

Fostering Social Harmony: The Impact of Islamic Character Education in Multicultural Societies

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ABSTRACT

In multicultural societies, fostering social harmony requires educational approaches that integrate values of tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding. This study examines the role of Islamic-based character education in shaping individuals who can navigate diversity dynamics, balancing Islamic values with modern societal needs. This research employs a qualitative literature review method, analyzing data from various credible sources, including scientific journals, books, and articles. The study systematically reviews and synthesizes findings to assess the impact of Islamic character education on promoting social harmony in multicultural contexts. The analysis reveals that Islamic-based character education serves as a crucial foundation for character development in multicultural societies. It emphasizes core values such as tolerance, respect, and empathy, enabling students to appreciate diversity and coexist peacefully. Islamic character education fosters an inclusive mindset, encouraging children to respect differences and actively contribute to social cohesion. While Islamic-based character education effectively supports social harmony, the study identifies the need for strategies to address future challenges, including resistance to diversity, globalization pressures, and the potential marginalization of minority groups. A holistic, collaborative approach—combining educators, policymakers, and communities—is recommended to enhance the effectiveness of character education programs. Ultimately, strengthening Islamic character education not only fosters social harmony but also equips the younger generation with the resilience and ethical grounding to face global challenges in an increasingly diverse world.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, societies worldwide are becoming increasingly diverse, characterized by a rich tapestry of cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences. Indonesia, as a unitary state, has long upheld the values of national unity and is recognized for fostering a harmonious

society grounded in tolerance, mutual respect, and strong bonds of brotherhood. Historically, Indonesian society has prioritized adherence to social norms and emphasized religious tolerance, contributing to peaceful coexistence among its diverse communities. However, the rapid advancement of technology and modernization has gradually eroded these traditional values, presenting new challenges in preserving the nation's culture of tolerance and social harmony (Anggraeni & Haryanto, 2022).

In this context, Islamic character education emerges as a vital solution for cultivating individuals capable of living peacefully alongside others from different backgrounds. Islamic-based character education emphasizes the development of moral virtues, such as tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity, which are essential for maintaining harmony in multicultural societies. By instilling these values, it encourages students to foster mutual respect, broaden their openness to differences, and actively contribute to social cohesion.

Furthermore, as outlined in Permendikbud Number 20 of 2018, character education is recognized as a foundational pillar in implementing Islamic education within Indonesia's multicultural framework. This policy stresses the integration of values such as religiosity and cooperation to promote mutual respect and appreciation for diversity. Thus, Islamic character education serves not only as a vehicle for transmitting religious knowledge but also as a powerful tool for strengthening national unity and fostering tolerance in an increasingly pluralistic society (Rosyadi, 2024).

The role of character education is referred to as a teaching methodology that instills the basic principles of three domains: perception, emotion, and imagination. Character education is an instructional methodology that promotes students' social, emotional, and ethical development. Positive reinforcement at home, in educational institutions, and in the community encourages character development. Formal institutions must integrate character education in all areas into a cohesive curriculum. This aims to build a quality and cultured Indonesian nation that is knowledgeable, faithful, compassionate, empathetic, and ethical (Ananda, Inas, & Setyawan, 2022). The issue of character is a matter of reflection and shared concern because it can be said that currently, students are experiencing a character crisis. This crisis is marked by the increasing prevalence of promiscuity and sexual freedom, increasing rates of violence among children and adolescents, crimes against peers, juvenile theft, cheating, drug abuse, pornography, rape, robbery, and vandalism - as Presidential Decree 87 of 2017 mandates the strengthening of character education (Suwendi, 2021).

The role of developing Islamic character is a systematic and planned process to shape a Muslim into an ethical individual who behaves honestly and obeys Islamic teachings. In addition to educating the community about good and bad morals, this character development process also involves habituation exercises that support the community in applying Islamic character values consistently in every aspect of life, anywhere and anytime. In Islam, morality is often understood to include virtues such as emotional stability, ethical behavior, fundamental character, habits, and civilization. Islamic character development includes non-formal education with the application of a perennial normative approach. This approach emphasizes character development based on the infallible sources of Islamic teachings, such as the Hadith and the Qur'an (Yusri, Ananta, Handayani, & Haura, 2023).

Character education is not a new idea in the history of education. Seeing the many issues and challenges that occur in education, character education has two major goals: to help students become intelligent in their minds and to help them become morally good. However, as time progresses and develops, character education begins to decline, which results in many issues related to the decline of Islamic character. Among them are the increase in promiscuity in children's environments, high rates of violence and crime, drug abuse, and human rights violations. So many problems occur due to the lack of character education for students. Until now, all the knowledge about morals and religion obtained at school has not been resolved completely (Hamim, Rindiani, Hasanah, & Arifin, 2021).

Islamic character education in a multicultural society is very important amidst today's complex social dynamics. Indonesia, as a country with ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, often faces challenges in building harmony between groups. The social conflicts that arise, such as inter-religious

tensions and cultural differences, show the need for an educational approach to instill the values of tolerance and mutual respect (Hamim et al., 2021). In this context, Islamic character education raises awareness of the significance of harmonious living. A concrete example of the challenges faced is the increasing intolerance in several regions, often leading to conflict. For example, incidents of rejection of the construction of places of worship by certain groups reflect a lack of understanding and appreciation of diversity. This shows that character education based on Islamic values, such as justice, tolerance, and unity, needs to be strengthened so that the younger generation can understand the importance of respecting differences (Creed, 2022).

Islamic character education in a multicultural society teaches religious knowledge and instills universal values that support social integration. Through a curriculum that emphasizes these values, students can be prepared with an open and inclusive attitude. Several schools have implemented educational programs integrating religious lessons with discussions on cultural and ethnic diversity. These programs aim to shape the character of students who understand their religion's teachings and respect others' beliefs (Anggraeni & Haryanto, 2022). Therefore, Islamic character education in the context of a multicultural society must go beyond theoretical teaching aimed at practical application in everyday life. This includes strengthening school regulations that support diversity and extracurricular activities that promote cross-cultural interaction (Hamim et al., 2021). Through this approach, it is hoped that the younger generation can be agents of change who can create a more harmonious and inclusive social environment. Therefore, the responsibility of educators and parents is not only limited to instilling moral ideals; they must also be role models in good behavior, demonstrate commendable morals, and provide essential encouragement and support for students to develop character and self-confidence (Adu, 2014).

The concept of Islamic character education is fundamentally centred on developing morally upright individuals and fostering a harmonious, respectful society. In communities characterized by diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, character education serves as a crucial vehicle for promoting universal values that transcend group differences. Islamic character education places a strong emphasis on morality and ethics as the foundation of social interaction, aligning with the Prophet Muhammad SAW's mission to perfect human morality. Therefore, its ultimate aim is to nurture individuals with high ethical standards who can contribute positively to societal well-being (Abidin, 2021).

In multicultural contexts, it is essential that Islamic character education integrates the core values of Islamic teachings with local cultural norms, fostering synergy and cooperation among different societal groups (Hayani, 2020). Furthermore, Islamic character education underscores the significance of tolerance and mutual respect. Through a value-based learning process, individuals are encouraged to understand, appreciate, and engage respectfully with diversity in their everyday lives. Thus, Islamic character education functions not only as a means of shaping personal morality but also as a bridge to cultivate social harmony in a pluralistic environment (Muawwanah & Darmiyanti, 2022). Understanding this concept reveals how religious values can provide a strong moral foundation for fostering positive social interactions, ultimately preparing future generations to be intellectually capable, ethically grounded, and socially adaptable (Hasan, 2024).

This article aims to highlight the vital role of multicultural values within Islamic character education, emphasizing the need for students to appreciate cultural, religious, and ethnic differences. It seeks to promote tolerance, openness, and respect—key attributes for nurturing a peaceful, harmonious society. Additionally, it advocates for integrating Islamic character values into educational curricula to equip students with the skills to resolve conflicts and contribute positively to diverse social environments. Through this discussion, the article aspires to offer meaningful insights into the effective implementation of Islamic character education in multicultural societies.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design, with the primary method of data collection being a comprehensive literature review. The literature review serves as a critical component in descriptive qualitative research, as it aims to systematically describe, summarize, and interpret various social realities, conditions, and phenomena present within society. These phenomena are analyzed specifically through the lens of the effectiveness of implementing Islamic character education in multicultural contexts (Holloway & Todres, 2003).

Data for this research were gathered by reviewing and synthesizing relevant sources, including international and national journal articles, scholarly books, and credible online publications closely related to the study's focus. To ensure the comprehensiveness and relevance of the data, the researcher utilized a range of online academic databases at both the national and international levels, selecting literature that directly addresses Islamic character education and its role in fostering social harmony.

The data analysis technique applied in this study follows the triangulation method, encompassing three key stages: data collection, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sarosa, 2021). Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns, themes, and concepts relevant to the impact of Islamic character education in multicultural societies. This approach allows for a thorough examination and interpretation of data, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings. Through this systematic method, the research design supports the objective of providing evidence-based insights into how Islamic character education contributes to promoting tolerance and social cohesion in diverse communities.

2.1 Search Strategy

Searching for data and selecting several scientific articles related to Islamic character education in a multicultural society is obtained from several databases, including Semantic Scholar, Google Scholar, JSTORE, Taylor & Francis, and Publish Or Perish. Searching for several articles to meet the required data, the author uses the keywords "Character Education", "Islamic Character", and "Multicultural Society". With this, the author can easily analyze the data based on literature reviews.

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Eligibility criteria are necessary to obtain an analysis result that aims to answer several research questions. From several articles found, there is a filtering method based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria that the author has set. The writing criteria in this article are a collection of scientific articles published nationally and internationally (Pradoko, 2017). Based on some information needed to strengthen the data, the author considers several inclusion and exclusion criteria according to this study to improve data quality and make it easier to analyze data according to research needs. In other words, these criteria can produce an analysis that can present various information about the multiple roles of Islamic character education in society.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Theme	Islamic character education in the context of multiculturalism	General character education, general Islamic religious education
Publication Type	Scientific journal articles (peer-reviewed), books, research reports	Popular articles, blogs, unpublished theses
Publication Year	2017-2024	Before 2020
Language	Indonesian English	Besides Indonesian and English
Methodology	Case studies, surveys, document analysis	Descriptive qualitative research

2.3 Data analysis

Following the selection of relevant data sources, this study employed a meta-aggregation approach for data analysis. Key elements such as research methodologies, findings, and their relevance to the theoretical framework were systematically extracted from each selected source. The extracted data were then summarized into descriptive aggregates and analyzed to identify recurring patterns and key themes that addressed the research objectives. To synthesize insights across various studies, a meta-synthesis using a narrative approach was applied, allowing for the integration of interrelated concepts and a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The synthesized results underwent further evaluation through iterative meta-aggregation, enhancing the depth, coherence, and structure of the analysis, and providing a solid foundation for the discussion and conclusions (Sukardi, 2021).

Additionally, the study defined clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of the analyzed literature. After applying these criteria, the data analysis proceeded qualitatively, highlighting key findings from the reviewed literature (Iriani et al., 2022). By meticulously adhering to these criteria, the analysis presents a well-rounded and in-depth exploration of the impact of Islamic character education within multicultural societies. Through this structured methodology, the study aims to critically examine how Islamic character education fosters the implementation of societal values and norms while reinforcing social relations across cultural and educational contexts. Ultimately, the findings are expected to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on implementing Islamic character education as a tool for promoting social harmony in diverse communities.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Conceptual Basis of Islamic Character Education

Education fosters good character or exemplary behavior, a foundation for individuals to contribute to a nation that can achieve security and prosperity. A nation will survive as long as it has a strong character. When their good character disappears, the nation will follow suit. This explains the importance of character education for individuals (Idris, 2018). In the context of character education, "character" comes from the Latin "character", which refers to a person's disposition, nature, psychological characteristics, moral values, personality, or ethics. Terminologically, character is defined as the general traits of a human being, where humans have many characteristics that depend on their life factors (Adu, 2014). Character can be considered identical to morality and virtue so that the character of a nation is equal to its morality or virtue. A nation with character demonstrates moral and ethical principles. A nation without character lacks moral ideals or fails to uphold appropriate norms of behavior (Setiawan, 2014).

The existence of character education aims to develop a society that is resilient, competitive, moral, tolerant, cooperative, patriotic, and nationalistic, oriented towards science and technology based on faith and piety towards God Almighty based on Pancasila. (Sifa et al., 2022). Through character education in schools, students are expected to improve their ability to apply the values of divinity, humanity, and noble morals, have integrated academic competencies, and behave according to applicable norms. Implementing character education in schools can reduce deviant behavior among students (Muawwanah & Darmiyanti, 2022).

Based on the understanding above, Character education includes teaching morals and ethics using insights derived from emotions and behavior. Implementing character education will show that religious and spiritual values cannot be separated from character education. Morality and spiritual values are important elements that should not be ignored because their absence will endanger the progress of human welfare and the integrity of social structures (Awhinarto & Suyadi, 2020).

The emergence of character education brings a unique dimension to the world of education, especially in Indonesia. However, character education has existed since the emergence of the Islamic education system because character education is its essence. Islamic education is an interactive system that aims to achieve predetermined goals. The development of Islamic character education must be

pursued through exemplary behavior to become a role model for humanity. (Nafsaka, Kambali, Sayudin, & Widya Astuti, 2023) Therefore, Islamic religious education is very important for character education because it teaches about virtue in the world and the hereafter, how to achieve that virtue, and how to practice and apply it in everyday life. The essence of goodness in Islamic education lies in piety, which means obeying the commands of Allah SWT and avoiding all His prohibitions. (Septian & Chanifudin, 2023).

In Islam, the Prophet Muhammad SAW is seen as a model to be emulated by all Muslims in attitudes and behavior in various aspects of life. Given the brain's role in human education, especially in Islamic education, character education in Islam must prioritize the brain as the focal point of teaching and learning. In Islamic education, goodness and truth are the most important qualities to seek. Acquiring virtue is more challenging than acquiring truth because truth can be easily and accurately learned. On the contrary, virtue must be acquired through continuous and repeated practice. (Arsyad & Rama, 2019).

Islam emphasizes the significance of collaboration, acceptance, reciprocity, and readiness to sacrifice. After getting to know each other, the next stage is mutual understanding (*tafāhum*). This will foster an awareness that our values and their values may differ, and we can complement each other and contribute to a dynamic relationship by acknowledging that our friends are different from us. Next is mutual respect (*takrīm*), where each individual or group must be willing to listen to other perspectives and voices. In interpersonal relationships (*hablum minannas*), mutual trust, goodwill, and tolerance are required. These values must be reinforced in social interactions or relationships between individuals (Yunita & Mujib, 2021). In this context, there are Islamic character education values that are implemented in a multicultural society, including:

a) Religion

Religiousness is at the top of the 18 character values the Ministry of Education and Culture set as values that must be instilled in students. Religiousness is personal, but in Islam, being spiritual is not enough just by carrying out formal aspects of religion such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and others. Real manifestation, namely noble morals, must accompany the implementation of worship. The main purpose of sending the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a messenger of Allah is to perfect various virtues and morals (*liutammima makarimal akhlaq*) (Madjid, 2019).

b) Compassion(Tolerance)

A Muslim and the Muslim community must practice peaceful coexistence with other communities of different religious beliefs. Tolerance is an absolute principle in a diverse and multicultural society. Without tolerance, society will always be in destructive conflict, mutual hostility, arrogance, and instability. Tolerance is a factor that can transform differences into strength and transform diversity into harmony. Tolerance enables a pluralistic society to develop dynamically in a peaceful and stable social situation. (Setiawan, 2014). According to the Islamic perspective, tolerance is an important starting point in building peace (*salam*). The Quran teaches how to create peace in a society of various religious and cultural communities while recognizing differences in beliefs and traditions.

c) Ta'aruf and Ta'awun

Plurality or diversity (*ta'addudiyah*) is a natural law (*sunnatullah*) that cannot be changed or denied. Humans were created in various countries, tribes, races, and others to establish relationships and get to know each other (*ta'aruf*). Ta'aruf is the process of getting to know each other through communication or opening up and finding similarities. In ta'aruf, there is a process of recognizing and acknowledging differences or diversity. At this stage, a tolerant attitude emerges. From there, solidarity or a higher sense of friendship is born. The Muslim community adheres to cooperation (*ta'awun*) between citizens and respects religious diversity in the spirit of *ukhuwah*. The formulation of ta'aruf can be *ukhuwah basyariyah* (brotherhood of all humanity), *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (brotherhood of the same nation), and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (brotherhood of Muslims).

d) Ukhwah (Brotherhood)

The values and spirit of brotherhood are very important and should be instilled as an integral part of forming Islamic students' character. In Islam, the concept of brotherhood was initially fostered among fellow believers. They should not criticize, use derogatory terms towards each other, be prejudiced, spy on each other (find faults), or gossip. After strengthening the bonds of brotherhood among Muslims, the next step is to expand the reach of brotherhood with adherents of other religions, both domestically and among all humanity. This is by the mission of Islam brought by the Prophet, namely mercy for the entire universe. Therefore, in interacting with people of other religions, Muslims are guided by Allah to do good and be just as long as they do not commit injustice.

e) Tawasuth

Etymologically, *tawasuth* means being in the middle, not too rigid (fundamentalist), and not too liberal. *Tawasuth* is an attitude that bases the principle of life on justice (*adl*) and integrity during life together (*i'tidal*). And acting honestly and consistently to try to build and avoid all forms of extreme behavior (*tathorruf*). The concept of moderation in Islam refers to the middle way between two extremes and is a virtue Allah SWT has destined from the beginning. Forms of moderate attitudes that need to be taught to students include not being extreme in preaching, not being quick to accuse fellow Muslims of being infidels because of differences in religious understanding and social life, and positioning oneself by adhering to brotherhood and tolerance, both among Muslims and with adherents of other religions.

f) Tawazun

"*Tawazun*", which means balance or equilibrium, reflects the character of choosing a fair middle ground when facing problems. The importance of *tawazun* must be instilled in students as an element of Islamic character formation to avoid extreme behavior and not forget the basic rights that must be fulfilled. In addition, *tawazun* limits freedom (liberalism) so that excesses do not occur. As a social entity, individuals have freedom but also an obligation to respect the freedom of others. Various aspects of life require balance to prevent fanaticism, extremism, and radicalism. In Islam, maintaining a balance between the interests of the afterlife and the world and human relations with God and others is very important (Hayani, 2020).

The role of character education in religion and culture is to foster religious and cultural teachings and increase faith and devotion to God Almighty. The implementation of character education can be done theoretically and practically. Dependence on contemporary technology and foreign culture increasingly distils students and the wider community from cultural and religious ideals. Implementing character education rooted in culture and religion is a significant problem for today's young generation. (Judge, 2017). The implementation of Islamic character education is not only limited to the microscope but also extends to the macro scope, which is one form of successful implementation of Islamic character education. One form of implementing Islamic character education is through the macro scope, namely multicultural society. (Huda, 2019). Multicultural society consists of various ethnic, cultural, and religious groups living side by side. Based on this, it can be defined that a multicultural society consists of several cultural communities with all their advantages but with slight differences in the conception of the world, systems of meaning, values, forms of social organization, history, customs, and habits. (Hayani, 2020).

Social communities highly value Islamic character and high morality. Generally, humans want to have an Islamic character. Evidence that humans are social creatures can be seen from the formation of society (Suyanta, 2013). Society creates a shared life in a certain geographical area, where various social processes occur. Sociologically, individuals form cultures and institutions that crystallize into values that are upheld, binding every member of society. (Sifa et al., 2022). It is important to inherit these values because there is a close relationship between culture, values, and character education. As an important part of these values, Islamic character requires attention from all stakeholders. Transferring values (character education) is a collective obligation. Success in transmitting Islamic beliefs from generation to generation shapes group behavior and identity. Once a collective character structure is

formed, social control over members of society becomes effective, creating a conducive and dynamic environment for progress while maintaining essential local values. (Hasan, 2024).

Therefore, efforts to implement Islamic character education in a multicultural society are important to instill Islamic values in individuals so that they can become individuals with noble character, faith, and devotion to Allah SWT and can live in peace and harmony in a society with diverse ethnicities, religions, cultures, and traditions. Instilling compassion and respect for diversity, increasing tolerance and mutual respect between individuals with different religious and cultural backgrounds, developing skills to live in peace and harmony, and strengthening self-identity as a Muslim in a multicultural society.

3.2 The Role of Education in Building Social Harmony

Education is important in creating social harmony, especially in increasingly complex and diverse contexts. In addition to functioning as a medium for transferring knowledge, education also serves as an instrument for forming character and social values that support cohesion among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Through education, individuals are taught to appreciate differences, develop empathy, and build an attitude of tolerance. These values are crucial for creating a peaceful and harmonious social environment, where schools as formal educational institutions function as a place for children to learn to live side by side and understand diversity (Meriyati, Siminto, & Wahid, 2024). Moral education plays a vital role in achieving social harmony. Through teaching moral values, individuals can understand the significance of maintaining a balance between rights and obligations and respecting diversity. The integration of character education helps students internalize values such as mutual respect and tolerance from an early age so they develop into individuals who can contribute to a harmonious society. However, although education has significant potential to create social harmony, some challenges must be overcome, including the issue of accessibility to quality education and the implementation of an inclusive curriculum. (Salim, Siregar, & Mulyo, 2022)

According to Law No. 20/2003 concerning the national education system, Article 13 paragraph (1) states that the education system consists of formal, informal, and non-formal education pathways that can complement and enrich each other. (Puspytasari, 2022). The family is considered part of the informal or out-of-school education system in the national education system. According to Zakiah Daradjat, three environments are responsible for educating children. The three environments in question are family, school, and society. These three environments cannot be separated (Daradjat, 1982).

Character education is an important and strategic step in reconstructing the nation's identity and developing a new Indonesian society. Phillips emphasized that character education must involve all stakeholders: families, educational institutions, and the wider community. Therefore, the initial step must be to rebuild the almost severed educational relationships and networks between the three educational environments. Character development and education will not be effective without continuity and harmony between the three educational contexts. (Hasan, 2024)

3.2.1 Role of Family

Islam places significant emphasis on the development of the family. The family is the foundation of a nation's society, so the family's condition significantly affects society. The ideal nation (*khayr ummah*) that represents a united nation (*ummah wahidah*) and a moderate nation (*ummah wasath*), as envisioned by Islam, can only be formed through families that are built and developed based on love and affection (*mawaddah warahmah*) (Advice, 2019). As the smallest social system, the family greatly influences a person's character. The family functions as a producer and consumer, preparing and providing daily needs such as clothing and food. Each family needs and depends on each other to live more comfortably and peacefully (Tira, Suwandi, & Rifki, 2024).

The form and method of education in the family will affect the growth and formation of individual character. In the family context, character education aims to instill positive traits or good morals in children. Through this character education, children are expected to understand positive or

commendable values and internalize them in everyday behavior (Judge, 2017). Education received in the family becomes the foundation for children to socialize in society. The role of parents in shaping children's personalities include:

- 1) Both parents should love and care for their children.
- 2) Both parents should maintain a peaceful home environment and cultivate inner peace in their children.
- 3) Mutual respect between parents and children.
- 4) Building trust.
- 5) Hold family meetings and get-togethers (including parents and children). (Ramdani, Miftahudin, & Latif, 2023)

In addition, parents must familiarize children with beliefs, ethics, laws, and human experiences. The most important factor is that parents act as primary role models for their children in shaping their personalities. Parents unconsciously influence children, giving them theoretical and practical role models. The success of a nation's development is highly dependent on quality human resources. Therefore, various methods are needed to instill the importance of character. One of them is through education. Both formal and non-formal education (Ramdani et al., 2023).

Given the importance of character education, the role of the family is a crucial first step in instilling character values in children or students so that they understand the importance of internalizing noble ethics in every interaction between individuals. The quality of human resources can be assessed through the family. Individuals from diverse economic backgrounds can improve their quality through additional educational resources outside the classroom. The quality of resources and moral excellence are the result of parental education. The family is an important foundation in the development of individual character (Adeo & Sembodo, 2021). Basic values such as integrity, responsibility, and mutual respect can be instilled through daily interactions. For example, families who routinely perform congregational prayers teach religious values and instill discipline and a sense of solidarity. In addition, the habit of reading together or discussing inspiring narratives can increase children's interest in reading and emotional intelligence. Therefore, the quality of human resources is determined not only by formal education but also by a supportive family environment.

3.2.2 Role of Schools

The Ministry of Education and Culture defines character education as an educational effort aimed at embedding national values within students, enabling them to embody these values in their daily lives as productive, creative, religious, and nationalistic citizens (Salamah, Hidayat, Ibrahim, & Akhwani, 2023). Importantly, character education should not be viewed solely as the responsibility of educational institutions but rather as a collective obligation, beginning within the family environment. The family plays a critical role in shaping character, as it is through family upbringing that children internalize core values, cultural norms, and ethical behavior (Bahiyah, 2022).

Nevertheless, schools remain a vital context for character development. As one of the primary environments influencing a child's social and moral growth, schools are instrumental in fostering values such as honesty, religiosity, patriotism, and nationalism (Amazona & Hamida, 2016). The complex structure of the school environment, encompassing curricular and extracurricular activities, supports the holistic development of students' mental health, social responsibility, and moral awareness. Educational institutions integrate character education into all subjects, thereby aligning moral, social, and academic goals (Hendri, Utami, & Nurlaili, 2022).

Islamic character education, specifically, has demonstrated significant benefits when implemented in schools. Programs such as tahfidz not only focus on memorizing the Qur'an but also cultivate faith, discipline, and moral integrity among students. Similarly, extracurricular activities like Rohis foster religious understanding and community engagement. The integration of Islamic values across

academic disciplines helps students internalize Islamic teachings in everyday life, while teachers serve as key role models in reinforcing these values (Salamah et al., 2023).

Moreover, fostering a supportive and evaluative school environment is essential to producing a generation characterized by faith, piety, and strong morals. Teachers play a multifaceted role—not only disseminating knowledge but also modeling ethical behavior, promoting active student participation, and nurturing independence and confidence (Syahroni, 2017). Ultimately, the collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial; the family lays the foundation of character development, while schools reinforce and enrich these values, shaping students into individuals of integrity who contribute positively to society.

3.3 Challenges in Implementing Islamic Character Education

Character education has become a prominent topic in educational discourse, particularly with the implementation of national character education across all levels of schooling, including primary education. Numerous academic forums continue to explore and debate various aspects of character education, underscoring its significance in addressing contemporary moral challenges. In the context of Islam, character education is not a new concept; it has long been integral to Islamic teachings (Nasution, Fitrah, Alfina, & Hajmi, 2023). The increasing attention to character education in Indonesia is closely tied to concerns over a moral crisis, where instances of moral decline are often attributed to the failure of educational institutions to effectively impart character values.

In addition to formal education, the process of habituation plays a critical role in character development within schools. This process involves the continuous and consistent practice of positive behaviors, integrated into daily routines, structured programs, and modeled by teachers and school leaders (Huda, 2019). Schools are pivotal environments for shaping students' values, fostering an atmosphere conducive to moral growth. By embedding character education into the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and school culture, educational institutions significantly contribute to students' internalization of national and religious values (Purwasih, 2021).

In the contemporary social landscape, Islamic character education is viewed as a proactive measure to address the increasing complexities of modern society. These challenges are exacerbated by technological advancements and shifts in social dynamics. The easy accessibility of inappropriate content online presents obstacles to reinforcing character values taught in schools (Hendri et al., 2022). Therefore, Islamic character education requires collaboration between schools, families, and the wider community to navigate these difficulties effectively.

One key challenge in implementing Islamic character education in multicultural contexts lies in accommodating the diverse backgrounds of individuals within society. Community members may come from various ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, requiring the educational process to emphasize tolerance and mutual respect to prevent inter-group conflict (Nafsaka et al., 2023). An adaptive, responsive approach—sensitive to cultural diversity and technological changes—is essential to ensuring that Islamic character education positively influences both individual development and social harmony (Jannah, 2023).

One of the primary challenges in implementing Islamic character education is the absence of strong role models from parents and educators. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping children's character. However, many parents are preoccupied with career demands and daily responsibilities, limiting their ability to provide consistent attention, affection, and religious guidance at home. Without positive role models to emulate, children may struggle to develop strong moral values and ethical behavior (Adeo & Sembodo, 2021).

Another significant challenge arises from limited learning time and the dense nature of school curricula. Educational institutions often emphasize cognitive and psychomotor skills, leaving less room for affective development, including character-building efforts. This issue is further compounded by inadequate facilities and limited resources, which hinder schools' ability to effectively integrate character education into the curriculum.

The influence of peer groups and the broader social environment also plays a pivotal role in shaping children's behavior. When children are exposed to peers and surroundings that lack Islamic values, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the moral principles instilled by families and schools. Negative social interactions can erode the values children are taught at home and in educational settings.

Additionally, the rapid impact of globalization and the widespread use of digital media pose serious threats to students' moral development. The influx of foreign cultures and unchecked exposure to social media content often lead to early addiction, behavioral issues, and unhealthy online habits, especially when parental supervision is lacking (Primary, 2019).

To address these challenges, a systematic and sustainable approach to character development is essential. Families, in particular, play a central role. Teaching strategies should be carefully structured to align with planned character education goals, ensuring that moral values are effectively imparted (Yuniarti, Siskandar, Shunhaji, & Suwandana, 2021). Motivation, both internal and external, must be provided to encourage ethical behavior. Parents and educators should consistently model positive behaviors, as children learn significantly through imitation. Furthermore, cultivating consistent habits, promoting self-discipline, and enforcing clear rules are key to reinforcing virtuous conduct. These efforts help children practice problem-solving, adapt to life's challenges, and internalize moral values from an early age (Arsyad & Rama, 2019).

In a multicultural society, Islamic character education must adopt a holistic approach that acknowledges cultural diversity while emphasizing tolerance and mutual respect. Additionally, adapting teaching strategies to align with technological advancements is crucial for equipping students with the ability to navigate digital spaces responsibly. The collaborative efforts of educators, parents, and communities are essential to ensuring the effectiveness of Islamic character education, ultimately shaping a generation that is not only academically competent but also morally grounded and capable of contributing positively to a pluralistic society (Bahiyah, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of building social harmony in a multicultural society by implementing Islamic-based character education to form individuals who understand the dynamics of diversity in a multicultural society. By integrating Islamic values and modern renewal, many parties play an important role in building harmony in a multicultural society through Islamic character education. This study shows that Islamic-based character education is important in shaping children into tolerant individuals who appreciate diversity and are ready to face an increasingly diverse world. By learning Islamic values, children can develop good and positive characteristics, such as a sense of responsibility, mutual respect, and awareness of the surrounding environment. Despite the challenges, the benefits of Islamic character education are enormous for the development of children and society.

Future research in Islamic-based character education is expected to develop and test models of character education that are more integrated with national education goals while still considering the context of a multicultural society to build social harmony. The importance of technological renewal as a supporting tool to foster more interactive and active learning experiences needs to be re-evaluated in a multicultural society, especially regarding local community participation in designing and implementing programs that aim to promote harmony in this diverse society. In addition, this research should also include strategies to overcome challenges that will be faced in the future. Through this holistic and collaborative approach, it is hoped that it can increase the effectiveness of Islamic-based character education in shaping children's characters who can build social harmony in society, as well as prepare the younger generation with a strong identity and character to face global challenges in diversity and differences in culture.

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