

Research Article

Islamic Value in Fostering Unity amid Indonesia's Cultural and Religious Diversity

Miftahudin^{1*}, Saepudin², and Fauzul Adzim³

¹Bimbingan dan Konseling, Teacher Traininf and Education, Universitas Bina Bangsa, Serang, Banten, Indonesia

²Biology Education, Teacher Traininf and Education, Universitas Bina Bangsa, Serang, Banten, Indonesia

³Management, Economics and Business, Universitas Bina Bangsa, Serang, Banten, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: miftahudin@binabangsa.ac.id

Abstract: Indonesia is a multicultural nation characterized by diverse ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages. While this diversity represents a valuable national asset, it also poses potential challenges to social cohesion if not managed appropriately. Islam provides comprehensive principles for promoting unity through fundamental values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), justice (*al-'adl*), and deliberation (*shura*). This study aims to examine Islamic values in fostering unity within Indonesia's pluralistic society and to explore their implications for strengthening social harmony. The research employed a qualitative approach using a library research method. Data were collected from primary sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical as well as contemporary Islamic literature, complemented by secondary sources such as scholarly journal articles, academic books, and government policy documents. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis through data identification, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that Islamic teachings provide a comprehensive framework for nurturing social cohesion by promoting religious moderation, tolerance, justice, and respect for diversity. Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in cultivating inclusive, moderate, and responsible citizens capable of living harmoniously within a multicultural society. The study also highlights that strengthening religious moderation, multicultural education, and digital literacy constitutes an effective strategy for addressing contemporary challenges, including intolerance, radicalism, misinformation, and social polarization. Therefore, the contextual implementation of Islamic values through education, dialogue, exemplary leadership, and responsible digital engagement is essential for reinforcing national unity and preserving the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia

Keywords: Diversity; Islamic Education; Islamic Values; Multicultural Society; National Unity; Religious Moderation.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia is one of the world's most culturally diverse nations, characterized by its rich plurality of religions, ethnic groups, languages, cultures, and local traditions. This diversity constitutes both a distinctive national identity and a valuable form of social capital that supports inclusive national development (Abdullah, 2022). At the same time, however, such pluralism presents significant challenges. When differences in identity are not managed wisely, they may give rise to social conflict, discrimination, intolerance, and polarization, thereby threatening social cohesion and national stability.

The rapid advancement of globalization and the digital revolution has further intensified these challenges (Suprpto, 2022). The unprecedented flow of information through digital media and social networking platforms has not only facilitated communication but has also created opportunities for the dissemination of hate speech, misinformation, radical ideologies, and religious extremism, all of which have the potential to undermine national unity. In recent years, issues related to religious identity have frequently been exploited in both social and political contexts, highlighting the urgent need for more systematic efforts to strengthen the values of unity, tolerance, and religious moderation.

As the religion embraced by the majority of Indonesia's population, Islam provides a comprehensive framework of universal values that places unity at the center of social life (Quraish Shihab, 2002). The Qur'an emphasizes the principles of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta'aruf* (mutual acquaintance and understanding), justice (*al-'adl*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and cooperation in righteousness (*ta'awun*). These values are not confined to relationships among Muslims but also serve as ethical foundations for fostering harmonious interactions among all members of society regardless of their religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. Consequently, diversity is viewed in Islam as *sunnatullah*—a divinely ordained reality that should be embraced and managed as a source of social strength rather than a cause of division.

Previous studies conducted by Arif (2023) and Sutrisno (2023) demonstrated that Islamic education, religious moderation, and interfaith dialogue contribute significantly to the promotion of peaceful coexistence and social tolerance. Nevertheless, most existing research has primarily focused on the implementation of religious moderation within educational settings or on conceptual discussions of tolerance. Relatively limited attention has been given to integrating the Islamic concepts of unity through the values of *ukhuwah*, *tasamuh*, *ta'awun*, and religious moderation in response to the challenges posed by contemporary digital society. This limitation indicates the existence of a research gap that warrants further scholarly investigation.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to integrate the fundamental values of Islam with the contemporary social realities of Indonesian society, particularly in addressing identity-based polarization, the rapid expansion of digital media, and the growing need to strengthen religious moderation. Rather than merely discussing the normative concept of unity in Islam, this study examines how these Islamic values can be implemented as practical strategies for fostering social cohesion within Indonesia's multicultural society.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the concept of unity from an Islamic perspective, examine the implementation of Islamic values in promoting social harmony amid Indonesia's diverse society, and explore their relevance in addressing contemporary social challenges in the digital era. The findings are expected to contribute to the advancement of scholarship in Islamic Religious Education while providing practical insights for strengthening religious moderation and cultivating a society that upholds unity within diversity.

2. Literature Review

The Concept of Diversity from an Islamic Perspective

Diversity is regarded in Islam as *sunnatullah* (the divine order established by Allah), constituting an inherent aspect of human existence. The Qur'an affirms that humanity was created into diverse nations, tribes, and communities so that people may know and understand one another (*ta'aruf*), rather than despise or engage in hostility toward one another (Quraish Shihab, 2002). This principle is explicitly emphasized in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), which states that a person's honor before Allah is determined not by ethnicity, culture, or social status, but by their level of piety (*taqwa*). Consequently, Islam views diversity as a divine blessing that should be managed through mutual respect, cooperation, and a shared commitment to universal humanitarian values.

From an Islamic perspective, plurality is not perceived as a threat to faith but rather as a social reality that must be approached with wisdom. Living within a multicultural society requires individuals to cultivate openness, appreciate differences, and establish harmonious relationships without compromising the fundamental principles of Islamic faith. Therefore, *tasamuh* (tolerance) represents one of the essential moral virtues that every Muslim should embody in fostering peaceful social interaction.

The Concept of Unity in Islam

Unity constitutes one of the fundamental objectives of Islamic teachings in establishing a peaceful and just society. The Qur'an commands Muslims to hold firmly to the rope of Allah and avoid division, as stated in Surah Ali 'Imran (3:103). This verse emphasizes that unity serves as the foundation for developing a strong, harmonious society capable of addressing various social challenges.

The Islamic concept of unity is reflected through three interrelated dimensions of *ukhwwah* (brotherhood). The first is *ukhwwah Islamiyah*, referring to the spiritual brotherhood among Muslims based on shared faith. The second is *ukhwwah Wathaniyah*, or national brotherhood, which encourages citizens to preserve national unity regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. The third is *ukhwwah Basyariyah* (also known as *ukhwwah Insaniyah*), which denotes universal human brotherhood among all people as creations of Allah. These three dimensions complement one another in promoting a peaceful, tolerant, and equitable society.

In addition to *ukhwwah*, Islam promotes the principles of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance in righteousness), *shura* (consultation), and justice (*al-'adl*) as essential foundations for maintaining social cohesion. These values provide an ethical framework through which communities can resolve conflicts by means of dialogue, cooperation, and respect for the rights and dignity of every individual.

Religious Moderation as the Practical Implementation of Unity

Religious moderation refers to a balanced and moderate approach to understanding and practicing religious teachings while respecting the existence and rights of others (Kementerian Agama RI, 2021). Within Indonesia's multicultural context, religious moderation has become a strategic approach for strengthening national unity and preventing the spread of extremism, intolerance, and radicalism (Ardhy & Fauziah, 2025).

The principles of religious moderation are closely aligned with the Islamic concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation), which emphasizes compassion, justice, balance, and respect for human dignity. Religious moderation can be promoted through education, interfaith dialogue, digital literacy initiatives, and exemplary leadership demonstrated by religious figures. Accordingly, religious moderation should not be interpreted as compromising religious doctrines but rather as a constructive approach to practicing religion that fosters peace and preserves social harmony within a pluralistic society.

Islamic Education in Strengthening National Unity

Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping individuals who appreciate diversity and uphold the values of unity (Arif, 2023). Through educational processes, the values of *ukhwwah*, tolerance, justice, and social responsibility can be internalized from an early age, becoming integral components of learners' character development.

Islamic Religious Education is not solely intended to enhance students' religious understanding but also to cultivate moderation, respect for diversity, and concern for social welfare (Prasetyo et al., 2026). Integrating multicultural education into Islamic Religious Education represents an effective strategy for fostering awareness that diversity is a national strength that should be preserved collectively (Sutrisno, 2023).

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a library research design. This approach was selected because the study focuses on a conceptual analysis of Islamic values in fostering unity within Indonesia's diverse society based on relevant scholarly sources.

The research utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained from the Qur'an, Hadith, Qur'anic exegeses (*tafsir*), and authoritative Islamic literature discussing the concepts of unity, *ukhwwah*, tolerance, and religious moderation. Secondary data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, and government policy documents related to religious moderation, Islamic education, and multicultural society.

Data were collected through documentation techniques by reviewing various sources relevant to the objectives of the study. The selected documents were evaluated based on their relevance, credibility, and publication recency to ensure a comprehensive theoretical foundation for addressing the research objectives.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analytical process consisted of several stages, including data identification, data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2020). The analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of Islamic values in fostering unity within Indonesia's pluralistic society. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing evidence derived from scholarly literature, previous empirical studies, and relevant official documents related to the research topic.

4. Results and Discussion

The Concept of Unity in Islam as the Foundation of Social Life

The findings indicate that Islam regards unity as one of the fundamental principles of social life. Unity is understood not merely as political or physical cohesion but as a spiritual, social, and moral bond founded upon faith, justice, and respect for human dignity (Quraish Shihab, 2002). This principle is explicitly affirmed in the Qur'an through the command to hold firmly to the rope of Allah and to avoid division, as stated in Surah Ali 'Imran (3:103).

The Islamic concept of unity is embodied in the multidimensional principle of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood). *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* emphasizes solidarity among Muslims based on shared faith, *ukhuwah Wathaniyah* strengthens patriotism and national solidarity, while *ukhuwah Basyariyah* (or *ukhuwah Insaniyah*) recognizes all human beings as members of one universal human family (Nizar, 2017). These complementary dimensions demonstrate that Islam does not restrict brotherhood to those who share the same religion but also emphasizes harmonious relationships with all people regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural differences.

These findings demonstrate that the Islamic concept of unity is highly relevant to Indonesia's pluralistic society. Unity should not be interpreted as the elimination of diversity; rather, it reflects the capacity to coexist peacefully through mutual respect, cooperation, and a shared commitment to the common good.

The Implementation of Islamic Values in a Multicultural Society

The analysis reveals that Islamic values—including *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), *shura* (consultation), and justice (*al-'adl*)—play a strategic role in fostering social harmony within Indonesia's multicultural society (Yusuf, M., & Hasanah, 2024). These values are not merely normative ideals but can be implemented across various aspects of public life, including education, community development, governance, and civic engagement.

Within the educational sector, the internalization of tolerance through Islamic Religious Education contributes significantly to developing students who appreciate religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. Learning processes that integrate multicultural education encourage learners to cultivate openness, respect the rights of others, and resolve differences through constructive dialogue.

At the community level, the implementation of Islamic values is reflected in various forms of collective social action, including mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), humanitarian initiatives, disaster relief programs, and interfaith collaboration in maintaining social order and community security. These practices demonstrate that Islamic teachings function as a powerful source of social cohesion capable of strengthening solidarity among diverse communities.

Furthermore, Islamic educational institutions, including *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), *madrasah*, and Islamic higher education institutions, make substantial contributions to promoting religious moderation and national identity among younger generations. Through character education grounded in Islamic values, students are encouraged to become religiously committed individuals while simultaneously developing a strong sense of responsibility toward national unity.

Religious Moderation as a Strategy for Strengthening National Unity

One of the most significant findings of this study is that religious moderation represents a highly relevant approach to preserving national unity within Indonesia's diverse society. Religious moderation positions religion as a source of ethical values that promote peace, justice, and respect for diversity (Kemetreian Agama RI, 2021).

A moderate approach to religious practice encourages individuals to avoid extremism, exclusivism, and excessive fanaticism (Husna & Thohir, 2020). Instead, it promotes openness to dialogue, appreciation of differences, and cooperation across various aspects of social life without compromising one's religious convictions.

Government initiatives promoting religious moderation, implemented in collaboration with religious organizations, have contributed positively to strengthening social tolerance (Suprpto, 2022). Programs such as interfaith dialogue, interreligious harmony forums, religious moderation villages, and character education in schools demonstrate that the values of moderation can effectively reinforce social cohesion while reducing the potential for horizontal conflicts.

Accordingly, religious moderation may be understood as a practical manifestation of the Islamic principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), which emphasizes bringing benefit, compassion, and peace to humanity as a whole.

Challenges to National Unity in the Digital Era

The rapid advancement of information technology has fundamentally transformed Indonesian society. Social media has emerged as a new public sphere where individuals can rapidly access and disseminate information. While this technological development has facilitated communication and strengthened social connectivity, it has also created opportunities for the spread of hate speech, misinformation (*hoaxes*), radical ideologies, and provocative content capable of undermining national unity.

The findings indicate that social polarization in digital spaces is frequently driven by the misuse of religious, ethnic, and political identities. This phenomenon suggests that inadequate digital literacy and limited understanding of tolerance remain significant challenges within Indonesian society (Arif, 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, the use of digital media should be guided by the principles of honesty (*sidiq*), verification of information (*tahayyun*), accountability, and respect for the dignity of others. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy in conjunction with character education based on Islamic values represents an essential strategy for developing a digitally responsible, tolerant, and ethically conscious society.

Implications for Islamic Religious Education

The findings of this study suggest that Islamic Religious Education occupies a strategic position in strengthening national unity through character development (Sutrisno, 2023). Islamic Religious Education should no longer focus solely on the acquisition of religious knowledge but should also emphasize the cultivation of moderation, tolerance, inclusivity, and civic responsibility.

Teachers of Islamic Religious Education should adopt contextual learning approaches by integrating the values of nationalism, religious moderation, multicultural education, and digital literacy into instructional practices. Discussion-based learning, case studies, collaborative learning, and community-based social projects may serve as effective pedagogical strategies for internalizing the values of unity among students.

Moreover, strong collaboration among schools, families, local communities, and religious leaders is essential for fostering a culture of peace within educational environments. Such collaboration enables the continuous internalization of Islamic values, ensuring that students not only understand the concept of unity theoretically but also demonstrate these values in their daily lives.

The findings confirm that Islamic teachings remain highly relevant in addressing the challenges faced by Indonesia's pluralistic society. The values of *ukhuwah*, *tasamuh*, *ta'awun*, justice, and religious moderation constitute significant forms of social capital that strengthen social cohesion while serving as the foundation for national unity amid diversity. Therefore, the contextual implementation of Islamic values through education, exemplary leadership, dialogue, and the responsible use of digital technology represents a strategic approach to preserving the unity and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Islam offers a comprehensive concept of unity that remains highly relevant to Indonesia's pluralistic society (Abdullah, 2022). Fundamental Islamic values, including *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'awun* (mutual

assistance), justice (*al-'adl*), and *shura* (consultation), serve as the primary foundations for fostering harmonious social relationships amid religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. From an Islamic perspective, diversity is regarded as *sunnatullah* (the divine order established by Allah), which should be accepted as an integral aspect of human existence and managed wisely to promote peaceful coexistence, justice, and mutual respect.

The findings further indicate that the implementation of Islamic values through Islamic Religious Education, the promotion of religious moderation, interfaith dialogue, and the enhancement of digital literacy contributes significantly to strengthening national unity. Islamic Religious Education, in particular, plays a vital role in developing students who are tolerant, inclusive, and socially responsible, thereby enabling them to live harmoniously within a multicultural society.

At the same time, the rapid advancement of information technology has introduced new challenges, including the spread of misinformation, hate speech, intolerance, and identity-based polarization, all of which pose serious threats to social cohesion. Consequently, the contextual implementation of Islamic values has become increasingly important in addressing the complexities of contemporary society. Effective collaboration among educational institutions, families, religious leaders, government agencies, and the wider community is essential for internalizing the values of unity and fostering a peaceful, moderate, and civilized society.

This study confirms that Islamic teachings not only regulate the spiritual relationship between humanity and Allah but also provide a comprehensive ethical framework for strengthening unity within a diverse society. The practical implementation of these values constitutes an important form of social capital for preserving the integrity and unity of the Republic of Indonesia.

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