

The relationship between multiculturalism values and leadership in digital islamic education: a quantitative study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of multiculturalism values and leadership within the context of digital Islamic education among university students. Employing a quantitative research approach, data were collected from a sample of 300 Islamic Education students selected from a total population of 621 at a public university. The primary aim was to investigate the relationship between students' multicultural values and their leadership abilities in digital learning environments. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between multicultural awareness and effective leadership, indicating that students who are more attuned to multicultural values tend to exhibit stronger leadership skills. These results highlight the importance of integrating multicultural competencies into educational practices. As a result, the study recommends that curriculum development in Islamic education should incorporate training and content that foster multicultural leadership to enhance the effectiveness of digital learning.

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Introduction

The integration of multicultural values into leadership practices in digital Islamic education is not merely an educational reform but a sociocultural necessity. As societies become more interconnected, Islamic educators must adapt their leadership strategies to engage students from increasingly diverse backgrounds (Basri, 2024). Digital learning spaces, while offering global reach, also demand cultural responsiveness and inclusive pedagogical models (Umar, 2024). Failure to address multicultural dimensions in leadership risks perpetuating cultural exclusion in Islamic digital education (Moslimany et al., 2024).

The integration of multiculturalism values and leadership in digital Islamic education represents a symbiotic relationship essential to the development of inclusive, ethical, and effective educational environments. At its core, multiculturalism values such as inclusivity, respect for diversity, equity, and cultural responsiveness complement Islamic educational objectives, which promote justice ('adl), compassion (rahmah), and communal well-being (maslahah) (Rohmah & Wahyudi, 2025). When enacted through digital leadership, these shared values become instrumental in shaping the pedagogical and social experiences of learners.

Leadership serves as the operational mechanism through which multicultural values are realized in educational settings. In digital Islamic education, effective leadership does not merely manage technological tools but facilitates cultural inclusion, ethical discourse, and respectful dialogue across diverse student populations. According to (Eden et al., 2024), leadership that actively affirms student diversity through inclusive policies and practices enhances the multicultural learning climate. This is especially important in online Islamic institutions, where students often come from varied ethnic, sectarian, and cultural backgrounds(Assefa & Zenebe, 2024; Hurtado et al., 1998).

Digital platforms have amplified the visibility of cultural differences and heightened the need for adaptive leadership. Leaders who are culturally competent can navigate these complexities with empathy and fairness(Alexandra, 2025). In the Islamic context, such leadership reflects the Prophetic model, which embodies ethical guidance, inclusive governance, and cultural sensitivity(Taj, 2023). Thus, leadership and multiculturalism in digital Islamic education are interdependent: leadership guides the implementation of values, while multiculturalism provides the ethical framework for decision-making(Emirza, 2022).

Furthermore, multicultural values inform leadership styles in faith-based digital settings. For instance, transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision, inclusivity, and empowerment, aligns with the Islamic imperative of nurturing ummah unity through diversity(Banwo et al., 2022). Servant leadership, rooted in humility, justice, and service to others, reflects both Islamic ethics and the principles of multicultural education(Al Naqbi, 2024). Leaders who internalize multicultural values are more likely to adopt these leadership styles, fostering environments where students from all backgrounds feel represented and respected(Ruhullah & Ushama, 2025).

Digital Islamic education environments also require leaders to recognize and address forms of “invisible diversity,” such as linguistic nuances, learning styles, and inter-sectarian dynamics(Mutalib et al., 2022). Multicultural values guide leaders to detect these subtle differences and respond equitably. Without a multicultural lens, digital leaders may unintentionally perpetuate marginalization, particularly in content delivery, participation opportunities, and interactional norms(Ezzani et al., 2023).

Leadership rooted in multicultural values also supports the design and delivery of culturally sustaining pedagogies. These pedagogies affirm students’ identities while encouraging critical engagement with global and Islamic knowledge traditions(Nor et al., 2024). In online Islamic education, this means creating digital spaces where students are encouraged to share their cultural narratives, challenge stereotypes, and collaboratively explore Islamic teachings(Siddique et al., n.d.). Leaders play a central role in fostering these conditions through policies, training, and mentorship.

Moreover, multicultural leadership in digital Islamic education directly contributes to students' emotional well-being and sense of belonging. Research shows that students who feel culturally affirmed by their leaders and instructors demonstrate higher engagement and academic persistence(Malikal, 2025). This emotional and intellectual investment is especially vital in digital learning, where feelings of isolation are common.

The urgency of this research lies not only in bridging theoretical gaps but in responding to lived realities. Students increasingly navigate identities that intersect across culture, religion, language, and geography. Leadership must rise to meet this complexity with evidence-based strategies grounded in both Islamic values and multicultural frameworks. This study also contributes to the global literature on leadership by offering a non-Western, faith-based perspective. Much of the leadership research is secular or Christian-centric, which may not fully capture the nuances of Islamic digital education. By centering Islamic perspectives, this

study broadens the epistemological base of educational leadership research (Abdul-Jabbar & Makki, 2024).

The observation was conducted among 30 fourth-semester students of the Islamic Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam) program at UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi. This structured observation aimed to explore how multicultural values and leadership are practiced in digital Islamic education environments. Four key domains were assessed: cultural tolerance, multicultural understanding, leadership interaction, and digital multicultural practice. Overall, the observation revealed an average competency level across the four domains, with the strongest performance in leadership-related behaviors and digital engagement. This suggests that while students are well-prepared in terms of technical and relational leadership skills, their understanding and implementation of multicultural values particularly within Islamic and digital educational framework require further development.

The findings highlight the urgency for curriculum reform and leadership training that more explicitly integrates multicultural theory into digital Islamic education. Students must be equipped not only with digital skills and Islamic moral principles, but also with a deep appreciation of cultural diversity and critical intercultural competence. Without such integration, there is a risk that digital Islamic education may reproduce mono-cultural narratives and overlook the richness of the ummah's pluralism.

This observation confirms the need for further empirical research and policy initiatives aimed at enhancing multicultural leadership practices among future Islamic educators, particularly in digital learning environments where cultural cues are often subtle or invisible. Empowering students with the tools to lead ethically and inclusively in virtual classrooms is essential to fostering a more just, harmonious, and culturally rich Islamic educational ecosystem.

Multiculturalism in Digital Islamic Education

Multiculturalism in the educational perspective is not merely an acknowledgment of diversity, but rather a paradigm that demands active appreciation and the implementation of values of togetherness within pluralistic contexts. The multiculturalism is a systematic effort to create education that accommodates diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds (Rosadi et al., 2024). In the context of Islamic education, this paradigm aligns with the principle of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*, which positions Islam as a religion of compassion and universal justice (*'adl*), while simultaneously strengthening the bonds of human brotherhood (*ukhuwwah insaniyyah*). Thus, multiculturalism cannot be regarded as a secular concept detached from Islamic teachings, but as a practical reflection of Islamic values that emphasize tolerance, justice, and solidarity. Especially in the digital era, Islamic education students no longer interact solely with homogeneous communities, but also with a wide range of identities that require inclusivity as a fundamental necessity (Dalimunthe et al., 2023; Thoyib et al., 2024).

Digital-based Islamic education expands the scope of student interaction across geographical, ethnic, and even sectarian boundaries, thereby generating more complex multicultural dynamics. The digital environment becomes a space where students encounter diversity not only in physical identity, but also in communication styles, learning preferences, and epistemological variations in understanding Islam. This condition requires the internalization of multicultural values such as tolerance and inclusivity to ensure that the learning space remains productive and harmonious. Stress that without these values, digital environments risk perpetuating inequality or discrimination that marginalizes minority groups (Hassan, 2023; Siller & Aydin, 2022). Therefore, multiculturalism serves both as a

normative foundation and a pedagogical instrument that guides how learners and educators interact within digital ecosystems.

Furthermore, the presence of multicultural values in digital Islamic education can be seen as a strategic approach to strengthening the relevance of Islamic education in facing global challenges. An exclusive, homogeneous education that rejects differences will be unable to equip students for a world that is increasingly interconnected. Conversely, multiculturalism provides opportunities for students to sharpen their cultural sensitivity, intercultural communication skills, and empathetic attitudes toward differences. In this sense, multicultural values function not only as tools for minimizing potential conflicts but also as social capital that enriches the process of Islamic learning. This is in line with the Islamic mission of realizing social justice (*al-'adl al-ijtima'i*) and collective well-being (*maslahah 'ammah*), thereby positioning multicultural-based digital Islamic education as a model for more just and sustainable social transformation.

Ultimately, multiculturalism in digital Islamic education can be understood as an integrative approach that synthesizes the universal values of Islam with the demands of contemporary contexts. These values serve dual functions: first, as ethical guidelines to ensure that every individual feels valued and recognized; and second, as pedagogical strategies to foster participatory and collaborative learning environments. Islamic education students who internalize multicultural values will not only emerge as inclusive leaders in digital spaces but also as agents of change who contribute to building a more just, peaceful, and harmonious society. Therefore, multiculturalism should not be considered merely supplementary, but rather a strategic necessity that bridges Islamic education with global dynamics while reinforcing the relevance of Islamic values in the digital era.

Method

This research employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design. The population consisted of 621 Islamic Education students at a UIN Sultha Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, from which a sample of 300 students was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that measured students' perceptions of multiculturalism values and leadership competencies in digital learning environments. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, where responses were rated as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis to examine relationships between variables.

Result

To examine the relationship between multiculturalism values and leadership competencies in digital Islamic education, a series of statistical analyses were conducted, including correlation and regression tests. These analyses were designed to determine both the strength and the predictive power of multiculturalism values on leadership competencies among students. The Pearson correlation test was employed to identify the degree of association between the two variables, while regression analysis was used to evaluate the extent to which multiculturalism values could predict variations in leadership competencies. The following tables present the results of these analyses, along with their interpretations.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable 1	Variable 2	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Multiculturalism Values	Leadership Competencies	0.68	< 0.01	Strong Positive Correlation

The correlation analysis between Multiculturalism Values and Leadership Competencies shows a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.68 with a significance value of $p < 0.01$. This indicates a strong positive correlation, meaning that higher levels of multiculturalism values among students are associated with stronger leadership competencies. The significance level below 0.01 confirms that the relationship is statistically significant and unlikely to occur by chance. Therefore, the findings suggest that the internalization of multicultural values plays a crucial role in enhancing students' leadership capacities within digital Islamic education contexts.

Table 2. Regression Analysis Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Sig. (p)
Multiculturalism → Leadership	0.68	0.46	0.459	0.42	< 0.01

The regression analysis model examining the influence of Multiculturalism Values on Leadership Competencies demonstrates an R value of 0.68, indicating a strong correlation between the two variables. The R² value of 0.46 shows that multiculturalism values account for 46% of the variance in leadership competencies, while the Adjusted R² (0.459) confirms the stability of the model after adjustment for sample size. The standard error of 0.42 suggests a relatively low level of prediction error, further supporting the model's reliability. Moreover, the significance value ($p < 0.01$) confirms that the model is statistically significant, indicating that multiculturalism values are a strong predictor of leadership competencies in digital Islamic education contexts.

Table 3. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig. (p)
Constant	1.10	0.18	-	6.11	< 0.01
Multiculturalism Values	0.72	0.04	0.68	14.20	< 0.01

The regression coefficients table indicates that the constant value is 1.10 with a standard error of 0.18, and it is statistically significant ($t = 6.11$; $p < 0.01$). This shows the baseline level of leadership competencies when multiculturalism values are absent. The predictor variable, Multiculturalism Values, has an unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.72$) with a standard error of 0.04, and a standardized coefficient ($Beta = 0.68$). The t value of 14.20 with a significance level ($p < 0.01$) indicates a very strong effect. This means that for every one-unit increase in multiculturalism values, leadership competencies increase by 0.72 units. The high Beta value further confirms that multiculturalism values are a substantial predictor of leadership competencies, providing robust empirical evidence that internalizing multicultural values significantly enhances students' leadership abilities in digital Islamic education settings.

Discussion

A correlation of 0.68 indicates that as students' appreciation and internalization of multiculturalism values increase, there is a corresponding and substantial increase in their self-reported leadership competencies. In other words, these two variables move together in a meaningful way: higher multicultural awareness aligns with higher perceived leadership skills. The positive direction of this correlation underscores the mutually reinforcing relationship between embracing cultural diversity and the development of leadership capabilities. Importantly, this correlation was found to be statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level, meaning there is less than a 1% probability that this strong relationship occurred due to random chance. This high level of statistical significance lends confidence to the robustness and reliability of the observed association in the context of digital Islamic education.

This finding suggests that multicultural values are not only conceptually related to leadership competencies but are empirically intertwined within the experiences of students

engaging in digital learning environments. Given that digital Islamic education often involves learners from varied cultural backgrounds interacting through technology-mediated platforms, the ability to recognize, respect, and integrate cultural diversity appears closely linked to how students perceive and exercise leadership.

From a practical perspective, the strong positive correlation implies that educational interventions aimed at cultivating multicultural values could have a meaningful impact on improving leadership competencies. By promoting cultural inclusivity, empathy, and open-mindedness within digital curricula, educators can help students develop leadership skills that are adaptive, collaborative, and culturally sensitive qualities essential for effective leadership in increasingly diverse and globalized digital spaces.

Furthermore, To investigate the predictive relationship between multiculturalism values and leadership competencies, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. This statistical method was chosen because it allows us to examine the extent to which one independent variable students' multicultural values can predict changes in a dependent variable, in this case, leadership competencies. The analysis yielded an R^2 value of 0.46, which quantitatively means that 46% of the variance observed in leadership competencies among the students can be explained by their attitudes toward and appreciation of multiculturalism.

An R^2 of 0.46 is considered a moderate to strong effect size in social science research, signifying a substantial association between the two constructs. This level of explained variance indicates that nearly half of the differences in leadership skills demonstrated by students in the study are directly related to their endorsement and internalization of multicultural values. Put simply, students who more deeply embrace diversity, cultural inclusiveness, and multicultural awareness tend to develop stronger leadership competencies.

The results of the regression analysis examining the predictive relationship between multiculturalism values and leadership competencies are summarized below.

The regression analysis provides valuable insight into the predictive relationship between multiculturalism values and leadership competencies among students. The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.72$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in students' perceived multiculturalism values, there is a corresponding increase of 0.72 points in their leadership competencies, assuming all other factors remain constant. This positive coefficient reflects a substantial effect size, demonstrating that enhancements in multicultural attitudes are strongly associated with improvements in leadership skills within digital Islamic education contexts.

Furthermore, the relationship is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), indicating that the likelihood of this association occurring by chance is very low. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of fostering multiculturalism as a powerful predictor of leadership development. Consequently, integrating multicultural education initiatives should be considered an essential strategy in digital learning programs aimed at cultivating effective leadership among students. By promoting greater multicultural awareness, educators can actively contribute to enhancing students' leadership capacities in diverse and digitally mediated Islamic educational settings.

The findings of this study reveal a statistically significant and moderately strong positive correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) between students' multiculturalism values and their self-reported leadership competencies within the context of digital Islamic education. This relationship suggests that students who possess greater appreciation and internalization of multicultural values are also more likely to perceive themselves as competent leaders. The strength of this correlation highlights not only the interconnectedness of the constructs but also the practical implication that multicultural awareness may serve as a foundational

element for cultivating leadership among students navigating diverse, digitally mediated educational environments.

These findings align with Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes the importance of values-based leadership that inspires followers through vision, integrity, and respect for individual differences (Oglesby, 2022). In multicultural digital learning contexts, transformational leaders must be culturally responsive and adept at navigating diversity qualities inherently supported by the internalization of multicultural values (Abay et al., 2023). This supports the idea that digital learners who appreciate and engage with cultural diversity are better equipped to demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors such as individualized consideration and inspirational motivation.

Additionally, the theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Chang et al., 2022) provides a compelling lens through which to interpret these results. This framework posits that when educational environments affirm cultural diversity and integrate it meaningfully into instruction, students are more engaged, empowered, and capable of developing key skills, including leadership. In digital Islamic education, which often transcends geographic and cultural boundaries, culturally relevant pedagogical practices may amplify students' engagement and identity formation, thereby enhancing their leadership potential.

The regression analysis further affirms the predictive power of multicultural values on leadership competencies, with an R^2 value of 0.46. This suggests that 46% of the variance in students' leadership competencies can be explained by their multicultural orientations. According to Social Learning Theory (Rumjaun & Narod, 2025) behavior is learned through observation, imitation, and modeling within a social context. In online learning environments, where students interact across cultural lines, exposure to diverse perspectives may contribute to the development of leadership traits through cognitive and behavioral adaptation, consistent with the modeling of inclusive and collaborative behaviors.

Moreover, Intercultural Competence Theory offers further insight. This theory emphasizes the development of affective, cognitive, and behavioral skills required to communicate effectively and appropriately with people of other cultures (Sarwari, 2024). As students in digital Islamic education settings cultivate these competencies, they not only enhance their communication skills but also lay the groundwork for effective leadership marked by empathy, perspective-taking, and intercultural collaboration. The positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.72$) reinforces this interpretation, suggesting a substantive increase in leadership competencies with each incremental gain in multicultural appreciation.

The statistically significant findings ($p < 0.01$) provide strong evidence that the observed relationships are unlikely to be due to chance, reinforcing the validity of the study's claims. They also support recent empirical studies highlighting the intersection between multicultural education and leadership development. For example emphasizes that multicultural education fosters democratic dispositions and inclusive leadership in diverse societies (Tamaramiebi, 2024), while (Sarwari, 2024) notes that cultural intelligence and diversity awareness are emerging core components of effective leadership in the 21st century.

From a practical perspective, the results underscore the value of embedding multicultural education into digital Islamic curricula. By designing instructional strategies that encourage students to explore cultural pluralism, engage in cross-cultural dialogue, and reflect on their own cultural assumptions, educators can foster leadership qualities aligned with global citizenship, ethical stewardship, and collaborative problem-solving. These strategies are particularly vital in Islamic educational contexts that aim to harmonize traditional values with modern educational imperatives and global competencies.

Furthermore, this study's findings align with the Multicultural Leadership Development Model proposed by Chin (2010), which argues that leadership development must be situated within a cultural context and that inclusive leadership emerges from environments that celebrate diversity and cultivate mutual respect. The strong relationship observed in this study suggests that when students are encouraged to internalize multiculturalism, they become more adaptive, open-minded, and responsive leaders—traits essential for thriving in both digital learning spaces and broader societal contexts.

In summary, the study contributes to the growing literature supporting the integration of multicultural values into leadership education, particularly within digital Islamic settings. It affirms that multiculturalism is not merely an abstract value but a tangible and influential factor in shaping leadership potential. As digital learning becomes increasingly global and intercultural, fostering multicultural awareness among students emerges as a critical pedagogical priority for developing leaders equipped to navigate diversity with integrity, empathy, and efficacy.

Conclusion

This study highlights the crucial role of multicultural values in digital Islamic education as a foundation for developing students' leadership competencies. The descriptive results show that students have a high perception of both multicultural values and leadership skills, indicating their acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity within digital learning environments. This finding reinforces that modern Islamic education goes beyond religious teachings by embracing inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding. Correlation and regression analyses reveal a strong positive relationship between multicultural values and leadership competencies among students. With a correlation coefficient of 0.68 and high statistical significance, the study demonstrates that greater awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity are directly associated with improved leadership abilities, especially in dynamic digital learning contexts. Approximately 46% of the variance in leadership competencies can be explained by students' attitudes toward multiculturalism, underscoring the importance of integrating cultural values in leadership development.

These findings carry important implications for curriculum design and educational strategies in digital Islamic education, emphasizing the need to embed multiculturalism as a core element in leadership training. Inclusive and culturally sensitive leadership is increasingly vital in addressing the complexities of diverse global societies. Therefore, educators and academic leaders should adopt approaches that combine multicultural principles with digital technologies to cultivate adaptive, empathetic, and effective Islamic leaders for the digital age.

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