interconnectedness, the challenges of cultural diversity, religious pluralism, and social cohesion have become central to both scholarly inquiry and policy debates. Research shows that individuals and institutions adopt diverse strategies to navigate these complexities. For instance, Virgona et al. (2025) highlight how polycultural identity enables individuals to flexibly engage with cultural difference, fostering well-being and meaningful cross-cultural interaction. At the institutional level, Thijs et al. (2025) demonstrate that teachers' beliefs about diversity involve acknowledging cultural differences, emphasizing communalities, and reinforcing national culture, underscoring the multidimensional nature of diversity engagement in education. However, barriers remain, as Masunungure & Maguvhe (2025) reveal in the South African context, where teachers struggle to effectively address cultural and linguistic diversity due to limited training and systemic challenges. In Indonesia, youth use social media as a tool to negotiate multiculturalism and cultural integration, reflecting both opportunities and tensions in a pluralistic society (Saud et al., 2025). Together, these studies illustrate that while multiculturalism offers a framework for fostering respect, participation, and peaceful coexistence, its definitions and institutionalization vary widely across sociopolitical and religious contexts.

Indonesia offers a compelling case for examining these dynamics. Recognised as one of the most diverse nations in the world, the country is home to more than 600 ethnic groups, hundreds of local languages, and multiple religious and belief traditions (Solikhah & Budiharso,

2020). This plurality has historically been framed both as a national asset and as a source of tension. During the New Order regime (1966–1998), state policy emphasised rigid national uniformity, suppressing minority expression and inadvertently fueling ethnic and religious conflicts during the 1998–2004 democratic transition. In the post-reform era, however, renewed academic and policy interest has turned toward more inclusive frameworks for managing diversity, with multiculturalism gaining particular prominence (Aderibigbe et al., 2023).

Multiculturalism emerged as a more widely accepted discourse than pluralism, particularly after the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) issued a 2005 *fatwa* rejecting secularism, pluralism, and liberalism on theological grounds. While pluralism was deemed incompatible with Islamic doctrine, multiculturalism, emphasizing mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, was embraced by Muslim scholars as a more theologically acceptable framework (Abduloh et al., 2022; Hamdan et al., 2022). Historical references, such as the Medina Charter under the Prophet Muhammad, have often been cited to justify this stance as rooted in Islamic tradition (Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023; Wasino, 2013).

This conceptual reconciliation between Islamic principles and multicultural values has influenced how Islamic higher education institutions interpret and implement diversity. Multiculturalism is now understood not as a Western construct but as an Islamic civic ethic that connects faith with social harmony. This perspective shapes institutional visions, curricular design, and leadership practices across universities. Such an approach enables Islamic universities to promote inclusive academic environments while maintaining their theological authenticity (Santoso et al., 2024). Within Islamic higher education, the discourse on multiculturalism has evolved significantly over the past two decades. Empirical studies indicate that integrating multicultural perspectives into religious curricula fosters tolerance, civic engagement, and inclusive citizenship among students (Deiniatur & Hasanah, 2024; Raihani, 2018). Nevertheless, institutional responses vary considerably. Some universities embed multicultural principles into their vision statements, curricula, and programs, while others promote them more informally through leadership or campus culture (Doucette et al., 2021; Nurbatra & Masyhud, 2022; Sibawaihi & Fernandes, 2023). In contrast, certain institutions remain reluctant or resistant due to theological conservatism or local sociopolitical pressures. These variations highlight the need for a systematic framework to capture the spectrum of institutional engagement with multiculturalism.

Recent studies across Muslim-majority contexts indicate that institutional design and everyday practices play a more decisive role than formal mission statements in shaping multicultural outcomes. In Malaysia, research highlights how international students' intercultural adjustment is influenced by language, pedagogy, and campus support (Sena & Eid, 2022). Studies from the Middle East suggest that Islamic values can underpin multicultural education, but effective implementation depends on curricular adaptation and concrete practices rather than rhetorical endorsement (Moussa et al., 2023). Evidence from Turkey shows that theology students demonstrate high levels of intercultural sensitivity, with significant gains linked to direct intercultural exposure (Erdogan & Okumuslar, 2020). Likewise, findings from Sri Lanka reveal that religious curricula hold potential to cultivate intercultural competence, though systematic reform and institutional support are necessary to realise this potential (Ramzy et al., 2022). Collectively, these studies, together with Indonesian scholarship that focuses mainly on curriculum and student outcomes (Irham & Saada, 2023; Syahbudin & Hanafi, 2017), illustrate the importance of moving beyond rhetorical commitments to examine how multicultural principles are embedded in practice.

Despite these contributions, there remains limited research on institutional-level variations in how multiculturalism is conceptualised, integrated, and contested within Islamic higher education. Much of the existing scholarship privileges student outcomes or curricular

reform, leaving a gap in understanding how institutional culture, leadership, and structural mechanisms shape approaches to diversity. Addressing this gap, the present study develops a typology of institutional responses, symbolic, substantive, and resistant, that captures the varying degrees of multicultural adoption in Islamic higher education. By doing so, it offers both a conceptual innovation and an analytical framework for assessing institutional strategies, thereby contributing to broader discussions in Islamic education, multicultural policy, and Islamic sociology.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to examine how multiculturalism is conceptualised, institutionalised, and enacted in three Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. This approach enables an in-depth analysis of structural, cultural, and ideological factors (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The cases were purposively selected to reflect regional variation (Western, Central, Eastern) and differing orientations toward diversity: one explicitly embeds multiculturalism, another practices inclusivity without using the term, and the third shows minimal engagement. Over three months of fieldwork, data were collected from 27 participants, including rectors, vice rectors, lecturers, senate members, and student activists, using purposive and snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom and academic event observations, and document analysis of institutional visions, curricula, and policies were combined to capture both formal commitments and lived practices, providing a comprehensive basis for developing a typology of institutional responses to multiculturalism. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Boards. All participants were informed about the research purpose, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw, and provided written informed consent prior to participation. The researchers positioned themselves as outsiders with no formal affiliation to the participating institutions, while drawing on their collective professional experience in Islamic higher education to support contextual understanding and reflexive interpretation.

A thematic analysis framework was adopted to analyse the qualitative data, using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Al-Eisawi, 2022). Codes were developed inductively from the data, while being sensitized by theoretical perspectives on multiculturalism and institutional culture to ensure both empirical grounding and conceptual coherence. It focused on identifying how multiculturalism is interpreted and implemented through institutional policies, leadership behaviours, and academic practices. The analysis emphasised three thematic dimensions: (1) Institutional narratives on multiculturalism (symbolic, substantive, or resistant); (2) Structural strategies and curricular arrangements; and (3) Actor involvement and ideological orientation. These themes were synthesised into a comparative typology to identify patterns and contrasts across cases. To ensure credibility, triangulation was employed through cross-validation of interviews, observations, and document analysis. Member checking was also conducted with selected informants to refine interpretations and verify thematic accuracy. This methodological design supports the study's goal of constructing an empirically grounded typology of multicultural engagement in Islamic higher education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of three Islamic higher education institutions revealed varied patterns of engagement with multiculturalism, which were categorized into symbolic, substantive, and resistant models. These patterns emerged from triangulated data sources, including institutional documents, interviews with leaders, faculty, and students, as well as classroom and campus observations. The findings highlight how each institution's historical trajectory, leadership orientation, and academic culture shaped its approach to diversity and inclusion. While symbolic

engagement emphasized rhetorical commitments and visible events, substantive engagement integrated multicultural values into curricular and mentoring practices, and resistant orientations actively limited pluralist initiatives through theological orthodoxy and structural homogeneity. The following sections present each case in detail, illustrating how these trajectories were manifested in institutional visions, leadership discourse, academic routines, and student experiences.

Symbolic Model (Case A)

Before examining the detailed visual representation, it is important to firstly outline how these dynamics manifest in the institutional context. Figure 1 illustrates the symbolic type of multicultural practice identified in Case A. This case highlights how the institution projects its commitment to pluralism through strategic vision statements, ceremonial events, and visible public initiatives. While these gestures signal an aspirational stance toward inclusion, they remain largely rhetorical and are not consistently embedded in the institution's academic or structural routines. The figure captures this dynamic by mapping the relationship between institutional vision, symbolic activities, and the limited integration of multiculturalism into everyday practices.

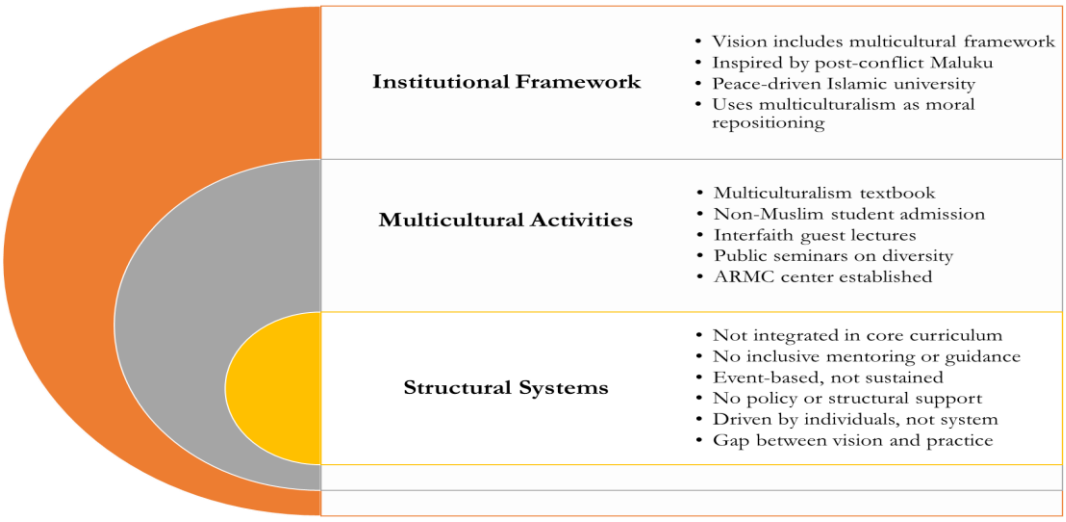

Figure 1. Multiculturalism Practice of Symbolic Type in Case A

Case A demonstrates a symbolic orientation toward multiculturalism. Document analysis revealed that the institution's vision explicitly aspires to "integrating Islam, science, culture, and technology in a multicultural framework by 2032," a formulation shaped by its history of communal conflict. Institutional leaders consistently emphasized peace and inclusivity, with the rector stressing that the institution's commitment was to avoid repeating past divisions (Samad Umarella, personal communication, January 2025). Initiatives such as the establishment of a reconciliation and mediation center, the publication of a multiculturalism textbook, and interfaith guest lectures were prominently highlighted in policy documents. Observations confirmed the presence of banners and slogans promoting pluralism, as well as ceremonial events designed to showcase inclusivity. However, both faculty and students reported that these initiatives had little impact on academic routines. A lecturer explained that multiculturalism was evident in public seminars but not reflected in classroom practices (Hasbollah Toisuta, personal communication, February 2025), while a student activist similarly indicated that most activities were aimed at visibility rather than sustained change (Ilham,

personal communication, March 2025). Observational data reinforced this perception, showing that multicultural events were isolated and rarely embedded in curriculum or mentoring systems. Collectively, these findings highlight the gap between rhetorical commitment and lived practice, consistent with Chin and Levey's (2023) notion of aspirational multiculturalism.

Substantive Model (Case B)

Prior to comprehending Case B's visual representation, it will be beneficial to emphasize how these practices differ in a different institutional setting. Figure 2 presents the substantive type of multicultural practice observed in Case B. Unlike the symbolic model, this type reflects how multicultural values are embedded organically within the institution's daily academic routines, despite the absence of explicit rhetorical statements in its formal vision. The institution's mission emphasizes "developing inclusive Islamic scholarship and civic responsibility," a value rooted in its historical role as a teacher-training college serving diverse ethnic and cultural communities. Rather than projecting multiculturalism through slogans or ceremonial events, the institution integrates inclusivity into teaching, mentoring, and curriculum design. The figure illustrates how team-teaching, interdisciplinary collaboration, and dialogical classroom practices converge to form a structurally grounded and lived multicultural environment.

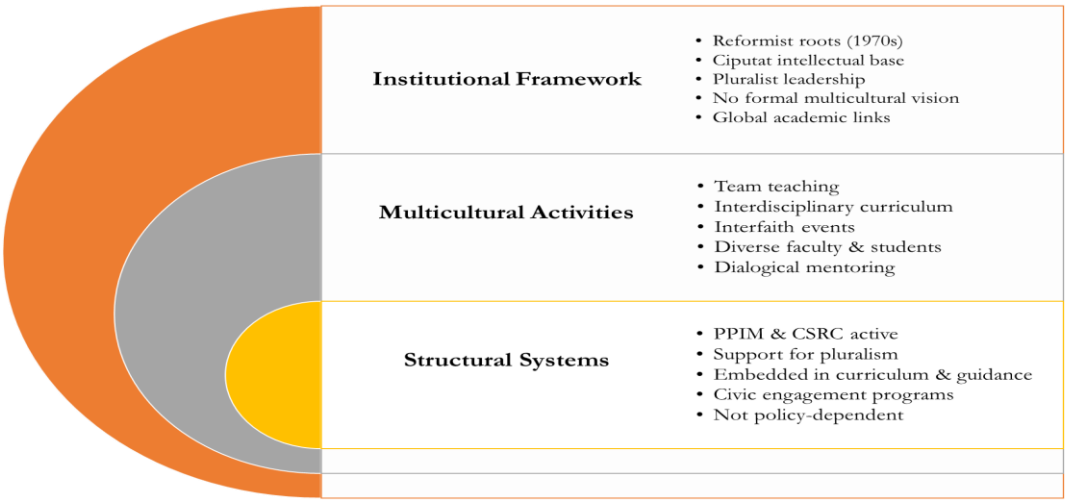

Figure 2. Multiculturalism Practice of Substantive Type in Case B

Case B demonstrates a substantive orientation toward multiculturalism. Document analysis revealed that, although the institutional vision does not directly reference "multiculturalism," inclusivity and civic responsibility are consistently emphasized as foundational values. Interviews with academic leaders revealed that inclusivity is viewed as a "natural expression of Islamic ethics" rather than a separate policy agenda (Asep Saepudin Jahar, personal communication, January 2025). Faculty members described collaborative pedagogical practices, such as team-teaching between lecturers from different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds, as a strategy to "model diversity in the classroom" (Din Wahid, personal communication, February 2025). Student activists highlighted that discussion-based learning and mentoring fostered open dialogue about cultural and regional differences (Rahmad Hidayatulloh, March 2025). Observations of classroom and campus life supported these claims, showing that pluralist interaction was normalized through peer learning, interdisciplinary projects, and inclusive extracurricular activities. However, lecturers acknowledged that such

initiatives often rely on individual commitment rather than institutional mandate, leading to variations in implementation across faculties. Despite these limitations, Case B exemplifies what Banks (2021) and Gorski (2019) term *transformative multiculturalism*, in which inclusion is embedded in both structural and pedagogical systems rather than merely symbolic representation.

Resistant Model (Case C)

Preliminary to presenting the subsequent visual depiction, it is crucial to elucidate the manner in which institutional attitudes toward diversity may manifest not only as acceptance but also as resistance rather than accommodation. Figure 3 illustrates the resistant type of multicultural practice as found in Case C. In this model, institutional engagement with diversity is minimal or absent, as the vision and practices are firmly anchored in theological orthodoxy and mono-religious frameworks. Curricular design, student services, and campus life reinforce cultural and religious homogeneity, leaving little room for pluralist perspectives to emerge. The figure highlights how this resistant orientation manifests through structural rigidity, ideological conformity, and the marginalization of diversity-related initiatives, ultimately constraining the potential for inclusive academic development.

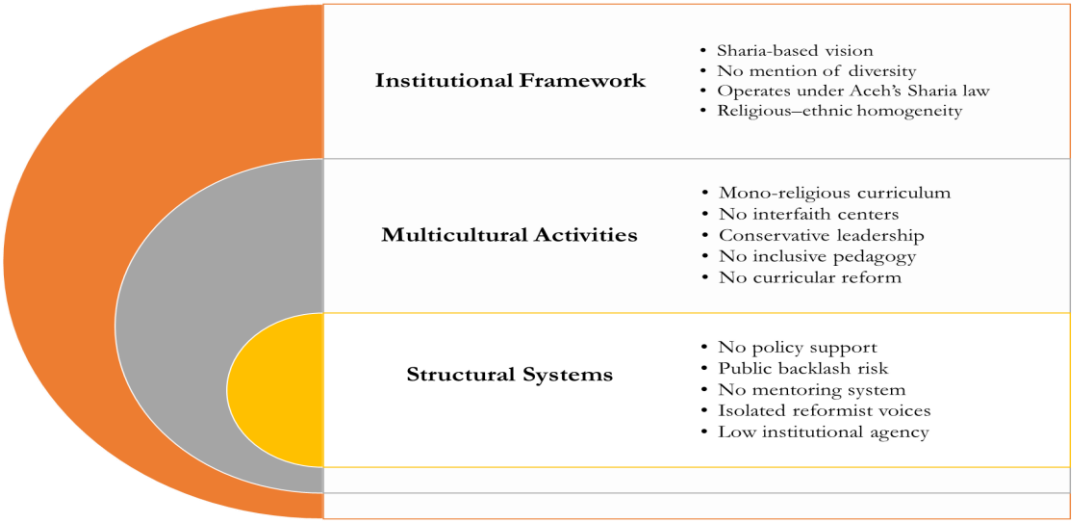

Figure 3. Multiculturalism Practice of Resistance Type in Case C

Case C reflects a resistant orientation toward multiculturalism. Institutional documents emphasize Islamic orthodoxy and Sharia-based technological advancement, with no reference to diversity or pluralism. Leadership interviews reinforced this stance, as one vice rector stressed that the university's mission is to strengthen Islamic identity rather than accommodate multicultural ideas (Danial, Personal Communication, January 2025). Faculty echoed this position, describing tolerance-related courses or activities as unnecessary and even problematic (Chairunnisa, Personal Communication, February 2025). Observations of classrooms confirmed that curricula were mono-religious, with readings and discussions focused solely on Islamic orthodoxy, leaving little room for comparative or plural perspectives. Student services and extracurricular activities further reinforced cultural and religious homogeneity, centering on rituals and events for a single community. Student activists similarly noted that discussions of diversity were consistently framed as challenges rather than values (Farhan, Personal Communication, March 2025). Together, these findings align with Raihani's (2018) argument

that institutions dominated by theological orthodoxy tend to privilege conformity over inclusion, thereby reproducing exclusionary institutional cultures.

Observations across Case C revealed how resistance to multiculturalism was embedded in daily routines and campus culture. Classroom teaching was consistently framed within a mono-religious perspective, with lecturers drawing exclusively on Islamic orthodoxy and avoiding comparative materials. Faculty meetings and academic events similarly reflected a narrow focus, with discussions centered on preserving Sharia-oriented values rather than engaging broader pluralist issues. Campus spaces also reinforced homogeneity; notice boards displayed religious slogans and announcements for ritual-based activities, while no materials promoting intercultural exchange or inclusion were visible. Student events and extracurricular programs, such as study circles and commemorative ceremonies, were exclusively tailored to a single religious tradition, leaving little opportunity for cross-cultural dialogue. These observations confirmed that multicultural discourse was absent not only from official documents but also from everyday academic and social practices, reinforcing an institutional culture that normalizes exclusion and conformity.

Cross-Case Analysis

The findings reveal three distinct institutional trajectories, symbolic, substantive, and resistant, shaped by leadership agency, socio-religious context, institutional culture, and external pressures. Case A reflects symbolic commitment, projecting inclusivity through vision statements and ceremonial events, but does not embed multiculturalism into everyday structures. Case B represents substantive engagement, where curricular innovation, mentoring, and civic-oriented leadership foster sustained pluralist practices even in the absence of explicit rhetoric. Case C demonstrates resistance, as theological orthodoxy and structural homogeneity restrict diversity initiatives. Across cases, observational and interview data indicate that meaningful multiculturalism depends on alignment among leadership, curriculum, and campus culture. The proposed typology thus offers a framework for explaining institutional variation in Islamic higher education, showing that durable multiculturalism requires structural and cultural integration rather than symbolic gestures or resistance.

Typology of Institutional Multiculturalism in Islamic Higher Education

Institutional engagement with multiculturalism in Islamic higher education varies widely, shaped by historical experience, leadership orientation, structural capacity, and ideological climate. From the three cases examined, a typology of responses emerges, comprising three broad models: symbolic, substantive, and resistant. These models reflect not only different levels of commitment but also distinct configurations of pedagogy, institutional culture, and organisational infrastructure. Rather than fixed categories, they represent institutional tendencies shaped by sociopolitical context and intellectual heritage.

The typology presented in Figure 4 not only delineates various institutional responses to multiculturalism but also lays out a conceptual framework for understanding the complex interplay of internal and external forces that influence how pluralism is operationalized within Islamic higher education. Rather than representing static categories, the symbolic, substantive, and resistant typologies are indicative of dynamic trajectories, shaped by intersecting historical developments, ideological considerations, and organisational contexts. This nuanced approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving nature of institutional strategies and their responsiveness to broader societal changes.

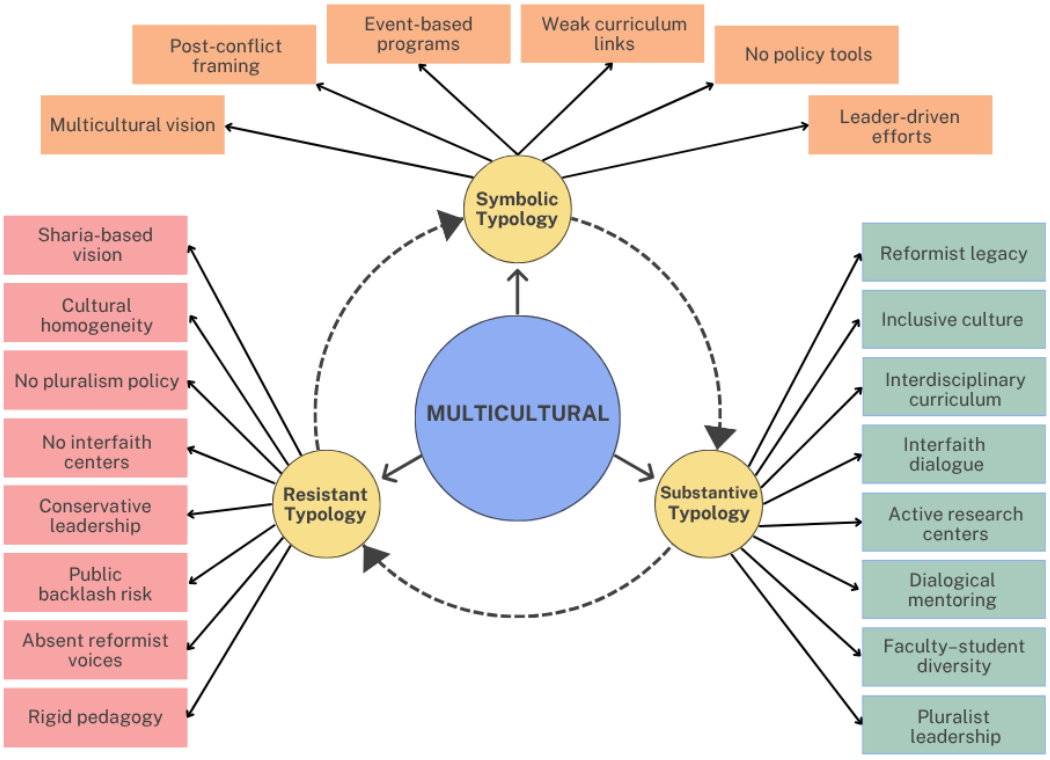

Figure 4. The Structural Dimensions of Institutional Multiculturalism Typology

The findings across the three cases confirm the utility of the typology of symbolic, substantive, and resistant responses to multiculturalism in Islamic higher education. Each model demonstrates how structural, cultural, and ideological factors interact to shape institutional practices, illustrating that diversity in higher education cannot be understood solely through vision statements but must be assessed through everyday practices and organizational cultures.

The symbolic model reflects what Chin and Levey (2023) term aspirational multiculturalism, in which public declarations of inclusivity and event-based initiatives function as symbolic capital but lack structural embedding. The emphasis on reconciliation centers, ceremonial events, and multicultural textbooks projects an image of inclusivity shaped by the institution's post-conflict history. Nevertheless, as faculty and students reported, these initiatives remain largely disconnected from curricula and mentoring practices. This suggests that symbolic commitments serve to manage legitimacy and reputation, particularly in regions marked by historical communal tensions, but do not necessarily transform pedagogical or organizational routines.

By contrast, the substantive model illustrates how multiculturalism can be institutionalized even without rhetorical emphasis. Here, pluralist practices are embedded in curricula, mentoring, and everyday academic routines, aligning with Tierney's (2016) notion of multicultural constitutionalism, where inclusion is enacted through norms and practices. Case B demonstrates how leadership vision, reformist intellectual traditions, and civic scholarship create an institutional habitus that sustains pluralist engagement. Interviews and classroom observations reveal that faculty practices, student forums, and mentoring consistently foster interreligious dialogue, suggesting that substantive multiculturalism relies more on institutional culture and leadership agency than on explicit mission statements.

The resistant model exemplifies Raihani's (2018) argument that institutions grounded in theological orthodoxy prioritize conformity over diversity. The findings show how mono-

religious curricula, homogenous extracurricular activities, and leadership resistance to pluralist discourse reproduce exclusionary institutional cultures. Resistance is embedded not only in official policy but also in everyday teaching, campus spaces, and student life, reinforcing what Haslanger (2019) and Elliott (2021) describe as the reproduction of exclusion through structural and discursive routines. The resistant model thus underscores how ideological commitments to orthodoxy constrain the possibility of multicultural integration.

Taken together, the cases demonstrate that multiculturalism in Islamic higher education is not a uniform project but a contested and context-dependent process. The symbolic model highlights the gap between rhetoric and practice; the substantive model illustrates how multicultural values can be sustained through leadership, curriculum, and mentoring; and the resistant model shows how structural and cultural homogeneity suppresses pluralist initiatives (OK et.al, 2022). The typology provides a practical analytical framework for mapping institutional variation and highlights that meaningful multiculturalism requires alignment between leadership vision, structural supports, and campus culture. Without this alignment, institutions risk reducing diversity to symbolic performance or reinforcing exclusionary norms.

Case A illustrates a symbolic orientation toward multiculturalism, expressed through its strategic vision to "be professional in integrating Islam, science, culture, and technology in a multicultural framework by 2032." This declaration, shaped by the institution's history of communal conflict, signals an effort to reposition itself as a promoter of peace and inclusivity. Several initiatives support this aspiration, including the development of a multiculturalism textbook, the admission of non-Muslim students, interfaith guest lectures, and the establishment of a reconciliation and mediation center with national and international linkages.

Despite these initiatives, multiculturalism remains largely superficial in practice. Observations and interviews reveal that values of inclusion are absent from core curricular design, mentoring structures, and faculty development. Activities are often ceremonial or event-based, designed for visibility rather than structural integration. This reflects what Chin and Levey (2023) and Johnson et al. (2025) term aspirational multiculturalism, where inclusion is rhetorically emphasized but lacks systemic reinforcement. Similarly, Modood (2021) and Parekh (2001) caution that rhetorical multiculturalism risks becoming merely performative if not institutionalized. Raihani (2018) further describes this as cosmetic multiculturalism, particularly when symbolic gestures are unaccompanied by teacher reform or curricular embedding. As Qian and Walker (2022) argue, the inability to translate symbolic capital into operational legitimacy produces a gap between external projection and internal practice. Thus, while Case A demonstrates an inclusive vision, its transformative potential is limited by the absence of structural embedding.

In contrast, Case B represents a substantive orientation to multiculturalism rooted in a reformist intellectual tradition. Although its strategic vision does not explicitly reference multicultural values, these are embedded in the institution's academic ethos. Multiculturalism is enacted through team teaching, interdisciplinary curricula, campus dialogues, and mentoring programs that promote interreligious understanding and civic learning. These practices are not sporadic but sustained, shaping the university's everyday academic culture.

This case confirms Tierney's (2016) and Wiener et al.'s (2019) notion of multicultural constitutionalism, where inclusivity is structurally embedded in norms and practices rather than in rhetorical claims. Reformist leadership, civic scholarship, and international partnerships foster an institutional habitus that sustains pluralism (Sliwka et al., 2024; Wardi et al., 2023). Research centers and civic institutions further strengthen this ethos, enabling dialogical engagement and civic learning. As Hardiansyah and Mas'odi (2022) note, such integration supports moral development and social resilience. Deiniatur and Hasanah (2024) emphasize that when multiculturalism is embedded in pedagogy and mentoring, it provides a durable base for

democratic pluralism. Case B thus demonstrates how epistemological openness can be translated into educational practice, producing a sustainable culture of inclusivity.

Case C reflects a resistant orientation in which multicultural values are absent or actively contested. The institutional vision is framed exclusively around Islamic orthodoxy and Sharia-based technological advancement, with no discourse on pluralism. Campus observations reveal curricula and student services shaped by mono-religious assumptions, leaving minimal room for alternative perspectives.

This orientation aligns with Raihani's (2018) argument that institutions dominated by theological orthodoxy often prioritize conformity over inclusion, thereby weakening civic preparedness. Haslanger (2019) explains that discursive regimes define what counts as legitimate knowledge, limiting institutional transformation. Elliott's (2021) structuration theory further illustrates how rigid routines suppress agency and reproduce exclusionary practices. In such settings, reform-minded educators struggle to gain traction because diversity is perceived as a threat rather than a resource. Public controversies surrounding interreligious engagement illustrate the risks of challenging normative boundaries. Budirahayu and Saud (2021) underscore that without systemic alignment in curriculum, faculty development, and leadership, exclusionary tendencies persist. Case C, therefore, demonstrates how resistant orientations normalize conformity and constrain pluralist initiatives.

The three cases collectively reveal distinct trajectories of institutional engagement with multiculturalism, which can be categorized into three typologies: symbolic, substantive, and resistant. These categories capture not only levels of commitment but also the interplay of pedagogy, institutional culture, and organizational structures. The symbolic typology corresponds to aspirational multiculturalism (Chin & Levey, 2023), where institutions invoke inclusive ideals in vision statements and ceremonial events but fail to integrate them structurally (Hagenaars et al., 2023; Mariyono, 2024). Such orientations are common in transitional or post-conflict contexts, where symbolic capital is mobilized for external legitimacy (Qian & Walker, 2022).

The substantive typology illustrates how pluralist engagement can be deeply rooted without rhetorical claims. This resonates with Tierney (2016) and Wiener et al. (2019), who highlight the structural enactment of inclusion through constitutional practices. Supported by reformist leadership and civic scholarship, such institutions sustain pluralism through interdisciplinary collaboration, mentoring, and dialogical engagement (Sliwka et al., 2024; Wardi et al., 2023; Schiller & Jonitz, 2023; Treve, 2025). Substantive orientations represent a convergence of civic, moral, and academic imperatives.

Conversely, the resistant typology reflects ideological rigidity and structural homogeneity. Here, multiculturalism is equated with dilution of religious identity, reinforcing exclusionary practices (Raihani, 2018; Rios, 2022). Structural inertia, as described by Haslanger (2019) and Elliott (2021), perpetuates these conditions, while the absence of aligned systems for curriculum or faculty development further entrenches resistance (Budirahayu & Saud, 2021).

This typology demonstrates that multiculturalism in Islamic higher education is not a matter of declarative vision alone but is shaped by institutional culture, structural capacity, and leadership orientation. Institutions may shift between symbolic, substantive, and resistant positions depending on historical legacies, leadership transitions, and sociopolitical pressures. As Sibawaihi and Fernandes (2023) and Setiawan and Stevanus (2023) argue, higher education plays a pivotal role in mediating pluralism within Indonesia's diverse society. Substantive multiculturalism, as shown in Case B, offers the most sustainable path by embedding inclusivity into everyday practices, thereby supporting civic readiness and democratic resilience. Ultimately, as Abduloh et al. (2022) and Saada (2023) emphasize, multicultural education is not merely an

academic concern but a civic imperative, requiring institutions to move beyond symbolic gestures toward structural and cultural integration.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights how Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia engage with multiculturalism through three institutional pathways: symbolic, substantive, and resistant. These trajectories are shaped by historical legacies, leadership orientations, structural capacity, and academic culture, reflecting the varied ways institutions respond to diversity. Symbolic engagement projects inclusivity through rhetorical commitments and event-based initiatives without structural embedding, while substantive engagement integrates pluralist values into curricula, leadership, and mentoring, fostering more profound institutional transformation. Resistant orientations, in contrast, prioritize theological orthodoxy and structural homogeneity, limiting space for pluralism and reform. Together, these findings underscore that advancing multiculturalism requires more than rhetorical declarations; it depends on the alignment of leadership vision, academic structures, and campus culture. For Islamic education, this suggests that fostering substantive multiculturalism demands leadership commitment, epistemological openness, and the integration of local cultural ethics to cultivate inclusive and resilient academic communities capable of preparing graduates for plural societies while remaining grounded in Islamic identity.

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