

Model of Cultural Integration at Al-Hidayah Modern Islamic Boarding School, Jambi: Commitment to Building Multicultural Santri Character

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of cultural integration programs in enhancing the tolerance attitudes of students at Pesantren Modern Al-Hidayah, Jambi. The program is designed to teach cultural diversity through interactive activities such as cultural festivals, intercultural dialogues, and active engagement with the surrounding community. The social issue underlying this research is the lack of effective interaction between students and the community, which can lead to misunderstandings and intolerant attitudes. Using a descriptive qualitative approach through a case study, the research involves students, educators, and the local community as primary respondents. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation of cultural integration activities.

The findings indicate that the program successfully enhances students' tolerance by fostering deep cross-cultural interaction experiences. Students reported improvements in communication skills, understanding of local cultural values, and conflict resolution abilities through dialogical approaches. Educators emphasized the importance of a multicultural curriculum supporting the program, while the community expressed a sense of greater harmony with the pesantren through active participation in joint activities. Thematic analysis identified key themes, such as changes in social attitudes, the program's role in fostering social cohesion, and implementation challenges involving cultural value differences.

This study concludes that the cultural integration program at Ponpes Modern Al-Hidayah Jambi significantly strengthens tolerance and harmonizes relationships between students and the community. These findings contribute to the development of multicultural curricula in religious educational institutions and serve as a reference for enhancing the role of pesantren as centers for tolerance education in diverse societies.



Keywords: Cultural integration program, Tolerance, Religious education, Cultural diversity, Multicultural curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools as religious-based educational institutions have a central role in shaping the personality and moral values of students, but Islamic boarding schools also face challenges in equipping students with the skills to interact effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse society (Rosidah and Jamilah 2023). In the Islamic boarding school environment which generally has homogeneous social norms and values, the ability of students to adapt and understand diversity outside the Islamic boarding school environment is often limited (Hadi 2014). This condition has the potential to create a gap between santri and the surrounding community, especially in culturally diverse areas (Muhammad Ariby Zahron 2024). As stated by Gordon Allport's Intergroup Contact theory, limited interaction with other cultural groups can strengthen stereotypes and prejudices, so Islamic boarding schools need to implement approaches that encourage student involvement in activities with the community (Hosaini et al. 2024). Thus, the relevance of this research lies in the urgency of exploring the extent to which cultural integration programs in Islamic boarding schools are able to strengthen students' attitudes of tolerance towards diversity and strengthen relations between Islamic boarding schools and the surrounding community (Mujib 2023).

Previous research shows that homogeneous environments in religious education, including Islamic boarding schools, tend to pay less attention to learning intercultural interactions, which has an impact on students' lack of social skills when facing pluralism in society. A study by Mansur (2021) found that students who have minimal involvement with the surrounding community do not understand local culture and traditions, which often gives rise to misunderstandings. On the other hand, research from Astuti (2020) shows that cultural integration programs in several Islamic boarding schools have succeeded in encouraging the creation of a higher attitude of tolerance among students towards diversity. Based on the perspective of Henri Tajfel's Social Identity theory, a strong social identity often makes individuals more distant from other groups, but direct interaction can reduce this prejudice. This research aims to fill the gap in previous research by exploring how students' interactions with local communities carried out in a structured manner through cultural integration programs can build attitudes of tolerance and foster empathy among students.

This research aims to analyze the impact of the cultural integration program in Islamic



boarding schools on increasing students' tolerant attitudes towards diversity, as well as strengthening relations between students and the community in the environment around the Islamic boarding school. The focus of this research is to comprehensively understand how students' participation in cultural integration activities can build awareness and appreciation for local cultural values. Another aim of this research is to identify the components of the cultural integration program that are most effective in forming students' interpersonal skills, especially in terms of collaboration, communication and conflict resolution with village residents. With this approach, research is expected to contribute to improving the curriculum in Islamic boarding schools, especially in the field of multicultural education in accordance with Berry's (1997) Acculturation theory, which emphasizes the importance of cultural intermingling in the educational environment.

The hypothesis in this research is that the cultural integration program in Islamic boarding schools significantly increases students' attitudes of tolerance and strengthens their social relations with the surrounding community (Rika Widianita 2023). Based on Allport's Contact Hypothesis theory, the more often individuals interact with different groups in an equal atmosphere, the higher the possibility of forming mutual respect (Abdulloh 2018). This research argues that students who are more often involved in cultural activities with local communities will more easily build understanding and respect for diversity (Rohman and Saihu 2019). In other words, this hypothesis states that the involvement of students in cultural integration programs not only strengthens their insight into local culture, but also increases awareness of the importance of the values of mutual cooperation and togetherness in a plural society (Ananda Muhamad Tri Utama 2022). It is hoped that the results of this research will support this theory and provide empirical evidence about the importance of cultural integration as an educational strategy in Islamic boarding schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was carried out at the Al-Hidayah Jambi Modern Islamic Boarding School which is located in Kenali Besar Village, Jambi. This location was chosen because this Islamic boarding school is quite active in carrying out cultural integration programs involving the students and the local community, making it possible to explore the impact of the program on the students' attitudes of tolerance and social relations. The Al-Hidayah Jambi Modern Islamic Boarding School is located in an area that has cultural diversity, including different tribes and traditions, making this village an ideal environment for observing intercultural interactions. The supportive social



environment and openness of the Islamic boarding school in implementing this program also contributed to the success of collecting valid data. Apart from that, the location of this Islamic boarding school is quite easy to access, allowing researchers to carry out field observations and interviews with various related parties, including students, teachers and the community. The existence of Islamic boarding schools amidst the diversity of society provides a rich perspective for understanding the dynamics of Islamic boarding school relationships with the surrounding community.

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research design with a case study approach. This approach was chosen by researchers because it aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences and responses of students, teachers and the community regarding cultural integration programs in Islamic boarding schools. The qualitative descriptive design is suitable for exploring individual participants' experiences, while the case study allows researchers to focus intensively on the specific context of the Al-Hidayah modern Islamic boarding school. Case studies help analyze key elements of cultural integration programs and their impact on increasing tolerance and social relations in the Islamic boarding school environment (Putri and Kurniawan 2024). Thus, this research aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the program based on participant experiences and interactions in one particular location.

The main respondents in this research include students aged 15-18 years, Islamic boarding school teachers who are directly involved in cultural integration programs, as well as local communities who interact with Islamic boarding schools. Santri were chosen as the main subjects to understand how the cultural integration program influences their attitudes and interpersonal skills in interacting with a diverse environment. Educators, especially those designing or implementing cultural integration programs, are also an important resource because they have insight into the goals and challenges of these programs. Residents of villages around the Islamic boarding school were selected to explore community perceptions of the existence of the Islamic boarding school and the impact of the program on their relationship with the Islamic boarding school students. This combination of respondents allows researchers to gain diverse perspectives regarding the effectiveness and social dynamics of cultural integration programs implemented in Islamic boarding schools.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation and documentation (Asiva Noor Rachmayani 2015). Interviews were conducted with students, teachers, and village residents to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and effects of the cultural integration program on social relations. In-depth interview techniques were used to



enable participants to share their views and experiences openly. Direct observations are carried out during cultural integration activities, such as festivals or mutual cooperation activities, to capture interactions between students and the community. Documentation is used to collect secondary data in the form of program notes, activity agendas and Islamic boarding school policies related to cultural integration programs. This combination of techniques allows researchers to collect rich and valid data from various points of view, providing a comprehensive picture of program implementation and impact (Masturaini 2021).

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which involved coding the data and identifying the main themes that emerged. Each interview, observation and documentation data was read repeatedly to find patterns or categories related to tolerance, social relations and cultural dynamics in Islamic boarding schools. After that, the data was classified into main themes, such as changes in students' attitudes, the role of the program in social relations, and challenges in program implementation. This technique allows researchers to identify relevant patterns of meaning from the perspectives of various participants and describe the results systematically. Thematic analysis provides flexibility in exploring various aspects of complex phenomena, such as the relationship between religious education and cultural openness, resulting in in-depth conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the cultural integration program at the Al-Hidayah modern Islamic boarding school (As-samawi 2024).

Research Objectives

Analyzing students' perceptions regarding cultural integration carried out in Islamic boarding schools.

Improved Interpersonal Skills:

Cultural integration activities, such as cultural festivals and intercultural dialogue, have improved students' interpersonal skills. Santri report increased abilities in communicating, working together, and resolving conflicts with friends from various cultural backgrounds (Shara, Ningsih, and Andriani 2020).

Description of findings: Cultural integration activities in Islamic boarding schools, such as cultural festivals and intercultural dialogue, significantly improve students' interpersonal skills. Cultural festivals provide a platform for students to interact directly with peers from different cultural backgrounds, allowing them to learn how to communicate effectively. During this activity,



students not only demonstrate speaking skills, but also good listening skills, which are essential for constructive communication.

Through intercultural dialogue, students are taught how to respect other people's perspectives and develop empathy. This situation encourages them to work together in teams, both in organizing events and in group discussions, thus increasing the sense of solidarity between them. In addition, the experience of dealing with various opinions and different ways of thinking provides opportunities for students to learn to resolve conflicts peacefully and productively. Thus, improving these interpersonal skills not only prepares students for better social interactions outside the Islamic boarding school, but also helps them become more tolerant individuals and open to diversity, creating a more harmonious environment in society.

The following are the results of interviews with students. Zahrotu Khoirunnisa, an 18 year old santri (Santri A), expressed his experience while participating in a cultural festival at his Islamic boarding school which involved collaboration with other santri from various backgrounds. He was very happy to take part in this activity because it gave him the opportunity to learn how to communicate well, especially in explaining each other's culture to other students. Even though it felt awkward at first, over time Zahrotu was able to open up more and often discuss and listen to other people's opinions, which helped him understand different points of view and increased his sense of tolerance. This experience also improved his interpersonal skills, especially in public speaking and resolving conflicts more calmly. On the other hand, Ulfa Masrurah, a 15 year old student (Santri B), felt that intercultural dialogue activities at the Islamic boarding school were very useful. He admitted that he learned how to communicate more openly and listen well, so that his communication skills improved. Initially, Ulfa often felt nervous speaking in front of friends, but now she has become more confident and calm. Apart from that, this experience also helped him get along more easily with students from different backgrounds and was able to resolve small conflicts by discussing without feeling awkward, so that the relationship between them became more harmonious.

CONCLUSION

From interviews with Santri A and Santri B, it is clear that cultural integration activities at the Islamic boarding school have had a positive impact on their interpersonal skills. They expressed improvements in communication, collaboration and conflict resolution skills, which shows the program's success in forming students who are more tolerant and open.



Community Involvement in the Integration Process:

Research finds that the involvement of local communities in cultural integration programs has a positive impact. Collaborative activities between Islamic boarding schools and the surrounding community not only strengthen social relations, but also create a sense of mutual respect and understanding between Islamic boarding schools and the community (Hafizatul et al. 2024).

Description of Findings: Community Involvement in the Integration Process

The involvement of local communities in cultural integration programs in Islamic boarding schools has been proven to have a significant positive impact on social relations between students and the community (Saputra 2024). Collaborative activities, such as art events, skills training, and cultural discussions, allow students and the community to interact directly, build closeness, and get to know each other more deeply. This strong social relationship fosters a sense of mutual respect, because both parties can understand each other's cultural differences and habits (Hafid 2016).

Active community participation in Islamic boarding school activities also provides opportunities for students to see firsthand the role of the community in preserving local culture, so that they learn the values of diversity and mutual cooperation from the surrounding environment. This involvement not only enriches the students' learning experience, but also establishes the Islamic boarding school as a center for community development. Through cultural integration, students not only learn to appreciate local culture, but also acquire the social skills needed for cross-cultural interactions, both inside and outside the Islamic boarding school environment (Imami 2022).

The following is evidence of interviews with village residents and an 18 year old Islamic boarding school student. Mrs. Rina, a village resident around the Al-Hidayah Modern Islamic Boarding School, told how cultural integration activities at the Islamic boarding school involve local residents, such as cultural festivals, group cooking events, and traditional craft training. According to him, this activity provides an opportunity for residents to get to know the students, introduce village culture, and exchange knowledge. Mrs. Rina expressed a positive impression of this activity because the students seemed enthusiastic about learning local traditions, while the residents also gained new insights from the students' open way of thinking. He also felt that the closeness between residents and students was getting stronger, to the point where it felt like a big family helping each other.



Meanwhile, an 18 year old santri, who was involved in the cultural integration program, also expressed his enthusiasm for learning local culture and building relationships with the community. The student admitted that he had gained a new understanding of the importance of mutual cooperation and preserving culture maintained by village communities. According to him, involvement in this activity changed the public's view of their students, not only as religious students but also as part of a wider community. Students and residents become closer, respect each other, and create a warmer and more intimate Islamic boarding school atmosphere.

Conclusion: Cultural integration activities at the Al-Hidayah Modern Islamic Boarding School strengthen relations between students and village residents, creating a harmonious and respectful relationship. Both students and residents gain new insights and experiences from this interaction, which not only increases cultural understanding but also strengthens the sense of togetherness and mutual cooperation in the environment around the Islamic boarding school.

Curriculum Adaptation to Accommodate Diversity:

Research shows that some Islamic boarding schools have adapted by developing curricula that include material about cultural diversity and multicultural values. This includes lessons about history, art, and cultural practices from various communities around the Islamic boarding school (Ixfina and Marlina 2024).

The adaptation of the curriculum in several Islamic boarding schools to accommodate diversity shows a progressive step in creating an inclusive learning environment. Research shows that Islamic boarding schools are starting to add material about cultural diversity and multicultural values to their curriculum. This step includes teaching history, art and cultural practices from the surrounding community, which provides opportunities for students to know and understand various traditions and ethnicities outside the Islamic boarding school environment (Jailani and Huda 2024).

This teaching aims to ensure that students are not only skilled in religious knowledge, but also have broad insight into other cultures, encouraging a tolerant and open attitude. Including multicultural values in the curriculum helps shape students' personalities so they are ready to face a diverse society, so that they can appreciate differences and foster a sense of unity amidst diversity (Problem 2022).

The following are the results of interviews with teachers and guardians of students. Ustazah Maya, a teacher at the Al-Hidayah Modern Islamic Boarding School, explained about the adaptation of the curriculum at the Islamic boarding school which has included cultural diversity



material to broaden the students' horizons. This additional material includes art, history and cultural practices from various communities around the Islamic boarding school. According to Ustazah Maya, the main aim of adding this material is to build a tolerant attitude and respect for other cultures so that students can more easily adapt to the social environment, both inside and outside the Islamic boarding school. The students' response to this material was very positive; they often actively ask questions, discuss and show great interest in other cultures, even sharing experiences when interacting with local people.

Mr. Ahmad, a student parent, also expressed his support for adding cultural diversity material to the Islamic boarding school curriculum. According to him, understanding and appreciating other cultures is very important in the era of globalization. Mr Ahmad sees positive changes in his son who is now more open and actively participates in village activities, such as attending local cultural events. This shows that the child feels comfortable with diversity and tries to adapt well. Mr. Ahmad assesses that this program helps strengthen relations between students and the community; When students appreciate local culture, the community feels accepted and is more open to interaction, thereby creating a harmonious atmosphere.

Conclusion: The integration of cultural diversity in the Al-Hidayah Modern Islamic Boarding School curriculum plays an important role in strengthening tolerance, respect and openness of students towards the surrounding community. This program not only broadens the students' horizons but also strengthens relations between the Islamic boarding school and the community, creating a harmonious and mutually supportive environment in the surrounding villages.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the cultural integration program in Islamic boarding schools has a positive impact in three main aspects, namely:

1. Increasing students' interpersonal skills

Cultural integration activities, such as cultural festivals and intercultural dialogue, have succeeded in improving students' interpersonal skills. Interaction with friends from various cultural backgrounds helps students develop communication, cooperation, empathy and conflict resolution skills. Santri become more tolerant and open to diversity, which prepares them to contribute to a harmonious social environment.

2. Community Involvement in the Integration Process

The active participation of the local community in Islamic boarding school activities strengthens relations between the students and the surrounding community.



Collaborative activities, such as arts events and skills training, create a sense of mutual respect and solidarity. This harmonious relationship not only enriches the students' learning experience, but also makes Islamic boarding schools a center for cultural-based community development.

3. Curriculum Adaptation to Accommodate Diversity

Adjusting the Islamic boarding school curriculum to accommodate cultural diversity shows a progressive step in building an inclusive educational environment. Teaching about cultural diversity and multicultural values encourages students to be tolerant, open and ready to face a pluralistic society. This adaptation strengthens the relationship between the Islamic boarding school and the local community, creating an atmosphere of mutual support and harmony.

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