Islamic Education in Indonesia: Challenges and Opportunities in the Context of Multiculturalism

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia faces significant challenges and opportunities in the increasingly complex context of multiculturalism. The aim of this study is to analyze the opportunities and challenges faced in efforts to provide effective and inclusive Islamic religious education in Indonesia, which is a country with a rich diversity of religions, cultures and ethnicities. This study uses a descriptive-analytical research method by conducting a literature review of previous studies, the latest educational policies, and related official documents. The results of the analysis show that there are several main challenges that need to be overcome in Islamic religious education in Indonesia. First, differences in understanding and practice of Islam between different ethnic and cultural groups complicate an inclusive learning process. Second, the lack of a pedagogical approach that suits the needs of students from multicultural backgrounds can hinder an in-depth understanding of the Islamic religion. Third, the imbalance in the number of qualified teachers in Islamic religious education can affect teaching quality. However, opportunities that can be utilized in improving Islamic religious education in Indonesia are, First, a multicultural approach in teaching Islamic religion can encourage a better understanding of tolerance, cooperation, and mutual understanding among students. Second, the use of communication and information technology can expand access to quality Islamic religious learning materials. Third, collaboration between educational institutions and local Islamic communities can enrich students' learning experiences through extracurricular activities and field trips.

Introduction

Islamic religious education in Indonesia has a very important contribution in the formation of religious character and values for the younger generation. As a country with the largest Muslim majority population in the world, Islamic religious education is an integral part of the national education system (Hamid, 2021). However, in the context of increasingly complex multiculturalism, Islamic religious education in Indonesia is faced with various challenges and opportunities that need to be faced and utilized. With rich cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity, Indonesia faces major challenges in maintaining the harmony and diversity of its people (Raharjo,

2005). Religious conflicts, discrimination, and social tensions are often obstacles in organizing inclusive and progressive Islamic religious education (Khozin, 2019). Therefore, it is important to understand the challenges faced in integrating Islamic religious education with the principle of multiculturalism.

The scope of Islamic religious education is the Qur'an-Hadith, Akidah, Worship, Morals, and Islamic History, it turns out to be closely related to the development of multicultural education. When learning to read the Qur'an such as the Science of Tajweed, students will understand that the variety of languages is something that is sunnatullah. Then instill understanding in students to respect and acknowledge language differences whose implications will give birth to different cultural varieties (Hairiyah, 2016). While in the material aspect of the Faith, it can be integrated with multicultural knowledge, for example a person who has a strong faith in Allah will always respect and respect other groups who have different beliefs. Appreciation or respect does not mean in the form of acknowledging or following their beliefs, but living in harmony and not interfering with each other and hurting each other (Hammy, 2016).

Moral material can also be packaged with multicultural insights, because it includes good relations between fellow Muslims and more importantly between servants and the Creator. Morals in Islam are very broad covering morals to family, parents, relatives, neighbors, compatriots, even morals towards different religions. Likewise, the material aspect of worship is developed by realizing to students that each religion has a different variety of worship and rituals. As Muslims or commonly referred to as Muslims must carry out worship rituals as ordered according to guidance. They must also respect other religions in terms of carrying out worship, but must not participate in other religions (Apipudin, 2020).

One of the main challenges is the gap in understanding of Islam among students. In a multicultural society, Islamic students have diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Faridah, 2018). This has led to variations in the understanding of Islam, and religious educators need to have the right approach to deal with this challenge. In addition, controversial issues such as religious radicalism are also challenges that need to be overcome in providing moderate and inclusive Islamic religious education. However, in the context of multiculturalism there are also great opportunities for Islamic religious education in Indonesia (Suyatno, 2013). In an inclusive atmosphere, Islamic religious education can be a vehicle to promote understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect between religious communities (Mampuniarti, 2010). With the right approach, Islamic religious education can be a means to strengthen one's Islamic identity, while still fostering respect for differences and equal rights for all individuals (Suyatno, 2013).

Education as an important instrument in society (Rahman, 2016), plays a role in improving peace efforts (Rahman, 2015). This idea is also supported by cultural and traditional

factors in cultivating diversity values (Rahman, 2016; Gusman et. al, 2023). This is important to be included in Islamic religious learning (Sari et. al, 2023), so as to enable Islamic education policies with all their challenges to make teachers more prepared in the field (Rahman, 2023). The values of culture-based religious education are also exemplified by various Islamic schools such as Muhammadiyah (Rahman, 2019), Ma'arif, Persis, and other Islamic schools. Meanwhile, Islam, which is derived from its teachings in the Qur'an (Yusroh, 2018), provides legitimacy for Muslims, both men and women (Amaliatulwalidain &; Rahman, 2020), in an effort to make changes, including the idea of multicultural education

This study aims to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic religious education in Indonesia in the context of multiculturalism. Through a comprehensive study, crucial issues that must be faced will be analyzed, including diverse religious understanding, religious radicalism, and inter-religious harmony. In addition, strategies and steps that can be taken to optimize the potential of Islamic religious education in creating an inclusive and harmonious society will be discussed. In facing challenges and taking advantage of existing opportunities, Islamic religious education in Indonesia needs to work together with the government, educational institutions, communities, and other stakeholders (Masrukin, 2020). Through strong synergy and collaborative efforts, Islamic religious education can be a key factor in building a society based on tolerance, mutual respect, and diversity in line with the principles of multiculturalism (Yaqin, 2019). This research will outline the challenges faced and opportunities that exist for Islamic religious education in Indonesia in the context of multiculturalism. It is hoped that the results of this research can make a valuable contribution to stakeholders in formulating policies and practices of Islamic religious education that are inclusive, relevant, and support the process of building a harmonious and prosperous society.

Method

This research is a type of library research, namely by collecting data both from books, journals, scientific papers, which have relevance to the object of research. How to collect data is done by tracing and collecting data that is the source of research (Nashihin, 2023). The description of the data collection procedure is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1.

Data Collection Techniques
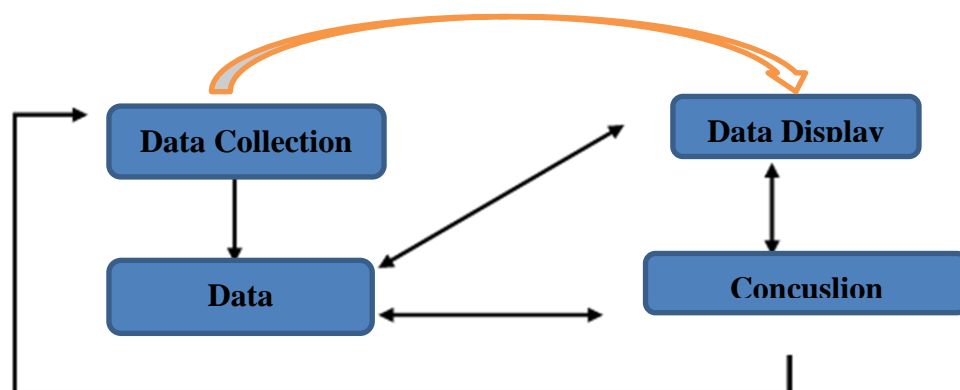
After all the data is collected, then enter the discussion stage related to all the problems being researched, so that data and study materials will be produced definitely and accurately. The data that has been collected is then carried out qualitative analysis, reasoning from general to specific (inductive) (Arifin, 2014).

Result and Discussion

1. Islamic Education in the Context of Multiculturalism

Islamic religious education in the context of multiculturalism refers to an approach that combines Islamic values with respect for the diversity of cultures, religions, and traditions in society. The main objective of multicultural Islamic religious education is to strengthen understanding and appreciation of existing differences, as well as promote cooperation, tolerance, and mutual understanding between individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds (Harto, 2014).

There are several important points in the context of Islamic religious education in multiculturalism, namely first, respect for diversity. Islamic religious education in the context of multiculturalism should emphasize the importance of respecting and respecting differences in society (Zulhammi, 2016). Students should be taught to respect and accept cultural, religious, and traditional diversity without abusing or degrading other religious or cultural values. Second, education about the universal values of Islam. Islamic religious education in multiculturalism should encourage a deep understanding of Islam's universal values which include peace, justice, tolerance, compassion, and equality (Mahariah, 2022). Students need to be taught to recognize and practice these values in everyday life and in interacting with people from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

Third, interreligious and cultural dialogue. Multicultural Islamic religious education should also encourage constructive dialogue between followers of Islam and people of other faiths and cultures. This dialogue should be based on mutual understanding, mutual listening, and a desire to learn from each other (Hammy, 2016). The aim is to promote better awareness and understanding of religious and cultural differences and similarities. Fourth, the development of intercultural skills. Islamic religious education in multiculturalism should provide opportunities for students to develop intercultural skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively, negotiate, and good conflict resolution. This will help students build harmonious relationships with people from various cultural and religious backgrounds (Syafe'i, 2017).

Fifth, community empowerment. Multicultural Islamic religious education should encourage community empowerment through education. Islamic religious education should

prepare students to play an active role in promoting peace, social justice, and respect for human rights. Students should be taught to recognize and deal with social issues relevant to various groups in society (Karim, 2017). Islamic religious education in the context of multiculturalism is about building understanding, tolerance, and mutual understanding between followers of Islam and people of other religions and cultures. Through inclusive and multicultural Islamic religious education, it is hoped that a harmonious, mutually respectful, and peaceful coexistence can be created in the midst of existing diversity (Mahfud, 2013).

2. Challenges of Islamic Education in the Context of Multiculturalism

Cultural differences in Indonesia are one of the challenges. Indonesia has a rich cultural diversity, and Islamic religious education is faced with the task of accommodating such cultural differences. The main challenge is how to convey Islamic religious teachings by paying attention to cultural diversity and avoiding forms of exclusivity that can trigger intercultural conflicts (Tambunan et al., 2017). In addition, the existence of differences in religious beliefs and practices in Indonesia also makes the problem complex if not handled seriously. Islamic religious education needs to respect these differences and create an inclusive dialogue space to build understanding and tolerance between religious communities (Sukarta, 2018).

Islamic religious education must always be encouraged to play a role as an effort to form an identity, so as to be able to integrate Islamic religious education with the formation of an inclusive national identity. Islamic religious education needs to instill national values and promote inclusive attitudes towards differences to strengthen national unity and unity (Abdullah, 2021). Islamic religious education is faced with complex challenges in the context of multiculturalism. In an increasingly religiously, culturally, and ethnically diverse society, Islamic religious education needs to accommodate those differences while maintaining its identity.

Facing religious plurality is the biggest challenge is ensuring that Islamic religious education respects and understands religious diversity, and promotes interreligious harmony. Islamic religious education should encourage constructive interfaith dialogue, promote a better understanding of the beliefs of others, and avoid attitudes of exclusivity or intolerance. Meanwhile, harmonizing religious values and multicultural values such as peace, justice, tolerance, and mutual respect is a must (Hadi, 2014). It is also important for Islamic religious education to combine these Islamic values with multicultural values such as equal rights, religious freedom, and respect for differences. It can help students understand how Islam views and interacts with diverse societies.

In a multicultural society, stereotypes and prejudices against certain religions and cultures still exist. Islamic religious education must work hard to overcome any negative stereotypes that may exist towards Islam and Muslims. This can be done through an educational approach that is open, knowledge-based, and supports intercultural dialogue. It is also important to teach students

how to recognize and avoid prejudice in their understanding and interaction with individuals of different faiths. Because in a multicultural context, the material taught in Islamic religious education must be relevant to students' lives and their social context. This means linking Islamic teachings to contemporary issues, such as human rights, the role of women in society, peace, and social welfare. Islamic religious education must also recognize the diversity of Islamic culture and traditions themselves, so that students understand variations in the practice and interpretation of this religion (Salmiwati, 2013).

Strengthening students' Islamic identity in an increasingly diverse society must be done as early as possible. Islamic religious education should provide a solid understanding of Islam's basic principles, core values, and worship practices, while encouraging students to understand and appreciate religious and cultural diversity. Islamic religious education can also play a role in building a positive sense of Islamic pride and identity in the context of multiculturalism.

3. Opportunities for Islamic Education in the Context of Multiculturalism

a. Collaborative Learning

The context of multiculturalism provides opportunities to develop collaborative learning approaches where students from different backgrounds can learn from each other and share knowledge about their religion and culture. This can increase intercultural understanding and tolerance (Syahrul, 2020). Collaborative learning in Islamic education in the context of multiculturalism is an approach that combines elements of collaboration and multiculturalism to create an inclusive learning environment, promote mutual respect, and encourage intercultural dialogue in the context of Islam (Halim, 2022).

This approach allows students from different cultural and religious backgrounds to study together, sharing their knowledge, experience, and understanding of Islam. Some principles and strategies that can be applied in collaborative learning of Islamic education in the context of multiculturalism are (Jamhuri, 2019):

1) Building an understanding of diversity

Start by building students' understanding of the diversity of cultures, religions, and traditions in society. This can be done through discussions, case studies, or activities that introduce students to the different cultures and religions that surround them (Rosyada, 2019).

2) Encourage dialogue and exchange of ideas

Facilitate open dialogue and mutual listening among students. Encourage them to share their understanding of Islam and how it is interpreted and practiced in their

respective cultures. This can be done through group discussions, collaborative projects, or structured debates.

3) Provide inclusive resources

Make sure the learning materials and resources provided illustrate the diversity in Islam. Included perspectives from various Islamic traditions, understandings, and cultures. In addition, choose resources that respect all students without discrimination or negative stereotypes.

4) Using student-centered learning methods

Use learning methods that allow students to actively participate and engage in learning. For example, group projects, simulations, case studies, and role plays can be used to foster cooperation, problem-solving, and a deeper understanding of multicultural issues in the context of Islam.

5) Facilitation of mutual respect

Encourage students to develop mutual respect for differences and diversity in religion and culture. Help them understand that there is no single interpretation of Islam and that variations in beliefs and practices are natural and valuable.

6) Encourage intercultural collaboration

Facilitation of projects or activities involving cooperation between students from different cultural and religious backgrounds. This can include research projects, group presentations, or social activities that promote intercultural understanding and tolerance.

7) Exploring local knowledge and student experience

Provide space for students to share their own knowledge and experience of Islam in their cultural context. This can provide valuable insight to other students about the different ways Islam is interpreted and practiced across different cultures.

It is also important to involve teachers as facilitators who support students in carrying out collaborative learning and facilitate fruitful dialogue. Teachers need to guide students to appreciate differences, respect individual rights, and work together to achieve a better understanding of Islam in the context of multiculturalism (Ubaidillah, 2018).

b. Inclusive Curriculum

Islamic religious education can take advantage of opportunities to develop inclusive curricula that accommodate diverse religious and cultural perspectives. In this regard, universal values such as love, justice, and peace can be emphasized as points of equality between religions. An inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum is an approach in teaching Islam that pays attention to the diversity and needs of diverse students in an educational context. The main goal is

to create an inclusive learning environment, promote a deep understanding of Islam, and respect existing differences (Abdullah, 2021).

Here are some characteristics and principles that may be contained in an inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum, namely (Yarun, 2019):

1) Recognition of diversity

    The curriculum recognizes and values diversity within the student community, including differences in culture, language, ethnicity, and social background. In an Islamic context, this approach acknowledges the variation in religious understandings, traditions, and practices that exist among students.

2) Open approach

    The curriculum encourages students to think critically, ask questions, and seek a deeper understanding of Islam. The understanding of Islam is taught in an inclusive way, respecting differences of opinion, and avoiding narrow dogmatic attitudes.

3) Universal context

    The curriculum links religious lessons to universal contexts, such as human values, peace, justice, and tolerance. It helps students understand the relevance and application of Islamic principles in everyday life, as well as in social and global contexts.

4) Diverse teaching methods

    This curriculum uses a variety of teaching methods that involve students actively in the learning process. This includes group discussions, collaborative projects, presentations, role plays, and the use of relevant educational technology. This approach helps students with different learning styles to develop their overall understanding (Sukmadinata, 2013).

5) Development of life skills

    This curriculum not only focuses on religious aspects, but also pays attention to the development of life skills necessary in daily life. These include critical thinking skills, effective communication, problem-solving, cooperation, empathy, and social justice.

6) Emphasis on ethics and morals

    The curriculum emphasizes the importance of ethics and morals in students' lives. This includes teaching about Islamic values that encourage integrity, responsibility, honesty, gender equality, and respect for human rights (Yarun, 2019).

7) Inclusive evaluation

This curriculum uses an inclusive evaluation method, acknowledging the diversity of students and allowing them to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways that suit their learning styles and needs (Abdullah, 2021).

The inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum aims to create a safe learning space, respect differences, and strengthen students' religious identity while developing an inclusive understanding and critical thinking about Islam.

c. Diverse Teacher Training

Teachers of Islamic religious education need to receive training that strengthens their understanding of multiculturalism and develops skills to teach in diverse environments. This training will help teachers build inclusive learning environments and facilitate intercultural dialogue (Sapari, 2019). The need for diversity awareness to help PAI teachers realize the diversity that exists in their classrooms. This can be done by opening discussions about different cultural backgrounds, religions, and traditions among their students. The emphasis on the importance of respecting differences and accepting diversity will be fundamental to an understanding of multiculturalism. In addition, the development of intercultural skills should focus on the development of intercultural skills of PAI teachers. This includes an understanding of different cultures, norms, and values, as well as the ability to communicate and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds effectively (Rantio, 2022).

Meanwhile, inclusive teaching materials need to be given guidelines and resources to develop inclusive teaching materials. This includes introducing different religions, cultures, and religious practices in Islamic religious learning. Teachers also need to encourage students to value diversity and avoid prejudice or negative stereotypes against certain religious or cultural groups. Collaboration and exchange of experiences facilitate PAI teachers from various backgrounds. This can be done through workshops, group discussions, or mentoring programs, where teachers can learn from each other from their experiences in facing the challenges of multiculturalism in the classroom (Nurochim, 2020).

Cross-disciplinary training focuses on religion and diversity, PAI teachers can also be included in cross-disciplinary training involving teachers from other fields of education. It helps in understanding the perspective of multiculturalism from a broader point of view, such as sociology, anthropology, or social psychology. Inclusive assessments provide guidance to PAI teachers on how to design inclusive assessments. This includes considering students' diversity in assessments and assessing their understanding of multiculturalism as well as their ability to appreciate differences. Adequate administrative support to PAI teachers in implementing a multiculturalism approach in the classroom. This can include

the development of school policies that support multiculturalism, additional resources such as books and teaching materials, and regular spaces for discussion and reflection (Koni, 2016). By following these steps in the diverse PAI Teacher training, it is hoped that teachers can develop a better understanding of multiculturalism and integrate it into Islamic religious learning effectively.

Conclusion

Islamic education in Indonesia faces challenges and opportunities in the context of multiculturalism. These challenges include differences in culture, religious beliefs, and practices, as well as the formation of an inclusive national identity. However, opportunities for collaborative learning, inclusive curricula, and diverse teacher training provide the foundation to address those challenges. Some principles and strategies that can be applied in collaborative learning of Islamic education in the context of multiculturalism are: 1) Building understanding of diversity, 2) Encouraging dialogue and exchange of ideas, 3) Providing inclusive resources, 4) Using student-centered learning methods, 5) Facilitation of mutual respect, 6) Encouraging intercultural collaboration, 7) Exploring local knowledge and student experience. By taking advantage of this opportunity, Islamic Education can be a vehicle to build understanding, tolerance, and harmony between religious communities in Indonesia's multicultural society.

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