



Exploring Moral and Multicultural Diversity: A New Islamic Education Curriculum

Muhammad Iqbal Dewantara^{1*}, Asep Rahmatullah²

^{1,2} Universitas Islam Internasional Darullughah Wadda'wah, Pasuruan, Indonesia

Email: dewantara13@gmail.com¹, aseprahmatullah@uiidalwa.ac.id²

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia is often criticized for focusing too much on ritual doctrine and failing to instill substantive moral reasoning and applicable diversity attitudes, exacerbating social ethical challenges. This study aims to develop and test the effectiveness of a Multicultural PAI Curriculum as a solution that integrates morality and diversity. Using an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods (Qual→Quan) design, the Multicultural PAI Curriculum was constructed based on Contextual Ethics and Nusantara Islamic Studies, then tested through a quasi-experiment (N=70 students) with MANCOVA analysis to measure Moral Reasoning and Attitude Tolerance. The novelty of this study is the success of presenting an operational model of PAI as a tested Applied Ethics Curriculum, different from conventional legalistic studies. The results show that the Multicultural PAI Curriculum is significantly superior ($P < 0.01$) in improving both variables, filling a theoretical gap in the applied PAI literature. In conclusion, the Multicultural Insight PAI Curriculum is effective as a new transformative PAI model, urging national curriculum reform so that PAI becomes a pillar of ethical and pro-diversity character formation.

Keywords: New PAI Curriculum, Moral Reasoning, Diversity Education, Contextual Ethics, Attitude Tolerance.

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di Indonesia sering dikritik karena terlalu berfokus pada doktrin ritual dan gagal menanamkan penalaran moral substantif serta sikap keragaman yang aplikatif, memperburuk tantangan etika sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan dan menguji efektivitas Kurikulum PAI Berwawasan Multikultural sebagai solusi yang mengintegrasikan moral dan keragaman. Menggunakan desain Metode Campuran Sekuensial Eksploratif (Qual→Quan), Kurikulum PAI Berwawasan Multikultural dikonstruksi berdasarkan Etika Kontekstual dan Kajian Islam Nusantara, kemudian diuji melalui kuasi-eksperimen (N=70 siswa) dengan analisis MANCOVA untuk mengukur Penalaran Moral dan Toleransi Sikap. Novelty penelitian ini adalah keberhasilan menyajikan model operasional PAI sebagai Kurikulum Etika Terapan yang teruji, berbeda dari studi konvensional yang bersifat legalistik. Hasil menunjukkan Kurikulum PAI Berwawasan Multikultural secara signifikan unggul ($P < 0.01$) dalam meningkatkan kedua variabel, mengisi kesenjangan teoretis dalam literatur PAI aplikatif. Kesimpulannya, Kurikulum PAI Berwawasan Multikultural efektif sebagai model PAI baru yang transformatif, mendesak adanya reformasi kurikulum nasional agar PAI menjadi pilar pembentukan karakter etis dan pro terhadap keragaman.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Baru PAI, Penalaran Moral, Pendidikan Keragaman, Etika Kontekstual, Toleransi Sikap.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia currently faces a critical dilemma arising from social pressures and contemporary moral challenges (Arikarani et al., 2025). On the one hand, there is increasing polarization of religious ideologies; on the other, social ethics are eroding (Azra, 2017). Although Islam historically entered the archipelago through peaceful means (Al-Rasyid, 2020), instilling the values of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) and respect for local wisdom as the foundation of Indonesian Muslim identity (Baswedan, 2018), the current PAI curriculum is considered inadequate (Rasmita, 2024). The curriculum tends to be verbalistic, dogmatic, and overly focused on ritual aspects such as *fiqh* (Zuhri, 2018), thus failing to equip students with the competencies needed to navigate cultural diversity and the complexity of expanding digital ethics (Setiadi, J., & Lestari, 2019).

An urgent need exists to develop a New Islamic Religious Education Curriculum that explicitly teaches substantive morals beyond a list of sins and rewards and applicable diversity competencies (Amir, 2021), not just theoretical tolerance (Nadia Saputri et al., 2025). A critical literature review reveals a significant gap in Islamic Religious Education research (Lubis, 2016). Recent studies have largely focused on preventing radicalism (Hasanah & Mustofa, 2023) or evaluating ritual teaching (F. Rahman, 2022). This narrow focus fails to address the core of the problem, namely the curriculum's lack of emphasis on developing moral reasoning skills and integrating diversity as measurable core competencies (Abdullah, I., & Rofiq, 2019).

Specifically, two major gaps were identified. First, the Moral Pedagogy Gap (Ibrahim, B., & Sari, 2018), where Islamic Religious Education focuses on affective internalization rather than moral reasoning skills (Harper & Tuckman, 2006). This means there is no Islamic Religious Education curriculum model that effectively trains and measures students' reasoning on contemporary ethical issues (Khoiruddin, 2020) such as AI ethics or cyberbullying (Hidayat, 2022). Second, the Diversity Skills Gap (Waskito & Rohman, 2018), where multicultural studies remain descriptive-historical (Syafi'i, 2020), without examining changes in attitudes and behaviors of tolerance resulting from curriculum interventions (Rosyad & Maarif, 2020).

To address this gap, this study presents a novelty in the form of the development and validation of a Multicultural Islamic Education Curriculum as an applicable framework (Arifin, 2017; Fauzi, 2023). This curriculum is designed to transform Islamic Education into a subject oriented towards ethical and social skills, not merely doctrine (Daradjat, 2019). The main objective of this study is to develop and validate a theoretical model of this curriculum that integrates substantive morals and diversity (Prasetia, 2020; Rohmah, 2024), and to test its effectiveness in improving Islamic Education students' Moral Reasoning and Attitude Tolerance (Muhaimin, 2021; Yahya, 2021). The research problem formulation specifically asks how this model can be developed and how effective its improvement is compared to the conventional Islamic Education curriculum (Ulum, 2023).

This research has important and dual implications. Theoretically, the findings offer a new perspective on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as an Applied Ethics Curriculum (Syahroni, 2017), enriching Islamic education theory with a model that focuses on critical and applicable moral reasoning (Nurhadi, 2023), while also serving as a constructive

critique of overly legalistic PAI curricula (Zulfikar, 2016). Practically, the results of this study provide concrete policy recommendations to curriculum makers and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to restructure PAI materials to orientate them toward diversity skills and contextual ethics. It is hoped that PAI graduates can truly become agents of morality and unity capable of making positive contributions amidst Indonesia's social complexity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (Qual→Quan) (Creswell & Plano, 2017), which was sequential in two phases to develop and then test the effectiveness of the Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum. In the Qualitative Phase, key informants (4 Islamic Religious Education Teachers, 3 Curriculum Experts, 3 Tolerance Figures) were selected through Purposive and Snowball Sampling (Dayusman, 2023; Sugiyono, 2021) to obtain the conceptual basis of the curriculum model. The Quantitative Phase focused on 11th grade students in Big City Surabaya, with a sample of 70 students divided into an Experimental Group (N=35) and a Control Group (N=35) using Cluster Random Sampling. The Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum intervention was implemented for 4-6 weeks in the Experimental Group.

Measurements were conducted using validated and tested instruments for reliability (Harper & Tuckman, 2006; S. T. Rahman & Rabiul Islam, 2022): the Moral Reasoning Test, validated by Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and the Attitude Tolerance Scale, tested for reliability by Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$). An interview guide was used in Phase I, while the Moral Reasoning Test and the Attitude Tolerance Scale were used in Phase II as Pre-test and Post-test. The data collection procedure was systematic, starting with the development of a curriculum prototype, followed by a Pilot Study of the instrument, and a quasi-experimental intervention. The researcher's role as observer and facilitator was maintained, and research ethics, including Informed Consent and data confidentiality, were strictly adhered to (Flick, 2022).

Qualitative data from Phase I were analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify themes that supported the curriculum construction. Quantitative data from Phase II were analyzed using Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) with IBM SPSS Statistics software (Alam & Daflizar, 2018; Field, 2013). MANCOVA was chosen to simultaneously compare Post-test means on two dependent variables (Moral Reasoning and Attitude Tolerance) while controlling for the influence of Pre-test. This analytical approach is consistent with the research objectives, as Thematic Analysis addresses the conceptual model of the curriculum, while MANCOVA simultaneously tests the effectiveness and significance of differences in the new curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research is presented systematically through two phases: curriculum development (qualitative) and effectiveness testing (quantitative) which are described as follows:

Qualitative Phase Results: Development of a Multiculturally Informed Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

This study employed an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (Qual→Quan) (Creswell & Plano, 2017). This two-phase design served as the foundation of the study, beginning with the Qualitative Phase (Qual) aimed at developing a Multiculturally Informed Islamic Religious Education Curriculum (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). After the curriculum model was successfully constructed, the research proceeded to the Quantitative Phase (Quan) to empirically test its effectiveness. The entire study was planned to last seven months, encompassing instrument development, a four- to six-week intervention period, and data analysis.

The Qualitative Phase, which focuses on curriculum development, involved selecting key informants through purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2021) and snowball sampling (Dayusman, 2023). The selected participants consisted of four senior/high-achieving Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, three Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum experts from universities, and three tolerance figures/education activists. The purpose of selecting these diverse participants was to obtain a comprehensive perspective that serves as the basis for curriculum design that is not only academically valid but also socially relevant and applicable in a pluralistic society.

Meanwhile, the Quantitative Phase, which aims to test the effectiveness of the curriculum, was conducted in the Big City of Surabaya by taking samples from two public or private MA/SMA/SMA. The target population was 11th grade students (aged 16–17 years). The research sample consisted of a total of 70 students, divided evenly into an Experimental Group (N=35) and a Control Group (N=35) using Cluster Random Sampling (Harper & Tuckman, 2006; S. T. Rahman & Rabiul Islam, 2022). This division was important to ensure a valid comparison between the new curriculum treatment and the conventional curriculum.

The measurement accuracy of the Moral Reasoning and Attitude Tolerance variables was ensured through careful instrument development (S. T. Rahman & Rabiul Islam, 2022). In the Qualitative Phase, an Interview Guide was used and its content was validated by three experts (Loree & Tuckman, 1973). For the Quantitative Phase, the instruments used were the Moral Reasoning Test and the Attitude Tolerance Scale, where the validity of the Moral Reasoning Test was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Wahid & Hamami, 2021).

Qualitative data analysis using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) successfully concretized the Multicultural Islamic Education Curriculum as a prototype. This curriculum model is built on three core components identified from field findings: the Contextual Ethics Module, Applied Diversity Pedagogy, and Nusantara Islamic Studies. Expert validation further confirmed that this model has high content validity and practicality, making it a robust curriculum framework ready to be tested for its effectiveness in a quantitative context.

Quantitative Phase Results: Testing the Effectiveness of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum with a Multicultural Perspective

The quantitative phase of this study was rigorously designed using a quasi-experimental design. Its primary objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum administered to the Experimental Group by directly comparing it to the conventional Islamic Religious Education curriculum

administered to the Control Group. This testing was crucial for measuring the actual impact of the new curriculum on students' moral and social competencies.

The collected data was then analyzed using Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA). Using MANCOVA is a crucial methodological choice because it statistically allows researchers to control for the influence of students' pre-test scores on both groups. By controlling for pre-test variables, comparisons of post-test results become much more accurate and valid, minimizing bias that may arise from differences in students' initial abilities (Creswell & Plano, 2017).

Table 1: MANCOVA Test Results for Moral Reasoning and Attitude Tolerance

Dependent Variable	Post-test Average of Experimental Group (Adjusted Mean)	Post-test Average of Control Group (Adjusted Mean)	Value F	Significance Value (P)	η^2 (Effect Size)
Moral Reasoning	82.72	68.45	18.55	<0.01	0.21 (Big Effect)
Attitude Tolerance	85.11	71.90	14.90	<0.01	0.17 (Big Effect)

The overall MANCOVA analysis results indicate that there is a significant multivariate effect of the curriculum treatment ($P < 0.01$) on the dependent variables of Moral Reasoning and Attitude Tolerance. These collective findings provide a strong and consistent indication that the Multicultural Islamic Education Curriculum is overall superior and more effective in improving students' moral and social competencies compared to traditional Islamic Education teaching methods.

A more detailed and focused single-variable analysis confirmed the significant superiority of the Multicultural Islamic Education Curriculum on the Moral Reasoning variable. The Experimental Group showed a significantly higher adjusted mean than the Control Group ($F(1, 67) = 18.55$; $P < 0.01$). This finding was supported by a strong effect size value ($\eta^2 = 0.21$), indicating that the new curriculum was responsible for explaining 21% of the variance in the improvement in students' moral reasoning abilities.

Similarly, the results of the single-variable test for the Attitude Tolerance variable showed a significant and measurable advantage. The Experimental Group recorded a significantly higher adjusted mean score than the Control Group ($F(1, 67) = 14.90$; $P < 0.01$). This success confirms that the new curriculum design is able to provide a real positive impact on students social attitudes.

The effect size value ($\eta^2=0.17$) on Attitude Tolerance confirms the strong effect of the Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in increasing students' positive attitudes towards diversity. Overall, these quantitative findings empirically prove that shifting the Islamic Religious Education curriculum towards multiculturalism is a successful and effective intervention strategy in instilling pro-diversity attitudes.

1. Interpretation of Results and Theoretical Relationships

The significant advantages of the Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in improving Moral Reasoning and Attitudinal Tolerance fundamentally indicate that shifting the focus of Islamic Religious Education is an effective pedagogical

strategy (Alam & Daflizar, 2018). This transformation involves a crucial transition from doctrinal teaching that tends to be exclusive to contextual ethics and applied diversity (Waskito & Rohman, 2018). These empirical findings prove that Islamic Religious Education, when reoriented, successfully produces graduates who are not only ritualistically pious but also ethically and socially competent (F. Rahman, 2022).

The significant improvement in students' Moral Reasoning variables directly confirms the theory that moral abilities must be honed through systematic exposure to ethical dilemmas and moral analysis frameworks (Harper & Tuckman, 2006). This suggests that moral mastery is not the result of mere memorization or passive obedience, but rather of active critical and analytical thinking processes.

In contrast, conventional Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula, which traditionally focus too much on the fiqh aspects of worship (F. Rahman, 2022), have proven inadequate in developing the critical thinking and moral analysis skills needed to address contemporary ethical issues (Nasir, 2025). A narrow focus on rituals fails to provide the cognitive tools necessary to consider and resolve real-world moral dilemmas.

Thus, the Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum effectively fills a long-standing pedagogical gap in Islamic education. It successfully demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education can be an effective platform for developing contemporary ethical reasoning skills, encompassing issues beyond the realm of pure worship. By utilizing case studies and real-life contexts, Islamic Religious Education transforms from a descriptive subject to a prescriptive and applicable one in shaping students' moral character.

In addition to the moral dimension, increasing Attitude Tolerance strongly supports the hypothesis that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) must be integrated with local historical and cultural values, particularly the concept of Islam Nusantara (Azra, 2017). Islamic Religious Education taught within the framework of *ukhuwah wathaniyyah* (national brotherhood) and *tasamuh* (compassion) has proven successful in countering and neutralizing narrow or exclusive religious narratives that students are vulnerable to accessing from external sources (Nadia Saputri et al., 2025).

These findings strongly emphasize the urgency of the recommendation for religious moderation (Baswedan, 2018) as the foundation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum (Rasmita, 2024). Moderation is not merely a normative concept, but a pedagogical foundation that produces measurable behavioral changes. Research results clearly demonstrate that students' social acceptance is higher when PAI is contextualized as an inclusive teaching that values diversity and is rooted in national culture (Syafi'i, 2020).

Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum with a Multicultural Perspective must be recognized as a key instrument for strengthening national harmony and unity (Waskito & Rohman, 2018). Its success proves that reforming the Islamic Religious Education curriculum towards a more contextual and multicultural direction is a strategic investment in creating citizens who are not only religiously devout but also ethically and socially responsible.

2. Integration of Results and Emphasis on Novelty

This research successfully presents a major novelty in the form of the development of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. This model serves as a structured solution explicitly designed to address the significant gap between overly normative (doctrinal-based) PAI and the needs of modern PAI oriented toward applicable ethical and social skills. The success in developing and validating this curriculum is a major milestone and originality of this study.

Statistically, the effectiveness of the Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum has been convincingly proven through quantitative testing. These results clearly address the overall research problem formulation. Key findings consistently affirm that an effective pedagogical strategy lies in a fundamental shift in the focus of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum.

This shift includes a fundamental transformation from legal aspects (formal fiqh) to ethics, and from theological history to sociological dialogue, making it accessible to all levels of society. This new orientation has been statistically proven to significantly improve students' moral and social competence, strengthening the relevance of Islamic Religious Education amidst contemporary challenges.

In terms of theoretical implications, this research makes a profound academic contribution. By offering an operational model of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as an Applied Ethics Curriculum, this study goes beyond and complements existing conventional Islamic Religious Education (PAI) studies. This contribution substantively enriches Islamic education theory.

The concept of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as an applied skills curriculum was previously merely a discourse or idea that had not been structured and tested in the literature (Setiadi, J., & Lestari, 2019). However, the Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum has successfully transformed this theoretical discourse into a validated and tested model, thus providing a new empirical foundation for the development of Islamic education theory in Indonesia.

Regarding practical implications, the findings of this study are urgent and highly relevant for policymakers. The Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum (PAI) must be immediately adopted as a key element in national PAI curriculum reform (Qolbi, S. K., & Hamami, 2021). This model provides clear implementation guidance for educators to shift the focus of teaching toward applicable ethics and diversity skills.

The implementation of a multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is crucial for achieving the goal of national character development, namely to effectively combat intolerance and polarization among students, often fueled by narrow religious understandings (Hasanah & Mustofa, 2023). Thus, PAI can optimize its role as a key pillar in building national character that upholds ethics, harmony, and supports diversity.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully achieved its objectives by demonstrating that the Multicultural Islamic Education Curriculum is a valid and highly effective curriculum framework in



addressing the weaknesses of conventional Islamic Education. This success was proven through two phases: First, the model was developed based on three main pillars Contextual Ethics, Applied Diversity Pedagogy, and Nusantara Islamic Studies. Second, the effectiveness test through MANCOVA analysis showed a significant superiority ($P < 0.01$) of the new curriculum in improving students' Moral Reasoning ($\eta^2 = 0.21$) and Attitude Tolerance ($\eta^2 = 0.17$). These findings strongly validate that the new curriculum successfully transforms Islamic Education into a relevant and applicable subject in moral and social aspects, making it an effective model for producing ethical and socially competent graduates.

In terms of theoretical implications, this research provides an original academic contribution (novelty) by offering a Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Curriculum as a structured and measurable Applied Ethics Curriculum Model. This major contribution fills a gap in Islamic Religious Education literature that was previously dominated by studies of rituals or radicalism prevention. This model modifies traditional Islamic Religious Education curriculum theories that tend to be legalistic, proving that a shift from a legalistic to a contextual approach is a fundamental prerequisite for forming substantive morals. Its practical implications urge policymakers to immediately integrate this curriculum into the national Islamic Religious Education structure to strengthen *ukhuwah wathaniyyah* (brotherhood and unity) and combat intolerance.

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