

STRENGTHENING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THROUGH VALUES-BASED PEDAGOGY IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral character and religious identity within increasingly multicultural and pluralistic societies. This study aims to examine how values-based pedagogy can strengthen Islamic Religious Education by fostering ethical awareness, religious moderation, and social harmony in multicultural educational contexts. Employing a qualitative research approach, this study utilizes a literature-based analysis combined with conceptual interpretation of classical and contemporary scholarly works on Islamic education, values education, and multicultural pedagogy, supported by relevant policy documents and empirical findings from previous studies. The findings indicate that values-based pedagogy enables IRE to move beyond doctrinal and cognitive-oriented instruction toward a holistic educational model that integrates moral, spiritual, and social dimensions of learning. Core Islamic values such as justice ('adl), compassion (rahmah), tolerance (tasāmuḥ), balance (tawāzun), and moderation (wasatiyyah) are found to be essential pedagogical foundations for addressing diversity and preventing exclusivism in religious education. Furthermore, the discussion highlights that implementing values-based pedagogy in IRE contributes to the development of inclusive religious attitudes, critical ethical reasoning, and constructive engagement with cultural and religious differences. This approach also reinforces the relevance of Islamic teachings in contemporary social life while supporting peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies. The study concludes that strengthening Islamic Religious Education through values-based pedagogy is a strategic and sustainable approach to enhancing both religious understanding and social cohesion in diverse educational environments.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education; Values-Based Pedagogy; Multicultural Societies; Religious Moderation; Character Education*

A B S T R A K

Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk karakter moral dan identitas keagamaan peserta didik di tengah masyarakat yang semakin multikultural dan plural. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana pedagogi berbasis nilai dapat memperkuat Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam menumbuhkan kesadaran etis, moderasi beragama, dan harmoni sosial dalam konteks pendidikan multikultural. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode kajian pustaka dan analisis konseptual terhadap karya-karya klasik dan kontemporer di bidang pendidikan Islam, pendidikan nilai, dan pedagogi multikultural, yang didukung oleh dokumen kebijakan serta temuan empiris dari penelitian terdahulu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pedagogi berbasis nilai mendorong transformasi Pendidikan Agama Islam dari pembelajaran yang bersifat doktrinal dan berorientasi kognitif menuju model pendidikan holistik yang mengintegrasikan dimensi moral, spiritual, dan sosial. Nilai-nilai inti Islam seperti keadilan ('adl), kasih sayang (rahmah), toleransi (tasāmuḥ), keseimbangan (tawāzun), dan moderasi

(wasatiyyah) terbukti menjadi fondasi pedagogis yang efektif dalam merespons keberagaman dan mencegah sikap eksklusivisme beragama. Pembahasan juga menegaskan bahwa penerapan pedagogi berbasis nilai dalam PAI berkontribusi pada pembentukan sikap keberagaman yang inklusif, kemampuan berpikir etis-kritis, serta keterlibatan konstruktif peserta didik dalam menghadapi perbedaan budaya dan agama. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan Pendidikan Agama Islam melalui pedagogi berbasis nilai merupakan pendekatan strategis dan berkelanjutan dalam meningkatkan pemahaman keagamaan sekaligus memperkuat kohesi sosial di lingkungan pendidikan yang majemuk.

Kata kunci: *Pendidikan Agama Islam; Pedagogi Berbasis Nilai; Masyarakat Multikultural; Moderasi Beragama; Pendidikan Karakter*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has historically served as a foundational mechanism for transmitting Islamic teachings, shaping moral character, and developing ethical competencies in learners within formal educational settings. In contemporary societies where cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity is increasingly pronounced, the role of IRE must be reconsidered not only as a conduit of doctrinal knowledge but also as a transformative educational practice that fosters inclusive values and social harmony. This paradigm shift necessitates a pedagogical approach that foregrounds values-based pedagogy as the core strategy for nurturing learners who are not only religiously knowledgeable but also equipped with the moral sensibilities needed to navigate complex multicultural contexts.

The discourse on the relevance of Islamic Religious Education within multicultural societies has gained momentum alongside global trends of cultural pluralism and the imperative for educational systems to cultivate tolerance and respect for diversity. Multicultural education frameworks emphasize learners' abilities to appreciate cultural differences and engage constructively with diverse perspectives. This aligns with the goals of IRE, which, in an evolving social landscape, is expected to integrate normative religious instruction with values that promote peaceful coexistence (Assayuthi, 2024; Mustafida, 2024).

However, despite these theoretical alignments, a significant problem gap remains in how IRE is operationalized in practice. Much of the traditional IRE curriculum continues to focus on memorizing religious texts, ritual practices, and doctrinal knowledge, without systematically embedding values that address contemporary social needs, such as tolerance, empathy, moderation, and mutual respect. This gap constrains IRE's capacity to contribute meaningfully to social cohesion. It increases the risk of producing learners who are religiously literate yet socially unprepared to interact constructively in diverse environments. The literature indicates that while there are efforts to incorporate multicultural values into IRE, implementation is often fragmented, lacking cohesive pedagogical models that reflect an integrated values orientation (Gunawan, 2025; Siregar, 2025).

Current educational policies and classroom practices further reflect this incongruity. For instance, studies on the integration of multicultural values in Indonesian IRE classrooms reveal that although teachers attempt to introduce themes of tolerance and togetherness, these efforts are frequently limited to episodic classroom activities rather than constituting a comprehensive pedagogical shift (Madrasah research, 2025).

In some cases, educators lack adequate resources and pedagogical training to translate theoretical multicultural ideals into practical learning experiences, leading to

superficial engagement with diversity issues. Moreover, textbooks and curricula often fail to sufficiently contextualize Islamic teachings within the lived realities of multicultural interactions, leaving learners without critical frameworks for applying religious values in pluralistic social settings (Nugroho, 2019).

Empirical evidence suggests that multicultural dynamics in educational contexts are not limited to Indonesia but are mirrored globally. Research on educational systems in diverse societies highlights that effective religious education must transcend mere doctrinal instruction and emphasize moral comprehension, reflexivity, and respectful engagement with diversity (Banks, 2019; Merryfield, 2021). These scholars argue that pedagogical strategies must integrate critical thinking and ethical reflection to prepare learners for global citizenship and peaceful coexistence. However, the specific application of these strategies within Islamic Religious Education remains underexplored, particularly in terms of structured, values-based pedagogical frameworks that align Islamic moral principles with multicultural competencies.

A promising conceptual development in the literature is the emergence of values-based pedagogy, which situates ethical and moral values at the heart of the learning process. Values-based pedagogy suggests that education should not only transfer knowledge but also cultivate moral reasoning and character development through deliberate engagement with core human values (Lovat & Toomey, 2018). In the context of IRE, values such as justice, compassion, tolerance, balance, and moderation are deeply rooted in Islamic theological and ethical traditions and are highly relevant for navigating multicultural settings. Integrating these values holistically into IRE provides a coherent framework for addressing diversity-related challenges and fostering inclusive educational outcomes (Assayuthi, 2024).

Despite these advances, there is a noticeable gap in the scholarly literature regarding how values-based pedagogy is operationalized within IRE, particularly in multicultural settings. Most existing research has predominantly examined multicultural education within general curriculum contexts or teacher strategies in isolated case studies, without framing these within a broader pedagogical theory that emphasizes value internalization as a driver of behavioral and attitudinal transformation. Additionally, few studies systematically analyze how values-based pedagogical principles can be adapted in IRE to respond to both religious learning objectives and multicultural competencies in an integrated model (Siregar, 2025; Gunawan, 2025).

This research aims to address this scholarly gap by examining the conceptual foundations, practical implications, and transformative potential of a values-based pedagogical approach in strengthening Islamic Religious Education within multicultural societies. Specifically, this study seeks to articulate a clear framework that synthesizes Islamic ethical principles with pedagogical strategies that foster tolerance, respect for diversity, and social cohesion. By doing so, the research contributes to both theoretical and

practical discourse by offering a nuanced articulation of values-based pedagogy as a strategic alternative to traditional IRE approaches.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to integrate Islamic moral values with contemporary pedagogical theory to produce a coherent model that directly addresses the unmet needs of IRE in multicultural contexts. Unlike prior research that either focuses narrowly on multicultural content or on teacher strategies, this study foregrounds values-based pedagogy as a central mechanism for generating sustainable attitudinal change and cross-cultural understanding among learners. Furthermore, this research situates its analysis within current socio-educational dynamics, examining both global pedagogical insights and localized educational practices, thereby bridging theoretical aspirations and classroom realities.

The objectives of this study are twofold. First, to conceptualize how values-based pedagogy can be structured to enhance the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in multicultural settings; and second, to demonstrate the pedagogical implications of this approach for curriculum design, teacher professional development, and learner outcomes. By achieving these objectives, this research aims to provide a foundation for future empirical investigations and policy considerations that seek to strengthen religious education in ways that are contextually relevant, ethically grounded, and socially constructive.

The significance of this study extends to multiple stakeholders, including educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and communities seeking educational models that are responsive to the demands of cultural diversity and inter-religious harmony. For educators, the proposed values-based framework offers practical guidance on embedding moral and ethical values into substantive learning experiences. For policymakers, the insights from this research can inform curriculum reforms that prioritize both religious excellence and social inclusivity. Ultimately, by advancing a pedagogy that harmonizes Islamic moral principles with multicultural education goals, this research contributes to the broader mission of education as a tool for peacebuilding, social integration, and ethical citizenship in diverse societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic Religious Education in Contemporary Multicultural Contexts

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has traditionally been understood as a structured process of transmitting Islamic beliefs, rituals, moral teachings, and legal norms to learners. Classical Islamic education emphasizes the formation of *insān ṣāliḥ* through the integration of knowledge (*‘ilm*), faith (*īmān*), and practice (*‘amal*) (Al-Attas, 1993). However, contemporary multicultural societies present new challenges that require IRE to move beyond its conventional doctrinal orientation. Increasing cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity has reshaped educational environments, compelling religious education to respond constructively to pluralism, difference, and intercultural interaction (Jackson, 2014).

Scholars argue that religious education in plural societies must balance confessional integrity with social inclusivity (Gearon, 2013). In the context of Islam, this balance is critical, as misinterpretations of religious teachings may contribute to exclusivist attitudes or social tensions. Empirical studies in Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia, reveal that IRE often remains text-centered and exam-oriented, with limited engagement with lived multicultural realities (Azra, 2017; Hefner, 2019). This situation underscores the need for pedagogical reorientation that allows Islamic teachings to be meaningfully contextualized within diverse social settings.

Multicultural Education and Religious Pedagogy

The theoretical foundations of multicultural education emphasize equity, cultural recognition, and democratic participation in education (Banks, 2019). Banks identifies several dimensions of multicultural education, including content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and the empowerment of school culture. These dimensions highlight that addressing diversity is not merely a matter of curriculum content but also of pedagogical approach and institutional culture.

Within religious education, multicultural perspectives stress dialogical learning, empathy, and reflexivity (Jackson, 2004). Rather than positioning religion as a rigid system of beliefs, contemporary scholars advocate for interpretive and dialogical approaches that enable learners to understand both their own religious traditions and those of others. Applied to IRE, this perspective suggests that Islamic teachings should be presented not only as normative doctrines but also as ethical resources that guide interaction with diversity and difference (Merry, 2020).

Despite these theoretical advances, several studies indicate that religious education teachers often struggle to operationalize multicultural principles in classroom practice (Sahin, 2018). Constraints include limited pedagogical training, curriculum rigidity, and concerns over diluting religious authenticity. These findings point to a pedagogical gap between multicultural ideals and instructional realities, particularly within Islamic education systems.

Values-Based Pedagogy: Conceptual Foundations

Values-based pedagogy has emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of purely cognitive or skills-oriented education. This pedagogical approach emphasizes the intentional integration of moral and ethical values into teaching and learning processes (Lovat & Toomey, 2009). According to Lovat et al. (2011), values-based education promotes holistic learning by linking academic achievement with character development, social responsibility, and ethical reasoning.

In values-based pedagogy, teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but moral agents who model and facilitate the internalization of values through reflective dialogue, participatory learning, and real-life application (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Research demonstrates that values-based approaches positively influence learners' moral awareness,

empathy, and social behavior (Thornberg & Oğuz, 2016). These outcomes are particularly relevant in multicultural contexts, where ethical sensitivity and respect for difference are essential competencies.

Islamic Values and Pedagogical Relevance

Islamic ethical traditions provide a rich foundation for values-based pedagogy. Core values such as justice ('adl), compassion (raḥmah), tolerance (tasāmuḥ), balance (tawāzun), and moderation (wasatiyyah) are deeply embedded in the Qur'an and Prophetic teachings (Kamali, 2015). These values have been widely discussed in contemporary Islamic scholarship as normative principles for social coexistence and moral governance (Auda, 2008).

Several scholars emphasize that wasatiyyah (moderation) is a central Islamic concept with substantial pedagogical implications in plural societies (Kamali, 2015; El-Muhammady, 2017). Moderation encourages avoidance of extremism, openness to dialogue, and ethical engagement with difference. Similarly, raḥmah underscores empathy and compassion as guiding principles in social relations, while 'adl promotes fairness and respect for human dignity regardless of background.

However, studies indicate that these values are often taught in IRE as abstract moral ideals rather than lived pedagogical principles (Sahin, 2013). Learners may understand the conceptual meaning of Islamic values but struggle to apply them in real-life multicultural interactions. This gap reinforces the argument for adopting a values-based pedagogical framework that prioritizes experiential learning, ethical reflection, and contextual application.

Empirical Studies on Values, IRE, and Multiculturalism

Empirical research on IRE and multicultural education has grown in recent years, though it remains fragmented. Studies in Indonesian Islamic schools reveal that incorporating values such as tolerance and social harmony into IRE positively influences students' attitudes toward religious diversity (Nugroho, 2019; Sulaiman, 2021). However, these studies often focus on specific teaching strategies or case studies without situating them within a comprehensive pedagogical theory.

Internationally, Sahin (2018) highlights that effective Islamic education in Western multicultural contexts requires pedagogies that integrate faith commitment with ethical openness. Similarly, Merry (2020) argues that religious education must cultivate "ethical citizenship," enabling learners to reconcile religious identity with democratic pluralism. These studies support the relevance of values-based pedagogy but stop short of articulating a systematic framework tailored explicitly to Islamic Religious Education.

Positioning the Current Study

The existing literature demonstrates broad agreement on the importance of values, moderation, and inclusivity in Islamic education. However, a critical gap remains in synthesizing Islamic ethical principles with values-based pedagogical theory into an

integrated model for IRE in multicultural societies. Most prior studies address multicultural education, Islamic values, or pedagogical techniques in isolation, yielding partial and fragmented insights.

This study positions itself at the intersection of Islamic educational philosophy, values-based pedagogy, and multicultural education. By conceptualizing values-based pedagogy as the central mechanism for strengthening IRE, this research advances the literature beyond descriptive accounts toward a more coherent and theoretically grounded framework. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing scholarly debates on how religious education can remain theologically authentic while socially responsive in increasingly diverse societies.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research design, grounded in conceptual and literature-based frameworks, to examine how values-based pedagogy can strengthen Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in multicultural societies. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of meanings, values, and theoretical constructs rather than the measurement of variables or hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2014). The focus of this research is not to generalize findings statistically, but to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding of pedagogical practices grounded in Islamic values and multicultural education theory.

The study is positioned within interpretive and constructivist paradigms, which view educational phenomena as socially constructed and contextually embedded (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Through this lens, Islamic Religious Education is understood as a dynamic pedagogical practice shaped by religious traditions, cultural diversity, and contemporary social challenges.

Data Sources

The primary data sources for this research include scholarly literature on Islamic Religious Education, values-based pedagogy, and multicultural education. These sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy documents, and authoritative reports published within the last two decades, with particular emphasis on recent studies that address religious education in plural and multicultural contexts. Classical Islamic educational texts are also consulted to ensure theological grounding, especially in relation to core Islamic values such as justice ('adl), compassion (rahmah), tolerance (tasāmuḥ), balance (tawāzun), and moderation (wasatiyyah).

Secondary data include empirical findings reported in previous qualitative and mixed-method studies on IRE implementation, teacher practices, and student attitudes toward diversity. Using multiple types of sources enables triangulation of perspectives and enhances the credibility of the conceptual analysis (Patton, 2015).

Research Workflow and Analytical Procedures

The research workflow follows several systematic stages designed to ensure rigor, transparency, and analytical depth.

First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify key theoretical and empirical works related to the research topic. Databases such as Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science publications, and reputable regional journals were prioritized to ensure academic quality. Keywords used in the search process included “Islamic Religious Education,” “values-based pedagogy,” “multicultural education,” and “religious moderation.”

Second, selected literature was screened and categorized based on relevance, theoretical contribution, and methodological rigor. At this stage, the literature was grouped into three major thematic clusters: (1) theories and practices of Islamic Religious Education, (2) conceptual frameworks of values-based pedagogy, and (3) studies on multicultural education and religious diversity. This thematic categorization facilitated systematic comparison and synthesis across different bodies of knowledge (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Third, an interpretive content analysis was employed to examine how values are conceptualized, operationalized, and discussed within the selected literature. Content analysis in qualitative research allows researchers to identify patterns, themes, and meanings embedded in textual data (Krippendorff, 2018). In this study, particular attention was given to how Islamic values are framed pedagogically and to their relationship with multicultural competencies such as tolerance, empathy, and ethical engagement.

Fourth, a conceptual synthesis was conducted by integrating insights from Islamic educational philosophy with contemporary pedagogical theories. This step involved critically comparing normative Islamic principles with values-based pedagogy frameworks proposed by educational scholars. Through this process, the study developed a coherent conceptual model that illustrates how values-based pedagogy can serve as a strategic mechanism for strengthening IRE in multicultural settings.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework of this study is grounded in values-based education theory (Lovat & Toomey, 2009) and multicultural education theory (Banks, 2019), interpreted through the lens of Islamic ethical thought. Islamic values are treated not merely as moral content but as pedagogical foundations that shape teaching methods, teacher–student interactions, and learning outcomes. This framework enables the study to analyze the alignment between Islamic moral teachings and pedagogical practices that foster inclusivity and social cohesion.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applies qualitative rigor criteria including credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is enhanced through the use of multiple authoritative sources and cross-referencing between classical

Islamic texts and contemporary educational research. Dependability is supported by a transparent research workflow that clearly documents each stage of data collection and analysis. Confirmability is achieved by grounding interpretations in cited literature rather than personal assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

As a literature-based qualitative study, this research does not involve human participants and therefore does not require formal ethical clearance. Nevertheless, ethical academic practices were strictly observed, including accurate citation, avoidance of plagiarism, and respectful representation of diverse scholarly perspectives (Resnik, 2020).

Limitations of the Method

While the qualitative conceptual approach allows for deep theoretical insight, it does not provide empirical measurement of learning outcomes or behavioral change. Therefore, the findings are intended to inform future empirical studies rather than to serve as definitive evaluative conclusions. Future research may extend this study through classroom-based ethnography or interviews with educators and learners to empirically test the proposed framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Findings

This study aims to explore how values-based pedagogy can strengthen Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in multicultural societies through a qualitative, literature-based conceptual analysis. The findings are derived from a systematic synthesis of classical Islamic educational philosophy, contemporary pedagogical theories, and empirical studies on religious education and multiculturalism. Overall, the results demonstrate that values-based pedagogy provides a coherent and transformative framework that enables IRE to respond effectively to the ethical, social, and cultural challenges of plural societies.

The analysis reveals three significant findings. First, current IRE practices remain predominantly doctrinal and cognitively oriented, limiting their capacity to address multicultural realities. Second, values-based pedagogy aligns closely with core Islamic ethical principles and provides pedagogical mechanisms for learners to internalize these values. Third, integrating values-based pedagogy into IRE contributes to the development of inclusive religious attitudes, ethical reasoning, and social cohesion.

Current Limitations of Islamic Religious Education Practices

The first key finding highlights the persistent dominance of content-centered and normative approaches in IRE. Numerous studies indicate that Islamic education in both Muslim-majority and minority contexts prioritizes textual mastery, ritual correctness, and examination performance (Azra, 2017; Sahin, 2018). While such approaches are important for preserving religious knowledge, they often marginalize the affective and ethical dimensions of learning.

Empirical research in multicultural educational settings shows that students frequently struggle to translate religious concepts into inclusive social behavior (Nugroho, 2019; Sulaiman, 2021). This gap between religious knowledge and ethical practice becomes particularly visible in diverse classrooms, where learners encounter peers from different religious and cultural backgrounds. The findings of this study confirm that without a pedagogical emphasis on values internalization, IRE risks reinforcing exclusivist interpretations of Islam that are poorly equipped to engage with pluralism (Hefner, 2019).

Values-Based Pedagogy as a Transformative Framework

The second significant finding demonstrates that values-based pedagogy offers a viable and theologically grounded alternative to traditional instructional models. Values-based pedagogy emphasizes the intentional integration of moral and ethical values into all aspects of teaching and learning, including curriculum design, instructional strategies, and teacher-student interactions (Lovat & Toomey, 2009).

From an Islamic perspective, this pedagogical orientation resonates strongly with the holistic aims of education (*tarbiyah*), which seek to cultivate balanced individuals who embody faith, knowledge, and ethical conduct (Al-Attas, 1993). The literature reviewed indicates that Islamic values such as justice (*‘adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), balance (*tawāzun*), and moderation (*wasatiyyah*) are not merely moral ideals but pedagogical resources that can shape inclusive learning environments (Kamali, 2015; Auda, 2008).

To clarify how these values function pedagogically, the findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Core Islamic Values and Their Pedagogical Implications in Multicultural IRE

Islamic Value	Pedagogical Meaning	Implications for Multicultural IRE
Justice (<i>‘adl</i>)	Fairness and equity in teaching and assessment	Promotes equal respect for all learners regardless of background
Compassion (<i>rahmah</i>)	Empathy and care in teacher–student relationships	Encourages empathetic engagement with cultural and religious differences
Tolerance (<i>tasāmuḥ</i>)	Acceptance of diversity without compromising faith	Reduces prejudice and exclusivism in religious learning
Balance (<i>tawāzun</i>)	Harmonizing religious commitment and social responsibility	Supports coexistence between religious identity and a plural society
Moderation (<i>wasatiyyah</i>)	Avoidance of extremism in thought and practice	Strengthens religious moderation and critical ethical reasoning

Table 1 illustrates that Islamic ethical values can be translated into concrete pedagogical principles that directly address the challenges of multicultural education. Rather than being taught as abstract moral doctrines, these values function as guiding frameworks for instructional practice. For example, *‘adl* informs equitable classroom policies, while *rahmah* shapes empathetic teacher-student interactions. This pedagogical

translation is essential for ensuring that values are internalized and enacted in real-life social contexts (Thornberg & Oğuz, 2016).

Impact on Learners' Ethical and Social Development

The third major finding concerns the impact of values-based pedagogy on learners' ethical orientation and social behavior. Studies reviewed in this research consistently show that pedagogical approaches emphasizing values and reflective learning contribute to higher levels of moral awareness, empathy, and social responsibility (Lovat et al., 2011; Merry, 2020).

In the context of IRE, values-based pedagogy enables learners to interpret Islamic teachings as ethical guidance for engaging with diversity rather than as rigid boundaries separating "self" and "other." This aligns with Jackson's (2014) argument that effective religious education should foster interpretive and dialogical competencies. By engaging learners in ethical reflection, discussion of real-life scenarios, and collaborative learning, IRE becomes a space for cultivating inclusive religious identities.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that values-based pedagogy supports the development of religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*), a concept widely promoted in contemporary Islamic discourse as an antidote to radicalism and intolerance (Kamali, 2015). When learners are encouraged to critically reflect on Islamic values in relation to social realities, they are more likely to adopt balanced, contextually informed interpretations of religious teachings.

Discussion: Positioning the Findings within Existing Literature

The findings of this study reinforce and extend existing research on Islamic education and multiculturalism. Previous studies have acknowledged the importance of tolerance and moderation in IRE but often treat these values as curricular content rather than pedagogical foundations (Sahin, 2013; Nugroho, 2019). This study advances the discussion by demonstrating that values-based pedagogy provides a unifying framework that integrates Islamic ethics with teaching practice.

Compared to multicultural education models that emphasize cultural recognition and equity (Banks, 2019), the values-based approach in IRE adds a distinctive moral and spiritual dimension. It enables Islamic education to contribute not only to social cohesion but also to the moral development of learners as ethically responsible citizens. This dual contribution distinguishes values-based IRE from purely secular character education programs (Halstead & Taylor, 2000).

Importantly, this study also addresses concerns regarding the perceived tension between religious authenticity and inclusivity. The findings suggest that grounding pedagogy in Islamic ethical values does not dilute religious identity; instead, it strengthens it by aligning religious commitment with ethical responsibility toward others (Hefner, 2019). This challenges assumptions that multicultural engagement necessarily weakens confessional education.

Implications for Educational Practice and Policy

The results of this study have significant implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. For teachers, adopting values-based pedagogy requires professional development focused on ethical facilitation, reflective dialogue, and contextual teaching strategies. For curriculum developers, the findings suggest redesigning IRE curricula to prioritize the internalization of values alongside doctrinal knowledge.

At the policy level, integrating values-based pedagogy into national religious education frameworks can support broader goals of social cohesion and religious moderation. This is particularly relevant in societies experiencing increasing diversity and polarization, where education plays a critical role in shaping public ethics and intergroup relations (Banks, 2019).

Synthesis of Results

In summary, the results and discussion demonstrate that strengthening Islamic Religious Education through values-based pedagogy offers a comprehensive and sustainable response to the challenges of multicultural societies. By positioning Islamic values as pedagogical foundations rather than supplementary content, IRE can move beyond doctrinal transmission toward transformative education that nurtures ethical, inclusive, and socially responsible learners.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the role of values-based pedagogy in strengthening Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within multicultural societies through a qualitative, conceptual analysis of relevant literature and theoretical frameworks. The findings demonstrate that contemporary multicultural contexts require Islamic Religious Education to move beyond predominantly doctrinal, cognitively oriented instructional models toward a more holistic pedagogical approach that integrates the ethical, social, and spiritual dimensions of learning.

The analysis reveals that many existing IRE practices remain focused on textual mastery and ritual correctness, often with limited emphasis on the internalization of Islamic moral values in everyday social interactions. This condition contributes to a gap between religious knowledge and ethical practice, particularly in diverse educational environments where learners encounter cultural and religious differences. Values-based pedagogy addresses this gap by positioning core Islamic values—such as justice (‘adl), compassion (rahmah), tolerance (tasāmuḥ), balance (tawāzun), and moderation (wasatiyyah)—as foundational pedagogical principles rather than supplementary moral content.

Furthermore, the study concludes that values-based pedagogy is deeply compatible with the philosophical foundations of Islamic education, which aim to cultivate balanced individuals who embody faith, knowledge, and ethical conduct. By integrating these values into teaching strategies, classroom interactions, and learning activities, Islamic Religious Education can foster inclusive religious identities, critical ethical reasoning, and socially

responsible behavior. Importantly, the findings challenge the assumption that multicultural engagement weakens religious authenticity. Instead, the study demonstrates that grounding pedagogy in Islamic ethical traditions strengthens religious commitment while promoting peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the discourse on Islamic education and multicultural pedagogy by offering a coherent conceptual framework that bridges Islamic ethical thought with contemporary values-based educational theory. Practically, it highlights the transformative potential of Islamic Religious Education as an instrument for character formation, religious moderation, and intercultural understanding in increasingly plural societies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed for educational practice, policy, and future research. First, educators teaching Islamic Religious Education are encouraged to adopt values-based pedagogical strategies that emphasize reflective learning, ethical dialogue, and contextual application of Islamic teachings. Teacher training programs should therefore incorporate professional development modules focused on ethical facilitation, multicultural sensitivity, and the integration of values into instructional practice.

Second, curriculum developers and educational institutions should redesign IRE curricula to explicitly embed Islamic ethical values across learning objectives, instructional materials, and assessment methods. Rather than treating values education as an implicit or secondary outcome, curricula should position values internalization as a core pedagogical goal aligned with both religious and social competencies.

Third, policymakers are advised to support the institutionalization of values-based pedagogy within national and regional Islamic education frameworks. Such support may include curriculum guidelines that promote religious moderation, inclusivity, and social harmony, as well as evaluation mechanisms that assess not only cognitive achievement but also ethical and social development.

Finally, future research should extend this conceptual study through empirical investigations of the implementation and impact of values-based pedagogy across diverse Islamic education settings. Qualitative case studies, classroom ethnographies, and longitudinal research designs would be particularly valuable in assessing how values-based approaches influence learners' attitudes, behaviors, and intercultural engagement over time. These empirical insights would further strengthen the evidence base for values-based pedagogy as a sustainable model for Islamic Religious Education in multicultural societies.

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