

RELIGIOUS HARMONY THROUGH MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STUDIES IN INDONESIA-SINGAPORE

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Abstract

This study examines the comparative philosophy of multicultural education in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia and Singapore. Amidst increasingly complex societal diversity, understanding and implementing multicultural education are crucial, particularly in shaping students' character as tolerant and inclusive. The background to this research problem is the need to examine how the two countries, with different social and cultural contexts, integrate the principles of multicultural education into Islamic Religious Education. The main objective of this study is to analyze and compare the philosophical foundations of multicultural education underlying Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia and Singapore, and to identify similarities and differences. The research method is a qualitative comparative study using content analysis of educational policy documents, Islamic Religious Education curricula, and relevant academic literature from both countries. The results show that Indonesia, with its Pancasila philosophy, tends to prioritize inclusivity and tolerance in Islamic Religious Education, reflecting internal diversity. Meanwhile, Singapore emphasizes social cohesion and national identity through multicultural education integrated into general religious subjects. While they differ in philosophical emphases, both share the common goal of creating a harmonious society. This research recommends strengthening intercultural philosophical dialogue in the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula in both countries to promote a deeper understanding of universal human values.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education, Multicultural Education, Comparative Study, Religious Harmony, Indonesia-Singapore.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji perbandingan filosofi pendidikan multikultural dalam konteks Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di Indonesia dan Singapura. Di tengah keberagaman masyarakat yang semakin kompleks, pemahaman dan implementasi pendidikan multikultural menjadi krusial, terutama dalam membentuk karakter siswa yang toleran dan inklusif. Latar belakang masalah penelitian ini adalah perlunya menelaah bagaimana kedua negara, dengan konteks sosial dan budaya yang berbeda, mengintegrasikan prinsip-prinsip pendidikan multikultural ke dalam ajaran PAI. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis dan membandingkan fondasi filosofis pendidikan multikultural yang mendasari PAI di Indonesia dan Singapura, serta mengidentifikasi persamaan dan perbedaannya. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi komparatif kualitatif dengan teknik analisis konten terhadap dokumen kebijakan pendidikan, kurikulum PAI, serta literatur akademik yang relevan dari kedua negara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Indonesia, dengan falsafah Pancasila, cenderung mengedepankan inklusivitas dan toleransi dalam PAI sebagai refleksi keberagaman internal. Sementara itu, Singapura menekankan pada kohesi sosial dan identitas

nasional melalui pendidikan multikultural yang terintegrasi dalam mata pelajaran agama secara umum. Terdapat perbedaan dalam penekanan filosofis, namun keduanya memiliki tujuan bersama untuk menciptakan masyarakat yang harmonis. Rekomendasi penelitian ini adalah perlunya penguatan dialog filosofis antarbudaya dalam pengembangan kurikulum PAI di kedua negara untuk mempromosikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang nilai-nilai universal kemanusiaan.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam, Pendidikan Multikultural, Studi Komparatif, Harmoni Keagamaan, Indonesia-Singapura.

INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education in religious education is increasingly becoming an important concern in various countries, particularly in the Southeast Asian region, which has high cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. In Indonesia, a recent study confirms that multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education is important to be developed to foster social sensitivity and respect for differences and to overcome social problems rooted in the diversity of society (Handoko et al., 2022). The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) approach, grounded in multicultural insights, can help students understand and respect cultural and value diversity, and contribute to inclusive social change in a pluralistic society (Handoko et al., 2022).

In contemporary studies, multicultural education is not only understood as a recognition of cultural and religious diversity but also as an epistemic framework that shapes how knowledge, values, and identities are constructed in the educational process. According to James A. Banks' perspective, multicultural education encompasses several important dimensions, including the integration of multicultural education into the curriculum, knowledge construction, the reduction of prejudice, the pedagogy of equality, and the empowerment of school culture and social structures. These dimensions help to guide how cultural, ethnic, and identity diversity is accommodated in formal and social education (Purwasari et al., 2023). Islamic religious education in a multicultural perspective is further understood as a learning process that places Islamic teachings not only as a normative-theological system, but also as a source of social ethics that emphasizes the values of justice, tolerance, respect for differences which also function as a medium for the formation of social awareness and moderate attitudes of students through the integration of Islamic values and the principle of multiculturalism in learning (Ilya, 2025).

The development of multicultural studies in PAI is not only seen in Indonesia but has also expanded thinking in other regions of Southeast Asia. In general, multicultural education in Southeast Asia is a response to the need to manage complex social pluralism, both in the curriculum and in education policy (Patras et al., 2022). Comparative studies examining the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia, Singapore,

Malaysia, and Thailand highlight the importance of consistent educational policies and inclusive practices in creating a learning environment that respects the diversity of values, cultures, and religions (Patras et al., 2022). Recent studies show that the alignment between the values of Islamic education and the principles of multicultural education plays an important role in creating an inclusive and harmonious learning environment in Indonesia and Southeast Asia (Khodijah et al., 2025).

One of the countries in the Southeast Asian Region, Singapore, is a strong multicultural country in the realm of education policy that places the value of diversity within the national curriculum orientation. The education system in Singapore has long integrated the principles of inclusivity and tolerance across various levels of education to maintain social harmony amid ethnic and religious diversity. There are contemporary studies that show that the ethos of multiculturalism in Singapore contributes to social stability and the formation of tolerance values from early childhood education to the next level, although conceptual studies that explore the relevance of multicultural education to PAI are still very limited in the academic literature (Nuraini et al., 2025).

The development of multicultural education studies in the realm of PAI in Indonesia and also the Southeast Asian region in general has been increasingly intense in recent years, but the findings have so far been more descriptive, normative, and applicative, such as focusing on multicultural learning practices, religious tolerance teaching strategies, and the development of inclusive curricula such as the study conducted by Handoko. (Handoko et al., 2022) without systematically unraveling the foundations of knowledge, values, and philosophical directions that underlie multicultural education itself.

One of the studies on the basic concept of multicultural PAI highlights the philosophy and framework of the multicultural curriculum in Indonesia, but still focuses on the implementation stage of the values of tolerance and inclusivity of students (Ilya, 2025) without providing a conceptual map that comparatively distinguishes the ways in which multicultural knowledge is built in the tradition of Islamic education and secular multicultural education outside of Islamic education. In other research, for example, a study in Indonesia showed how the integration of multicultural values was applied in PAI learning at SMPN 8 Palangkaraya to increase students' social awareness and inclusivity (Zaini et al., 2025). So there is still a significant conceptual gap between what is being researched and what is needed to map the multicultural knowledge framework in PAI comparatively between countries, because most of the current literature focuses on the implementation of multicultural education in schools.

Likewise, a study by Sriliza examining the implementation of PAI in multicultural schools concluded that inclusive PAI is more effective in fostering students who are moderate and aware of social diversity (Sriliza, 2025). The study shows that a progressive

pedagogical approach can foster tolerance and respect among students and expand national horizons.

Based on the analysis of the latest literature search, multicultural education research from the perspective of PAI is still dominated by a one-country empirical approach, so that comparative epistemic analysis between countries has not been the main focus of the study. In addition, although a number of articles have described the policy of multicultural education based on PAI in general, such as with regard to the values of inclusivity, tolerance, and humanism in Islamic education, this kind of study has generally not been considered as an epistemological study because it remains oriented to learning practices and policies only, not to the structure of knowledge and the underlying value justification (Badruddin et al., 2025).

This is the initial data of literature studies, namely, evidence of what has and has not been systematically studied in the latest PAI multicultural education research. The literature search shows that the existing studies are still dominated by research on the implementation of multicultural education in one context of a country, especially Indonesia, with an emphasis on learning practices, pedagogical strategies, and the cultivation of tolerance values, while the knowledge framework underlying multicultural education in PAI has not been studied in depth. Therefore, although the development of multicultural educational literature in PAI shows significant progress, the gap in comparative studies between Indonesia and Singapore is still evident, especially in terms of how multicultural knowledge is constructed, justified, and institutionalized in PAI in each country, and this condition is a strong basis for the need for a systematic comparative literature review to fill the research gap.

Thus, this study positions comparative literature as a strategic approach to examining multicultural education in PAI, not only as a pedagogical practice but also as a construction of knowledge shaped by the philosophical, ideological, and policy contexts of education in each country. By comparing Indonesia and Singapore, this study seeks to reveal the differences and intersections in perspectives on multicultural education within the framework of PAI, especially regarding the source of knowledge, the legitimacy of values, and the orientation of religious education in a pluralistic society.

This approach is expected to make a conceptual contribution to the development of PAI studies by presenting a more reflective and critical understanding of how multicultural education is formulated and interpreted in two countries with different religious and secular characteristics, yet in the same region. This research is also expected not only to enrich the treasures of comparative education philosophy but also to provide a theoretical foundation for the development of a more contextual, inclusive, and relevant PAI for the multicultural realities in Southeast Asia.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze multicultural education in relation to Islamic Religious Education through a comparative literature study of Indonesia and Singapore. In particular, this study aims to identify the conceptual frameworks of multicultural education in each of these countries, examine the knowledge bases and value orientations that shape the approach to multicultural education, and compare the similarities and differences in how multicultural education is understood and institutionalized within religious education. Through this goal, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the position and role of PAI in responding to the reality of multicultural societies in the Southeast Asian region.

This research is novel in the cross-border comparative approach to examining multicultural education in the context of PAI. In contrast to previous studies that generally focused the study of multicultural education on a single national, institutional, or normative-theoretical approach, this study specifically compares the practices and conceptual frameworks of multicultural education in PAI in Indonesia and Singapore as two countries with different pluralistic society characteristics. This comparative approach allows for a more in-depth analysis of how social factors, educational policies, and religious constructions influence the meaning and implementation of multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education.

Furthermore, the novelty of this research also lies in the focus of analysis that not only highlights aspects of tolerance and diversity as general values but also places PAI at the center of the dynamics of multicultural education. Previous studies tend to separate the study of multicultural education from religious education or place PAI as a complement in the multidisciplinary discourse of multiculturalism. On the contrary, this study positions PAI as a strategic space for the formation of inclusive, dialogical, and moderate attitudes within a multicultural society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative comparative literature approach to systematically examine and compare the construction of multicultural educational knowledge in PAI in Indonesia and Singapore. The focus of this study is on the epistemic construction of PAI multicultural education, including the sources of knowledge used as references, the ways in which multicultural knowledge is legitimized within the education system, and the forms of institutionalization of multicultural values in the PAI curriculum in each of these countries. The three aspects were analyzed comparatively to identify patterns of similarities and epistemic differences between the two national contexts.

The subject of this research is not individuals or institutions, but relevant scientific documents, including journal articles, academic books, education policy documents, and official government reports that discuss PAI and multicultural education in Indonesia and Singapore. Literature sources were selected based on the criteria of thematic relevance, publication up-to-date in the last five years, and academic verifiability. The research instrument in this study is a document analysis sheet prepared by the researcher to review literature sources in digital format (PDF). This analysis sheet is used as a systematic guide to extract conceptual data from each document, with analysis categories that include epistemic sources of multicultural education, mechanisms, the legitimacy of PAI knowledge, and forms of institutionalization of multicultural values in educational curricula and policies. All PDF documents are analyzed using the same instrument to maintain consistency and comparability of data.

The data collection technique involves a systematic search of scientific databases, such as Google Scholar and national journal portals, using keywords relevant to the research focus. The collected data were then analyzed using comparative qualitative content analysis through the process of coding, thematic grouping, and comparison of epistemic patterns between countries, inductively and iteratively. The validity of the findings is maintained through the triangulation of sources and the logical consistency of the analysis results, with all stages of the research conducted transparently to enable replication and verification. This research method refers to the framework of qualitative document analysis and systematic literature study (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Knowledge Sources of Multicultural Education in PAI in Indonesia

The results of the literature review show that the sources of knowledge on multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia are multidimensional, drawing on academic studies, educational policy documents, and curriculum publications that complement each other in understanding the values, philosophies, and principles of diversity in Islamic education. One of the primary sources is a conceptual study of the multicultural PAI curriculum in Indonesia, which emphasizes a holistic curriculum philosophy that integrates the values of humanism, pluralism, inclusivism, constructivism, and critical education as the epistemic basis of multicultural education in the context of Islamic education. These findings show that multicultural education in PAI is not just a strategy to teach tolerance, but also a knowledge construct designed to form an inclusive attitude and critical thinking skills of students in a multicultural society (Ilya, 2025).

Furthermore, the study of the development of an Islamic education curriculum with a multicultural perspective is also an important epistemic source for PAI in Indonesia. The research examines the development of a multicultural Islamic religious education curriculum that demonstrates how integrating multicultural values can broaden students' insights into dignity, humanity, respect for local culture, and the development of tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect in social life. This confirms that the literature of the multicultural curriculum is a key source of knowledge in understanding how religious education facilitates the learning of diversity in the formal realm (Tang, 2023).

The findings of the wider literature also connect the source of knowledge, namely scientific articles that focus on the practice and orientation of PAI learning, with a multicultural perspective. One of them is a study that examines how multicultural perspectives PAI help instill religious tolerance in learning, showing that integrating multicultural insights into subject matter, pedagogical approaches, and classroom management increases students' awareness of social diversity. The results of this literature reflect that the source of knowledge of multicultural education in PAI in Indonesia is not only in the form of curriculum or policy documents, but also in the form of empirical and theoretical studies that discuss how Islamic religious education interprets and applies the values of diversity in learning practices (Rofikoh Sari et al., 2022).

Overall, the source of knowledge about multicultural education in PAI in Indonesia is academic literature, including curriculum studies, studies of multicultural Islamic education concepts, and scientific articles that document learning practices that instill the values of tolerance and inclusivity. All of these sources form an epistemic foundation that distinguishes between a mere pedagogical practice and a broader construction of knowledge in the context of multicultural Islamic religious education.

2. Multicultural Education Knowledge Resources in PAI in Singapore

The knowledge sources for PAI multicultural education in Singapore are mainly drawn from studies of the Islamic education system in a multicultural, secular society and from documents that discuss the role of Islamic educational institutions in the country. One relevant source is a study on the contribution of Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah to the Islamic education system in Singapore, which highlights how madrasah institutions operate with a dual curriculum that blends religious and secular education. The study shows that the six madrassas in Singapore seek to provide educational programs that are not only oriented towards religious teaching but also towards strengthening students' academic and social competencies in response to the multicultural conditions and needs of the Muslim minority community in a non-Muslim majority country. This confirms that literature sources in the Singapore context include research that explains the Islamic education system

that intersects with multicultural values within the framework of a pluralistic society (Syed Hassan dkk., 2024).

Another relevant source of knowledge is a study on the implementation of the Islamic education curriculum in Singapore madrassas, which highlights the structure and orientation of religious education in a multicultural, secular environment. One of the works is a research article on madrassas in Singapore that explains how Islamic educational institutions such as Madrasah Wak Tanjong Al-Islamiah adapt their curricula to the context of national education and human resource needs in developed countries, while maintaining Islamic identity and diversity values relevant to the realities of Singapore's multicultural society. These findings suggest that curriculum documents and academic studies of madrassas in Singapore can be used as an important epistemic resource for understanding multicultural education in the Islamic context in the country (Nahwiyah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the literature on the Islamic madrasah system in general in Singapore provides an important source of knowledge on how Islamic educational institutions adapt to the demands of a pluralistic and global society. Information from educational encyclopedias also shows that madrassas in Singapore are institutions that offer religious education alongside a secular curriculum, reflecting the integration of religious values and diversity in Singapore's formal education system. This fact confirms that the study of madrassas as Islamic educational institutions in multicultural countries is an important part of the knowledge resources of multicultural education in the context of PAI Singapore (Abu Bakar bin Taha, 2026).

Thus, the overall body of literature shows that the knowledge base of multicultural education in PAI in Singapore is rooted in the study of Islamic educational institutions, the curriculum of religious education adapted to multicultural and secular societies, and the interaction between religious education and pluralist values, as documented in academic literature. These sources provide a knowledge base for systematically comparing the position and orientation of multicultural education in PAI in Indonesia and Singapore.

3. The Legitimacy of Multicultural Knowledge in the PAI System in Indonesia

Literature search shows that the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in the PAI system in Indonesia does not only emerge from classroom learning practices, but is also built through a curriculum framework, pedagogical orientation, and philosophical foundation of Islamic education that is increasingly responsive to the reality of social diversity and the need to build tolerance values. As part of epistemic legitimacy, the study of cutting-edge literature situates the values of inclusivity, religious tolerance, and respect for differences as normative competencies, enriched by the study of multicultural education, within the

framework of PAI. For example, studies examining the design of a PAI curriculum responsive to a multicultural society emphasize egalitarian, pluralistic, and empathic principles as philosophical foundations that strengthen the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge within the PAI curriculum (Samsudin, 2025).

The legitimacy of multicultural knowledge can also be seen in how these values are integrated directly into the PAI learning orientation, including in assessment instruments and learning strategies. Recent research on multicultural-based PAI assessment strategies shows that integrating multicultural values into religious education assessments can broaden learners' understanding of tolerance, respect for diversity, and inclusive attitudes, which are the basis for the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in formal religious education practices. These findings emphasize that the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge is not only declarative in curriculum documents, but also manifested in evaluation instruments that encourage the achievement of socio-religious competencies of students (Sukowati et al., 2025).

In addition, empirical studies at the school level show that integrating multicultural values into PAI learning results in the legitimacy of knowledge produced through pedagogical routines that respect differences. For example, a study describing multicultural inclusive Islamic education at SMPN 2 Samarinda found that the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating learning systematically incorporates the values of togetherness, tolerance, and brotherhood into PAI, so that multicultural knowledge is seen as a legitimate part of the goals of religious education in schools. These findings confirm that the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in Indonesia arises from structured systemic practices in daily learning (Hasani, 2025).

Another form of legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in PAI can be seen from studies that connect aspects of traditional Islamic values with modern learning practices that prioritize intercultural social competence. A study of multicultural education from an Islamic perspective that integrates values *Tasamuh* (tolerance), *Ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *adl* (justice) in elementary schools shows that the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in PAI is also supported by Islamic normative principles that are rich in sources of social value, which in turn strengthens PAI's epistemic footing in the context of Indonesia's pluralistic society (Kholida et al., 2025).

Thus, the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in the Indonesian PAI system is formed through a combination of the integration of multicultural values in the curriculum supported by the philosophical principles of inclusivity and pluralism, the application of multicultural learning strategies and assessments that expand the social competence of students, and the development of Islamic education practices that respect social and ethical values in real life. These findings suggest that the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in

PAI is not only an added value, but has become an epistemic component that is recognized and practiced within the framework of formal religious education in Indonesia.

4. The Legitimacy of Multicultural Knowledge in the PAI System in Singapore

An analysis of the latest literature shows that the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in the PAI system in Singapore is shaped by a curriculum that combines religious and secular values in a pluralistic society, as well as by the recognition and support of Islamic communities and educational institutions operating in a secular and multicultural context. One of the main sources of this epistemic legitimacy comes from the study of the role of madrassas in Singapore, which offer a combination of *ukhrawi* (religious) and *secular* (secular) education as part of a response to the needs of minority Muslim communities in the context of a pluralistic country.

The study of Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah, for example, shows that the six madrassas in Singapore seek to provide holistic educational programs that combine the study of Islamic values with general education to prepare students to become religiously competent Muslims while contributing to a multicultural society. These findings confirm that the *dual curriculum* in madrassas is a source of legitimacy for multicultural knowledge that is recognized in Singapore's Islamic education system because it represents the integration of religious and secular values in shaping the character of students (Syed Hassan dkk., 2024).

Another important source of knowledge is a comparative study of the curriculum, which shows that the Islamic education system in Singapore is driven by a strong value orientation towards *multicultural competencies* (multicultural competence), global citizenship, and 21st-century capabilities, despite the context as a secular country that values diversity. Comparative curriculum research between Malaysia and Singapore reveals that Singapore's approach, oriented towards multicultural competence and critical thinking skills, provides a strong foothold for the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in Islamic education, as Singapore's national curriculum seeks to balance religious values and the need for social skills in a multicultural society (Rahayu et al., 2025).

In addition, the structure of Islamic madrassas in Singapore gained legitimacy through the recognition of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), which regulates Islamic educational institutions, including full-time and part-time madrassas. This shows that the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge is also built through an institutional framework that allows Islamic institutions to operate in a secular state without losing their religious identity, while bridging the relationship between the national formal education system and Islamic religious education (Abu Bakar bin Taha, 2026).

The findings show that the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in the PAI system in Singapore flows from three main sources including the *dual curriculum* of madrassas that combine religious and secular values in a balanced learning structure, the orientation of the multicultural and global competency curriculum adopted by Islamic educational institutions, and an inclusive institutional framework that allows Islamic education to be legitimately positioned in the education system Singapore's national values pluralism. Thus, the legitimacy of multicultural knowledge in the Singapore context is not just declarative but becomes a recognized and practiced part of Islamic educational practices in the developed country.

5. Institutionalization of Multicultural Values in PAI Curriculum and Policy in Indonesia

The institutionalization of multicultural values in PAI in Indonesia occurs through the integration of inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diversity into national education and the formal curriculum. Multicultural education in PAI is not only understood as an individualized pedagogical approach but is also institutionalized as part of the state's orientation to character and nationality education, designed to respond to the reality of pluralistic Indonesian society. Normatively, the legitimacy of multicultural values in PAI is reflected in the direction of national education policies that place religious education as a means of forming students with faith, piety, noble character, and a moderate, tolerant attitude in social life. The latest national curriculum emphasizes that PAI learning is directed not only at mastering normative teachings, but also at strengthening mutual respect, social justice, and diversity as part of learning outcomes (Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025, t.t.).

At the learning curriculum level, multicultural values are institutionalized through the formulation of PAI learning outcomes aligned with the Graduate Profile Dimension, particularly in the dimensions of citizenship and noble morals. Religious education is no longer separated from the socio-national context, but is directed to form students' ethical awareness in responding constructively to differences in beliefs, cultures, and views on life (Ministry of Education and Education, BSKAP, 2025).

The institutional value of multicultural values in PAI is also strengthened by the Ministry of Religion's policy in the Republic of Indonesia, which makes religious moderation the main framework for religious education. Religious moderation is institutionalized as a normative principle that balances Islamic commitment and respect for social, cultural, and religious diversity. In this context, PAI is positioned as a strategic instrument to form an inclusive, dialogical, and non-exclusive religious attitude. This confirms that PAI in Indonesia functions as a space for internalizing Islamic values that are

in harmony with the principles of nationality and multicultural reality (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

6. Institutionalization of Multicultural Values in PAI Curriculum and Policy in Singapore

Structurally, Islamic religious education in Singapore is not fully implemented in the national curriculum of schools, but rather institutionalised through Islamic educational institutions under state supervision, such as madrassas and official Islamic religious institutions. The Singapore government, through the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), plays a central role in formulating the PAI curriculum, which emphasizes a balance among Islamic teachings, civic values, and a commitment to multicultural life. Thus, the institutionalization of multicultural values in PAI occurs through strict, standardized institutional regulations (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, 2022).

Multicultural values in PAIs in Singapore are explicitly institutionalized through a framework, *Singapore Muslim Identity* (SMI), which is the ideological foundation of Islamic education in the country. SMI emphasizes that a Singaporean Muslim must be religious, progressive, and able to coexist harmoniously in a pluralistic society. This framework directly influences PAI's curriculum design, learning objectives, and pedagogical approaches that emphasize religious moderation, interfaith dialogue, and compliance with state laws (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, 2021).

7. Patterns of Similarities and Differences in the Construction of Multicultural Education PAI between Indonesia and Singapore

Comparative analysis shows that Indonesia and Singapore both treat education as an instrument for fostering social cohesion in multicultural societies, but through different policy approaches. In Indonesia, the legitimacy of multicultural values is institutionalized within the framework of the national curriculum and religious education through state regulations that affirm the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum as the basis for the formation of students' character and social competence. This policy shows that multicultural education is directly integrated into the national education system as part of the formation of national character (Permendikdasmen Number 13 of 2025, t.t.).

In contrast, in Singapore, the construction of multicultural education is not institutionalized through the direct integration of religious education into the national curriculum, but rather through a secular but inclusive approach to civic education and character building. Framework *Character and Citizenship Education* (CEE) places the development of values, character, social-emotional well-being, and civic disposition as integral parts of the holistic development of students, so that multicultural values are

internalized through national character education, rather than through formal religious curricula in public schools (Student Development Curriculum Division, Ministry of Education, & Singapore, 2021).

In terms of Islamic education, the difference in construction is obvious. In Indonesia, PAI is part of the national curriculum that is generally applicable to Muslim students, so that multicultural values are legitimized simultaneously through educational policies and theological frameworks. Meanwhile, in Singapore, Islamic education is conducted primarily in madrassas and religious institutions under state supervision, with an orientation towards a religious Muslim identity compatible with a pluralistic society. This approach reflects the efforts of minority-Muslim states to balance religious commitments and social integration in a secular system (Syafri & Bin Budin, 2025).

However, there is a fundamental pattern of similarities between the two countries, namely the emphasis on the formation of moderate character, social responsibility, and the ability to coexist in a pluralistic society. In Singapore, the state-designed vision of a national Muslim identity aims to strengthen the social coherence and civic loyalty of Muslim communities in a pluralistic society. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, strengthening national character and social competence through the national curriculum shows a similar orientation in maintaining social harmony. Thus, the construction of PAI's multicultural education in Indonesia and Singapore reveals two distinct yet goal-oriented models of institutionalization. Indonesia, through the integration of religious curriculum in the national education system, while Singapore, through the management of a secular state, towards character education and institution-based Islamic education. This comparison emphasizes that multicultural education in PAI is not only a pedagogical issue, but a reflection of the configuration of religious, state, and societal relations in the socio-political context of each country.

Discussion

The findings of the study show that the construction of multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia and Singapore is shaped by distinct configurations of religious, state, and societal relations, although both share an orientation towards the formation of social cohesion in pluralistic societies. Theoretically, multicultural education is understood as the process of integrating diverse values into curriculum structures, pedagogical practices, and educational policies to advance social justice and respect for differences. This perspective aligns with the multicultural education framework, which emphasizes the dimensions of knowledge construction, the reduction of prejudice, and the strengthening of inclusive school culture as the foundation of learning in a pluralistic society. Thus, the comparative findings of Indonesia-Singapore show that multicultural

education in PAI is not only a pedagogical practice but also a reflection of the institutionally legitimized epistemic paradigm of education.

In the Indonesian context, the results of the study show that the source of knowledge, legitimacy, and institutionalization of PAI multicultural education is directly integrated into the national education system through curriculum, religious moderation policies, and learning outcomes that emphasize tolerance and diversity. This pattern shows that the state plays a key role in harmonizing religious values with national identity. These findings are consistent with previous studies that affirm that religious education in Indonesia serves as an instrument for the formation of a moderate socio-religious character and a mechanism for national integration in a pluralistic society. In other words, the epistemic construction of PAI multicultural education in Indonesia is integrative-normative, namely, combining the legitimacy of theological, pedagogical, and state policy simultaneously.

In contrast, in Singapore, the construction of multicultural education within the PAI develops through a secular-institutional approach, where religious education is not fully integrated into the national curriculum, but is managed through an Islamic civic and institutional education framework under state supervision. These findings suggest that the legitimacy of multicultural values does not rest on theological integration in the general education system, but on state regulations that emphasize social stability, civic loyalty, and inter-community harmony. This pattern is in line with studies of minority Islamic education that affirm that Muslim communities in secular countries tend to develop educational models that are compatible with the national citizenship system without losing their religious identity. Therefore, the epistemic construction of PAI's multicultural education in Singapore can be categorized as an adaptive-secular model, i.e., religious education that is legitimized through the framework of citizenship and social cohesion.

Despite their structural differences, the two countries share fundamental similarities in their orientations toward moderate character formation, social responsibility, and coexistence in multicultural societies. This similarity indicates that multicultural education in PAI, both in integrative systems such as Indonesia and in secular systems such as Singapore, remains directed towards the universal goal of education: the formation of human beings who can live peacefully in diversity. These findings reinforce the theoretical argument that multicultural education is an inherent need of modern society, not merely a product of a particular country's ideology.

From the perspective of comparative education philosophy, the difference between Indonesia and Singapore reflects two paradigms of the relationship between religion and the state in education: the integrative paradigm and the regulative-secular paradigm. The integrative paradigm situates religion within the national identity institutionalized in the curriculum, while the regulative-secular paradigm positions the state as a manager of social

harmony that regulates religious expression through public policy. These two paradigms show that the epistemology of multicultural education is not singular but is influenced by the historical, political, and demographic contexts of each country.

The theoretical implication of these findings is that multicultural education in PAI should be understood as a contextual epistemic construct rather than a universal, uniformly applicable model. The comparative approach shows that the success of multicultural education is not determined by the form of religious integration in the curriculum, but by the education system's ability to build social cohesion and moderate students' attitudes. Thus, the contribution of this research lies in strengthening the comparative education philosophy perspective that situates the state context as an important variable in understanding multicultural education in PAI.

In practice, these findings imply that developing PAI in Indonesia should not only emphasize normative integration in the curriculum but also strengthen the dimensions of social dialogue, global citizenship, and life competencies in pluralistic societies, as seen in Singapore's experience. In contrast, the Singapore model underscores the importance of striking a balance between state regulation and strengthening the religious identity of Muslim communities. Therefore, dialogue between the two models can enrich the development of multicultural education at the regional level in Southeast Asia.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the construction of multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia and Singapore is shaped by different epistemic configurations but oriented towards a similar goal: the formation of social cohesion and moderate character in multicultural societies. In Indonesia, PAI multicultural education is constructed in an integrative manner through theological legitimacy, state policies, and a national curriculum that simultaneously internalizes the values of tolerance, diversity, and religious moderation into the formal education system. Meanwhile, in Singapore, multicultural education in PAI develops through a regulative-secular model, in which the state manages religious education within a framework of citizenship, social cohesion, and the strengthening of Muslim identities compatible with a pluralistic society. These differences show that the epistemology of PAI multicultural education is contextual and shaped by the historical relationships among religion, state, and society in each country.

The main findings of this study confirm that the success of multicultural education in PAI does not depend on the level of integration of religion into the national curriculum, but on the education system's ability to foster awareness of living together, moderate attitudes, and students' social responsibility. From the perspective of comparative education philosophy, Indonesia represents an integrative paradigm between religion and the state,

while Singapore shows a regulative-secular paradigm that places the state as a manager of social harmony. This comparative synthesis is a conceptual contribution to the development of the study of multicultural education in the Southeast Asian region, especially by expanding the understanding that religious education can function as an instrument of social cohesion across different institutional models.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in the formulation of a comparative epistemic framework of PAI multicultural education that links the dimensions of knowledge sources, value legitimacy, and policy institutionalization in two different country contexts. This framework enriches the development of Islamic da'wah and communication by showing that multicultural education is not only a pedagogical strategy but also a medium for the communication of religious values that builds social dialogue, moderation, and harmony in a pluralistic society. Thus, PAI multicultural education can be understood as a cultural da'wah space that operates through the formal education system to foster constructive awareness of diversity.

The suggestions that can be put forward are the need to strengthen the dimensions of social dialogue, global citizenship, and life competencies in a pluralistic society in the development of the PAI curriculum in Indonesia, without eliminating the theological and national basis that has become the foundation of national education. In addition, further studies are recommended to extend a comparative approach to other Muslim minority countries in Southeast Asia to deepen understanding of the variety of PAI multicultural education models and their implications for the development of Islamic da'wah and communication at the regional level.

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