

Multicultural Education in Islam to Strengthen the Religious Character of Gen Z in Indonesia

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Abstract

Multicultural education is an idea designed with the intention to bring about equality in educational opportunities for all students and community members, regardless of differences in racial identity, ethnicity, social level, and cultural diversity. The main objective in the study is to equip Generation Z with inclusivity, respect for differences, and the ability to make positive contributions to a society that thrives on multiculturalism. The methodology used is qualitative, through the application of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) technique to explore the issues discussed. A total of 8 articles were used as the main material in this research study which were indexed with ISSN (International Standard Serial Number). Data collection was obtained from google search/google scholar and in the time span between 2015 and 2024. Based on the research, it shows that multiculturalism education based on Islamic perspectives has a positive impact on Generation Z character building.

Keywords: *Generation z characters; Islamic multiculturalism; Multiculturalism Education.*

Abstrak

Pendidikan multikultural merupakan suatu ide yang dirancang dengan maksud untuk menghasilkan kesetaraan dalam peluang pendidikan bagi seluruh siswa dan anggota masyarakat, tanpa memandang perbedaan identitas ras, suku bangsa, tingkat sosial, serta keberagaman budaya. Tujuan utama dalam kajian adalah membekali generasi Z dengan inklusivitas, rasa hormat terhadap perbedaan, dan kemampuan untuk memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap masyarakat yang tumbuh subur dalam multikulturalisme. Metodologi yang digunakan adalah kualitatif, melalui penerapan teknik *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) untuk menjelajahi isu-isu yang dibahas. Sebanyak 8 artikel digunakan sebagai bahan utama dalam kajian penelitian ini yang terindex ber-ISSN (*International Standard Serial Number*). Pengumpulan data diperoleh dari pencarian google/google scholar dan dalam rentang waktu antara tahun 2015 hingga 2024. Berdasarkan penelitian menunjukan bahwa pendidikan multikulturalisme yang berlandaskan pada perspektif Islam membawa dampak positif terhadap pembentukan karakter Generasi Z.

Kata kunci: *Karakter Generasi z; Multikultural Islam; Pendidikan Multikulturalisme.*

INTRODUCTION

In general, multicultural education is an idea designed with the intention of producing equality in educational opportunities for all students and members of society, regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, social class, and cultural groups (Triandini et al., 2019). According to mentioned that multicultural education is something that has positive consequences to achieve the goal of Indonesian unity (El-Atwani, 2015). In the midst of the era of globalization, Indonesian people experience challenges from the free and unstoppable entry of foreign information and culture (Cherng & Davis, 2019; Herawati et al., 2025). Globalization does open up positive opportunities, but it also brings great challenges to the nation's identity and character, especially in Indonesian society which is rich in cultural, religious, and ethnic differences. Local values such as tolerance, mutual cooperation, and good manners began to be eroded by instant and individualistic culture (Jayadi et al., 2022; Sholahudin, 2019). This raises concerns about the decline in the character of the younger generation, which is a key factor in the formation and growth of a country (R'boul, 2021). Therefore, strengthening character education is an urgency that cannot be postponed, so that the Indonesian people remain resilient and rooted in noble values in the midst of global trends. Generation Z is known as a group born in the era of technological development, also known as digital natives. Generation Z is those born between 1998 and 2009 (Nurhayati et al., 2020). Generation Z is faced with environmental challenges that are more complex and diverse than the previous generation. In this situation, multicultural education emerges as a sincere effort to build a deeper sense of appreciation for diversity. This opinion is in line with (Hadi, 2021) who said that the purpose of multicultural education is to increase awareness in living together in society, foster awareness of cultural diversity, strengthen intercultural competence, eliminate racist attitudes and negative prejudices, and increase social responsibility for the environment (Nurdianzah et al., 2023).

However, the reality shows that discrimination is still common, both within the Muslim community itself and in interactions between Muslims and non-

Muslims, reflecting the tensions in a plural and multicultural society (Farikha et al., n.d.). In practice, the peaceful and respectful relations that should be the main goal of multiculturalism are often hampered by identity conflicts, prejudices, and mistrust between groups (Firdaus et al., 2020). In some conservative Muslim countries, narrow interpretations of religion can lead to exclusion and even discriminatory attitudes towards groups with different beliefs or practices, thus contradicting the core principles of multiculturalism that uphold respect for diversity. On the other hand, in global interactions, Muslims are also often victims of discrimination based on negative stereotypes, known as Islamophobia (Anggraini, 2025). This Islamophobia creates a stigma against Islam as an intolerant religion, worsens the image of Muslims, and hinders social integration in various countries. Religious and cultural differences are often seen as a threat to the identity of the majority, thus causing fear and rejection that have an impact on exclusive social relations. In fact, in the framework of multicultural education, Islam actually contains a great opportunity to become an example in internalizing the values of tolerance, mercy, and justice (Stuart Scott, 2023). True multicultural awareness and understanding is the key to building a harmonious and inclusive society.

Multicultural education is an approach that teaches us to build awareness and appreciation for the differences that exist in society, as an important step in fostering a sense of unity and togetherness (Parkhouse et al., 2019; Shaleh & Mahmudi, 2022). Other research also confirms that a curriculum that integrates multicultural values contributes to the formation of inclusive student character (Hayat et al., 2025). However, most previous studies have focused more on theoretical or implementation aspects in formal schools without evaluating their effectiveness within the framework of broader and more diverse social interactions. Therefore, this research is here to fill this gap, by examining more deeply how multicultural education is understood, applied, and internalized in the context of students' real lives, especially in the midst of the dynamics of Indonesian society that continues to develop. Therefore, this research is expected to be able to present a new perspective and help expand insights in the study of multicultural education in Indonesia.

The gap between educational idealism and social reality can be overcome through the implementation of Islamic religious education that integrates multicultural understanding (Purwaningsih & Fauzan, 2019). This integration shows the close relationship between the variables of Islamic religious education and multicultural understanding that plays a role in shaping the personality of students who are both faithful and inclusive (Nurul et al., 2020). Religious education that adopts a multicultural approach helps strengthen the ethics of peaceful, just, and respectful coexistence in diversity, which is an important part of strengthening the nation's character (Ika Sundari, 2024). This statement is in line with the provisions of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Article 4 paragraph 1, which states that the implementation of education must be democratic, uphold human rights, and reflect the diversity that exists in Indonesian society (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2005). Thus, the relationship between these variables is mutually reinforcing and complementary in forming an education system that is adaptive to multicultural realities.

The importance of this research lies in the real effort to answer the need for education that is able to embrace diversity and form the character of students who are tolerant and open-minded. In the midst of the increasing potential for conflict due to identity differences, multicultural education is not only a complement, but also the main foundation in building a peaceful and inclusive society (Suprapti, 2020). Through this research, we can evaluate the extent to which multicultural principles have been applied in the curriculum, as well as how they affect students' attitudes and understandings in real life. In other words, this research is not only academically important, but also has deep human value because it concerns the future of generations who will live and grow in a society full of diversity.

It is hoped that this research will make a significant contribution to the progress of Islam, multicultural education, and character development among members of Generation Z. Another goal of this research is to contribute to the development of educational strategies by better understanding the background of

these problems and forming the character of Generation Z in accordance with Islamic values. Therefore, this study aims to examine; 1) Multiculturalism in education from an Islamic perspective, 2) Multicultural education to shape the religious character of generation Z.

RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology used is qualitative, through the application of techniques *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) to explore the issues discussed (Triandini et al., 2019). Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a very useful method for exploring patterns, tendencies, and research gaps in the collection of literature related to a certain topic. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method is used to assess scientific articles by identifying, reviewing, and analyzing research that is considered relevant or related to the topic of the language being studied.

Reference analysis involves identifying, assessing, and interpreting specific findings from specific sources. Data searches using Google and Google Scholar. The reference sources in this study are taken from official journals that already have ISSN (*International Standard Serial Number*), as an indicator that the publication meets scientific publishing standards. The articles that are the source of data in this study come from the publication period of 2015 to 2024. The researcher collected journal articles using keywords such as multiculturalism education, Islamic multiculturalism, character, and generation Z. Document selection was carried out by considering the suitability of the research there were 8 articles, then the documents were analyzed and summarized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the results of the analysis carried out using *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR). This literature data was obtained from vulnerable in 2015-2024. There are 8 articles that are in accordance with the topics discussed that use keywords such as multiculturalism education, Islamic multiculturalism, character, and generation Z. multicultural education in Islam to strengthen the religious character of Gen Z in

Indonesia. Various studies examining multicultural education and Islamic moderation in Indonesia provide an important overview of efforts to understand and apply the values of diversity in the context of education and social life.

First; Research by (Imelda Wahyuni, 2015) emphasizing the importance of a deep understanding of multicultural education, especially in the context of language diversity in Indonesia. This research underlines the need for habituation from an early age in accepting differences and respecting cultural diversity among others. However, the research also shows the challenges in imposing the expected idealization of diversity, given the complexity of the diversity reality in Indonesia.

Second; Research (Muzaki & Tafsir, 2018) building a multicultural education perspective from the perspective of the Islamic worldview. Realizing an inclusive educational environment is one of the main goals of multicultural education through strengthening the values of justice, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. In the context of Islam, these values are strengthened through the process of Islamization of science, which has begun since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, thus strengthening the spirit of multiculturalism.

Thirth; Research by (Shaleh & Mahmudi, 2022) highlighting the role of multicultural Islamic education as a means of forming awareness and appreciation for diversity in society. Referring to Azra's thoughts, this education integrates the principles of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the motto Bhineka Tunggal Ika as an ideological basis, with the main goal of creating unity in the midst of the diversity of society.

Fourth; In the realm of religion, research (Noer, 2019) examine religious pluralism in the context of Islam in Indonesia. This research provides a critical understanding of religious diversity, especially after the issuance of the MUI fatwa, as well as the importance of the right framework to manage the inevitable reality of plurality. This research also reviews the existence of false paradigms that need to be watched out for in understanding religious pluralism.

Fifth; Next (Dawing, 2017) contribute through the study of Islamic moderation in a multicultural society. This research introduces the concept of contextualization of Islamic law, namely that the laws built by the Prophet based on the ancient context can be adjusted or reinterpreted according to the changing context of today, to produce new laws that are more useful and relevant to humanity.

The other 3 literature data There are a number of findings that directly or indirectly show the relationship between multicultural education and the formation of religious character in Generation Z.

First; Research conducted by (Lonthor, 2020) emphasizing the urgency of multicultural education as a means to foster legal understanding in a pluralistic society. In the reality of the Indonesian nation which is very diverse in cultures, ethnicities, and religions, multicultural education is seen as an urgent need to instill the values of togetherness and mutual respect. Lonthor emphasized that the national curriculum should be designed with multicultural principles in mind in order to be able to form a tolerant and inclusive national character. Education, in this case, is not only a tool for knowledge transfer, but also a bridge that unites diversity and encourages harmonious coexistence.

Second; Meanwhile, (Najmina, 2018) Through his research, it shows that multicultural education has a real contribution to the formation of the nation's character. He found that by inserting moral and behavioral values in learning such as honesty, tolerance, obedience, hard work, and the practice of religious beliefs, students can understand and appreciate the cultural differences that exist around them. The importance of this education lies in its ability to form a generation that not only thinks critically, but is also able to feel and understand life from the perspective of others. That way, the Indonesian nation will be better prepared to face global challenges without losing its national identity.

Thirth; Research from (Ijah Bahijah et al., 2022), which focuses on the importance of wasathiyah Islamic values education, namely moderate and balanced Islam, especially among millennial and Z generations in the use of social media. Today's young generation lives in a digital world full of instant information, which

makes them more vulnerable to deviant or extremist religious teachings. Therefore, values such as balance, justice, and tolerance must be taught consistently so that they can be wise in social media. This study reminds that social media has a great influence on the formation of attitudes and thoughts, so it is important for the younger generation to have a moderate filter of Islamic values in responding to all forms of information they receive.

Overall, this research underlines that education is not only about academics, but also about forming strong character and social awareness in the face of diversity and the challenges of the times. The literature provides a fairly comprehensive picture of how the multicultural approach in education not only encourages the creation of an inclusive and tolerant learning environment, but is also able to internalize religious values that are the foundation for the formation of the character of the younger generation. From the results of the study, it can be seen that the integration of Islamic values that emphasize mutual respect, justice, and peace into multicultural education practices contributes significantly to strengthening the religious character of students, especially generation Z who live in the midst of diversity and globalization challenges.

Multiculturalism Education

Multicultural education comes from the word 'culture' used in Dutch, and is also known as culture. In English, the word culture is used. Meanwhile in Arabic also known as *tsaqāfah*, this name is taken from the Arabic root of the word. The meaning comes from the Latin term which means cultivating, maintaining and improving, especially land cultivation or livestock. From this perspective, the definition of culture comes from the concept of all human power and activities that process and change nature (Chang et al., 2018; Saihu, 2019). Etymologically, the term multiculturalism began to appear in the 1950s. Multicultural education is considered a form of education that focuses on cultural diversity, in response to local cultural shifts (Arsal, 2019; Dwiyani, 2023).

In the realm of education, multiculturalism serves as a framework of thought that emphasizes the need to respect and acknowledge differences in society (Nurdianzah, 2020). The orientation of multicultural education is to "create a more human being." The basic principle of humanity is the recognition of human diversity, heterogeneity, and diversity. Multicultural education does not accept imbalances in the curriculum, thus respecting differences in scientific philosophy (Liu, 2022). According to (Dwiyani, 2023) states that in the idea of multicultural education, the focus is now broader than just racial groups in the main scope or domain, and beliefs. Actually, multicultural education is more about caring and a willingness to understand. Within this framework, multicultural education involves a more thorough understanding of society in general.

In the context of multiculturalism education, the main goal is to create a learning environment that encourages mutual understanding, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue (Octamaya Tenri Awaru, 2023). This mission aims to form a generation that is able to live a harmonious life in the midst of diversity, respect diversity, and have sensitivity to inequality and injustice. Thus, multiculturalism education is not only about the transfer of academic knowledge, but also the development of attitudes, values, and interpersonal skills. Multiculturalism education emphasizes the significance of integrating diversity values into educational curriculum and practice (Octamaya Tenri Awaru, 2023). This includes the application of learning materials that reflect the diversity of cultures, histories, and world perspectives. Multicultural education also equips individuals with the ability to communicate effectively across backgrounds, while also building a safe environment to share experiences and perspectives.

The implementation of multiculturalism education is not limited to the classroom, but involves the entire educational ecosystem, including the family and society (Baidhawry, 2005). The role of parents and community members is key in supporting multiculturalism education, because they play an important role in shaping children's perceptions and values related to diversity.

Multicultural Education Islamic Perspective

Reflecting the principles of the Islamic religion that emphasizes tolerance, justice, and mutual understanding among diverse human beings, it is the essence of multicultural education in an Islamic perspective. Islam, as an inclusive and universal religion, considers diversity to be God's will that was deliberately created to be appreciated and learned. Islam considers multiculturalism to be a reality that is deliberately created and must be faced with wisdom (Nasihin & Dewi, 2019). The concept of brotherhood (al-ukhuwah) is a characteristic of Islamic teachings on multiculturalism. According to (Muzaki & Tafsir, 2018), as time went by, the meaning of the concept of brotherhood introduced by the Prophet was distorted. Brotherhood is now limited to relations with fellow Muslims, while non-Muslim individuals are considered to be outside the scope of fraternal relations. In fact, in its extremes, brotherhood is only applied to people who share similar views and beliefs.

According to that Islam encourages its people to understand and appreciate human diversity as a manifestation of the greatness of Allah SWT (Nurdianzah, 2024). In Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, the Qur'an conveys that the diversity of human beings in tribes and nations is part of the divine plan for them to know and understand each other. Multicultural education in an Islamic perspective guides Muslims to see differences as the beauty of Allah's creation that needs to be protected and appreciated. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of a fair and equitable attitude in treating all individuals, regardless of differences. The concept of justice in Islam obliges its people to be fair in all aspects of life, including in the context of education. By avoiding unfair or discriminatory attitudes towards anyone based on cultural diversity or ethnic background. Therefore, multicultural Islam teaches the values of establishing brotherhood (Fita Mustafida, 2020). The concept of Islamic morality encourages Muslims to interact with compassion, respect, and understanding towards others, regardless of differences in beliefs or religions. Thus, multicultural education in Islam aims to form individuals who can coexist peacefully in a diverse society.

Viewing plurality as a gift from God that must be used to learn from each other and enrich life experiences. This education encourages Muslims to be active in various interfaith dialogue activities, expand their horizons, and foster a sense of brotherhood with fellow human beings. It is an important role of education as a means to overcome misunderstanding and intercultural conflicts. Through education, Muslims are invited to become agents of change who bring messages of peace, tolerance, and understanding in the midst of the complexity of a multicultural society.

Generasi Z (Zoomer)

Generation Z, often dubbed Zoomers, is made up of individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s (Viera Valencia & Garcia Giraldo, 2019). Generation Z is generally recognized as individuals who are familiar with technological developments, especially in the use of the internet and mobile devices, from the earliest days of their lives. The main characteristic of Generation Z lies in their high technological ability, identified as "digital natives" due to their familiarity with technology since childhood. The use of devices such as smartphones, tablets, and internet access has become a natural part of their daily lives. Generation Z is able to quickly access information and has a good level of skill in using various digital platforms.

By referring to this definition, classifying generations is made based on the period of the year of birth, and this idea can be described in the form of a table as follows:

Table 1. Generation Classification

Year	Generation Name
1925 – 1946	Veteran generation
1946 – 1960	Baby boom generation
1960 – 1980	X generation
1980 – 1995	And generation
1995 – 2010	Z generation
2010 +	Alfa generation

Each generation has a different character depending on the social context and historical events they experience. If you look at it in terms of time, generation Z can

be considered a descendant of generation Y, which is generally known as millennials (Aisah, 2020). Likewise, behavior shows change. Behavior refers to a person's actions, speech, and behavior that can be observed, explained, and recorded by others or by the individual concerned (Zis et al., 2021). Generation Z is the group that will take over leadership in the current era. Changes in behavior will also affect the direction of the nation's development in the future. With the character of interaction that takes place in various directions, social media is an attractive space for teenagers to establish social communication every day (Arung Triantoro, 2019). Generation Z is also often considered an inclusive group and understands diversity. They grow up in an environment that is more open to diversity, both culturally and gender-wise.

The challenges faced by Generation Z involve the mental and emotional impact of excessive exposure to social media, high academic pressure, and difficulties navigating a rapidly changing world. Therefore, a deep understanding of the characteristics and needs of this generation is crucial in designing their education, career development, and welfare support strategies.

Multicultural Strategies According to the Islamic Perspective of Islam to Build Character

According to (Permana & Ahyani, 2020), that in the implementation of multicultural education in educational institutions, it is necessary to include it in separate subjects to be more effective in keeping students to know more about diversity and how to respond to cultural diversity that can trigger the disintegration of the Indonesian nation (Astutik & Nurdianzah, 2024). Curriculum managers at the institutional level are advised not to be too rigid in starting multicultural education. Therefore, multicultural education has the potential to be incorporated into cognate subjects such as civics, social studies, or sociology, with an emphasis on the delivery of essential values that are at the core of this education (Azizah et al., 2023). This is expected to ensure that the main goal of multicultural education is well achieved.

The strategy of multiculturalism in the context of education, when adopted with reference to Islamic values and principles, becomes an effective method aimed at the development of the character of individuals with good morals (Nurdianzah et al., 2024). In Islam, diversity among humans is seen as God's will and the potential for strong collective unity. Here are some multicultural strategies from an Islamic perspective that can be applied to cultivate good character:

Inclusive Education Based on Islamic Values

Education with an Islamic multicultural perspective should emphasize inclusivity, in which everyone, regardless of their cultural or religious beliefs, is valued and respected; all pedagogical materials must be enriched with Islamic concepts, such as tolerance, justice, and respect.

Active Involvement in Intercultural Dialogue

In Islamic teachings, respecting differences between people and discussing with them in a polite manner is commendable. Engaging students in discussions and activities that aim to promote understanding of different cultures can help foster an open attitude in students.

Getting Used to Openness and Empathy

Students as part of the community are strongly encouraged in Islam to practice open-mindedness and empathy towards others. Therefore, a multicultural approach to character formation should seek to create conditions in which learners can appreciate the viewpoints of others. This can be done through team projects, community service activities, or role-playing where diversity is key to achieving goals.

Education for Understanding Diversity in the Context of Islam

It would be useful to teach about diversity issues within the framework of Islam. It is recommended that the lessons be designed to cover the concepts of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *shura* (deliberation), and *hikmah* (wisdom) as the foundations of Islam that can form harmony and collaboration among people.

Integrating Practical Learning

Multicultural strategies for character education should focus on practical activities. It needs to be arranged for students to participate in extracurricular activities, such as visiting places of worship or community development projects, as this will help them appreciate diversity and instill a positive attitude.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that multicultural education based on Islamic values makes an important contribution in shaping the religious character of Generation Z in the midst of diversity and challenges of the digital era. Islamic values such as tolerance, justice, compassion, and moderation (wasathiyah) are aligned with the principles of multiculturalism that emphasize respect for cultural, religious, and ethnic differences. Through the integration of these values into education, Generation Z is not only equipped with a strong understanding of religion, but also taught to be inclusive and open to diversity. Literature review analyzed through the *Systematic Literature Review (SLR)* shows that the application of multicultural education in an Islamic perspective is able to create a more just, peaceful, and socially meaningful learning environment. In addition, this approach is also considered an effective strategy to overcome the challenges of intolerance and Islamophobia that arise in the era of globalization and digitalization. Therefore, multicultural education based on Islamic values is not only relevant, but also essential as a strategy in producing a generation that is religious, reflective, and able to blend peacefully in the midst of the diversity of society.

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