

Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Learning Based on Local Culture: A Case Study of SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in shaping the moral and spiritual character of students in Indonesia's culturally diverse society. This study examines how the integration of local cultural values into PAI teaching can enhance the contextualization and internalization of Islamic teachings among students at SMP 6 Bolano Lambunu, Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, the principal, students, and community leaders, and documentation of religious and cultural activities. The findings indicate that the integration of local cultural practices such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation), respect for parents, and community celebrations such as the Prophet's Birthday creates a meaningful bridge between Islamic values and students' everyday social realities. This integration fosters students' religious awareness, tolerance, and moral responsibility while strengthening their cultural identity and pride. The results also indicate that inclusive and multicultural PAI learning, which accommodates religious diversity and encourages interfaith respect, contributes significantly to building harmonious and empathetic social relationships within the school environment. Furthermore, teachers' exemplary behavior plays a crucial role as facilitators and moral role models in ensuring that Islamic values are holistically internalized, both cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. Overall, this study highlights the effectiveness of a culturally integrative and multicultural approach in developing character education through Islamic Religious Education, offering a replicable model for schools in other culturally diverse regions.

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Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and spiritual values. The success of religious education is determined not only by the curriculum content but also by how religious values are integrated with the social and cultural context of the students' environment. A holistic approach that connects religion with local culture can make learning more meaningful and contextual, enabling students to not only understand Islamic teachings theoretically but also practice them in their daily lives. (Farid Haluti et al., 2024) This is very important, especially in areas with high cultural and social diversity.

Integrating Islamic religious values with local culture allows for a more effective and relevant learning process, as students can see a direct connection between religious teachings and their social lives. For example, values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, and respect embedded in local culture can be linked to Islamic socio-religious values, thereby strengthening students' understanding and appreciation. This integrative approach also helps address potential conflicts between religious norms and existing cultural practices, so that Islamic education can contribute to the formation of a strong, religious, and resilient character nationally. (Fa'idah, 2025).

Teaching Islamic Religious Education (PAI) that accommodates local culture not only enriches learning materials but also motivates students to be more active and creative in participating in the learning process, because the material presented feels closer and more relevant to their daily experiences. (Darmawi et al., 2025) This aligns with efforts to develop education that is responsive to cultural diversity and local wisdom, which currently present both challenges and opportunities in the Indonesian education system.

SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu, located in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi, is an example of a multiethnic educational environment rich in local cultural diversity. The school offers a religious education (PAI) learning model that integrates religious values with local culture. Through this integration, religious education serves as a means to strengthen students' cultural and spiritual identities while bridging universal Islamic values with unique local wisdom. (Sumarni et al., 2024) This learning model is expected to strengthen attitudes of tolerance, respect for differences, and strengthen togetherness among students from various cultural backgrounds.

Cultural integration in Islamic Religious Education materials also aims to answer the challenges of globalization which brings rapid social and cultural change. (Zalsabella et al., 2023) Educators at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu strive to create a curriculum that is responsive and adaptive to the needs of the times, without neglecting the cultural roots that characterize the region. This learning, which combines local religious and cultural values, is believed to foster noble character and resilience in students in the face of global change. (Muhammad Rangga Pramana & Oktrigana Wirian, 2025).

Previous research shows that integrating local wisdom into religious learning improves students' understanding of religious and cultural values holistically. (Harahap, 2025) This step also supports the creation of an educational environment that fosters diversity and tolerance. A contextual approach to religious education also enriches students' insights, strengthens their identity, and fosters their ability to interact in a multicultural society. Therefore, integration in the context of SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu is a relevant model worthy of further study as an effort to strengthen contextual and sustainable Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively explore how Islamic religious education materials integrating local cultural values are implemented at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu and their impact on students' character and spiritual development. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for developing Islamic Religious Education curricula in other regions with similar socio-cultural characteristics and to make a significant contribution to strengthening local culture-based religious education.

An analysis of cultural integration in religious education at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu needs to go beyond the assumption that the synergy between religious values and local wisdom always leads to harmony. This approach is vulnerable to normative bias if it does not critically acknowledge the potential risk of "cultural exoticism," where local wisdom is positioned merely as a decorative or static element without addressing the deeper essence of educational dialectics. There is a latent theological tension between the claimed universality of Islamic teachings and the particularity of local culture, which, if not managed with high pedagogical competence, can trigger cognitive dissonance in students or resistance from those who hold a formalistic understanding of religion.

Furthermore, an inclusive model that relies on separating physical spaces based on religious identity, while intended to respect religious freedom, risks creating institutional segregation that actually limits the space for student encounters. The tolerance fostered in this model often becomes passive, simply living side by side without confrontation, rather than active tolerance

based on substantive dialogue.(Mappiasse & Hayadin, 2022)To avoid falling into cultural romanticism, this research must acknowledge that disagreement and critical discourse are inherent parts of the democratic process of education. The effectiveness of this integration depends heavily on the institution's capacity to facilitate dialogical spaces, where students are given the space to examine and critique local cultural values to ensure they align with universal values and human rights. By acknowledging this complexity and potential for conflict, the study can transform from merely describing positive practices into a critical study that offers a more realistic and robust roadmap for managing religious education in a pluralistic society.

Theory

Multicultural education is crucial because it emphasizes respect for cultural diversity and the values inherent in a pluralistic society. Through this education, attitudes of tolerance, mutual respect, and appreciation for differences can be instilled from an early age. This not only equips students with academic understanding but also fosters the ability to coexist peacefully and respectfully in a heterogeneous environment. Multicultural education helps create an inclusive learning environment, where all students feel respected and have equal opportunities to thrive, while preparing a generation ready to face global challenges with openness and empathy.(Salma Murodah Putri Sasa et al., 2025).

The relevance to SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu is clear, given that the school is situated within a culturally diverse context. Cultural integration in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu is an implementation of Islamic multicultural education that teaches the values of tolerance, respect for differences, and instills the values of brotherhood and humanity derived from Islamic teachings. This approach not only strengthens religious understanding but also supports the creation of a harmonious and civilized school environment that upholds the values of diversity. Thus, PAI education at this school serves as a concrete example of how multicultural education can be implemented effectively in a diverse local religious and cultural context.

As Banks points out, multicultural education provides equal learning opportunities for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or social status. The primary goal of multicultural education is to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment, where every student feels valued and has an equal opportunity to thrive. This approach not only teaches respect for differences but also fosters tolerance, empathy, and social solidarity among students.(Firdaus, 2023).

Subsequent research has further strengthened this view by demonstrating that integrating multicultural values into the curriculum and learning activities can raise students' awareness of the importance of harmonious coexistence in a diverse society. Through diversity-oriented learning, students are encouraged to understand universal values such as justice, equality, and mutual respect.(Yati et al., 2022)This process not only enriches students' cognitive knowledge, but also forms social and moral sensitivity which is important in facing the challenges of life in a pluralistic society.

The implementation of multicultural education in schools plays a crucial role in preventing discrimination and social conflict. When the values of diversity are consistently integrated into learning activities, schools become strategic spaces for fostering a culture of peace, strengthening social cohesion, and developing students' character and openness to differences.(Haris Firmansyah, 2023).

Thus, multicultural education not only functions as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a process of forming a tolerant and inclusive national character and identity.

Method

This study used a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the application of local cultural values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Data were collected through several techniques, including direct observation of learning activities and in-depth interviews with various stakeholders, such as PAI teachers, principals, students, and local community leaders. Furthermore, documentation of cultural and religious activities within the school environment was

also collected as supporting data to enrich the analysis. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the socio-cultural context holistically and capture students' responses and perceptions regarding the application of cultural values in learning.(Putra & Lisnawati, 2024).

The research design used is a case study, where the research involves intensive analysis of one or more specific cases (such as individuals, groups, institutions, or events), with the aim of uncovering processes, dynamics, and contextual meanings that cannot be achieved through general approaches. This method is holistic, combining data from various sources to create a complete picture, suitable for educational research such as the integration of Islamic Education and local culture.

Data analysis was conducted systematically through three main stages: data reduction to filter out important information, presenting the data in a systematic narrative to facilitate understanding, and drawing conclusions based on patterns found in the field. To maintain the validity and credibility of the data, triangulation techniques were applied by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure more accurate and reliable data. This research specifically focuses on how local cultural values can be applied in Islamic Religious Education learning and how students respond to approaches that integrate these cultural aspects into the teaching and learning process.(Fajri et al., 2023).

Journal references indicate that the use of descriptive qualitative methods is highly appropriate in religious education research because it can capture the complexity of social interactions and religious values contextually. Triangulation techniques in qualitative research are also recognized as one of the best strategies for increasing research validity by combining various data sources and data collection techniques.(Amrillah & Abimubarok, 2022)Other research shows that integrating local cultural values into religious instruction can increase students' engagement and understanding, while strengthening their cultural and religious identity.

Results

The integration of local culture in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu reflects the integration of religious values with the social and cultural practices of the local community, so that learning becomes more contextual and meaningful for students. Collaborative activities with residents are a concrete manifestation of the value of Islamic brotherhood, which is not only learned theoretically but also applied in everyday life by students. Through active participation in socio-cultural activities such as mutual cooperation, students learn the values of cooperation, social awareness, and responsibility, all of which are integral parts of Islamic teachings and local culture. This approach strengthens learning that is not only normative, but also practical and relevant in building student character.(Pangestuti & Atika, 2025).

Research in the field of religious education shows that integrating local culture into religious learning is effective in transferring Islamic values and strengthening students' religious and cultural identities.(Kurnia, 2023)Local culture provides a rich and relevant social context so that students can see the direct connection between religious teachings and their everyday lives.(Wahidmurni, 2017)This is in line with research findings which show that local cultural values can be an effective means of instilling and internalizing Islamic values in a deeper and contextual way.

Religious activities such as the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday serve as a strategic means to instill exemplary behavior in students. In these activities, students are not merely passive spectators but also active participants, engaging in various activities such as reciting prayers, preaching, and staging Islamic historical dramas. This active participation provides hands-on experiences that deepen students' spiritual and emotional understanding of the Islamic values exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. Research shows that student engagement in such cultural-religious practices can increase emotional closeness and holistic religiosity, so that Islamic values are not only understood theoretically but also experienced concretely in everyday life.

Interviews with the Vice Principal for Student Affairs revealed that religious activities such as the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday play a strategic role in shaping students' character. He stated that

"Mawlid activities are not merely ceremonial, but also serve as an effective learning medium for instilling the exemplary values of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Students are directly involved so they not only understand but also experience the meaning of these values in their lives."

Meanwhile, an Islamic Education teacher explained that students' active involvement in religious activities significantly impacts their understanding. He stated:

"When students are given the opportunity to preach, recite prayers, or act out Islamic history dramas, they become more confident and more easily grasp the values being taught. Learning becomes more lively and meaningful than just through classroom lectures."

Furthermore, activities like these are also effective tools for building students' character and spiritual discipline. Through these routine activities, values such as honesty, patience, and tolerance begin to be internalized gradually and sustainably. This aligns with findings showing that internalizing religious values through routine religious activities such as congregational prayer, voluntary fasting, and Quran reading are effective in shaping students' Islamic personalities and noble morals. Teachers and school staff play a crucial role in providing guidance, mentoring, and role modeling throughout this process, ensuring that the learning environment and school environment optimally support students' spiritual growth.

The Vice Principal for Curriculum demonstrated that regular religious activities significantly contribute to student character development. He stated:

"Activities such as congregational prayer, Quran recitation, and voluntary fasting are not merely routines, but rather a process of habituation that gradually builds students' spiritual discipline. This leads to visible changes in attitudes, such as greater honesty, patience, and respect for others."

The religious learning system implemented in this school demonstrates the principle of inclusivity, where Muslim students study in the mosque and Christian and Hindu students receive learning according to their respective beliefs in separate rooms with competent religious teachers in their fields.(Mirrota, 2024)This learning system reflects multicultural educational practices that respect religious freedom while fostering tolerance among students. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers actively align teaching materials with universal values also embodied in the teachings of other religions, such as compassion, discipline, and social responsibility.(Siregar & Ginting, 2025)This approach strengthens interfaith harmony in the school environment, while equipping students with the ability to appreciate differences as part of the diverse character of the nation.(Sahroni & Tuswoyo, 2021).

Furthermore, the learning system provides space for constructive interfaith dialogue, where students are invited to discuss and understand the teachings of other religions objectively and respectfully. This process fosters empathy and mutual respect, which are crucial factors in reducing religious-based social conflict. In practice, time management and learning schedules are structured in such a way as to provide fairness for all students without compromising the quality of their religious education. Schools also engage religious communities and parents as part of an educational ecosystem that supports the success of multicultural education.

On the other hand, Islamic Religious Education teachers utilize these universal values as a gateway to building student character based on the principles of justice, tolerance, and solidarity. Through inclusive and adaptive teaching methods, teachers not only transfer religious knowledge but also instill attitudes and behaviors that reflect a peaceful and harmonious religious life.

An interview with an Islamic Religious Education teacher revealed that universal values such as justice, tolerance, and solidarity are the primary foundation of the learning process. He stated:

"In teaching Islamic Religious Education (PAI), I focus not only on delivering the material, but also on how Islamic values can be applied in everyday life. For example, when discussing justice, I relate it to an attitude of impartiality toward friends, and when discussing tolerance, I encourage students to understand the importance of respecting differences."

The teacher also explained that the approach used is inclusive and adaptive to the diverse circumstances of the students. He stated that:

"I often use discussion and case study methods so students can see firsthand how these values operate in real life. This way, students not only understand the theory but also learn to adopt appropriate behaviors in social situations."

The results of this interview confirm that Islamic Religious Education teachers, through inclusive and adaptive teaching methods, are able to make universal values an effective means of building student character that reflects a peaceful and harmonious religious life.

Preservation of local culture is being integrated more systematically into the learning process, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects, which are related to social and moral values. PAI teachers utilize the noble local cultural values that develop around students, such as the spirit of mutual assistance, respect for parents and traditional leaders, and spiritual values passed down from generation to generation. Local culture is used as a means to explain Islamic concepts such as etiquette, noble character, and social responsibility. This approach allows students to connect the learning material to their daily lives, making it easier to accept and internalize. This is clear evidence of the application of an integrative and ecological approach as recommended in the strategy for utilizing local culture to strengthen Islamic religious education in schools.

Furthermore, the integration of local culture not only enriches teaching materials but also strengthens Islamic identity in a context relevant to students' social realities. The use of art, folklore, and local traditions in learning deepens students' learning experiences and reinforces the moral and spiritual values taught in Islam. Furthermore, this approach supports a holistic learning approach that combines cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects to optimally develop character. The application of this contextual and participatory learning method not only increases students' motivation to learn but also fosters a sense of love and pride for their culture and religion.

By integrating local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching, teachers not only deliver material conceptually but also instill values through contextual and applied approaches. Collaboration with the community further enriches learning resources and strengthens the school's role as a center for social transformation based on Islamic values.

An analysis of the integration of local culture into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu shows that this practice can be understood through the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) framework, where local culture serves as a pedagogical bridge to facilitate the construction of in-depth meaning. Although this approach is effective in internalizing Islamic values, there is variability in responses among students and parents regarding potential tensions between normative Islam and cultural practices. Theoretically, student involvement in socio-cultural activities is a manifestation of constructivism theory, which emphasizes learning through empirical experience and the strengthening of social capital through bridging social capital.

However, the success of this model faces contextual challenges, including the risk of syncretism, which is viewed critically by formalist groups, and a reliance on teachers' pedagogical capacity to manage the dialectic between religious and customary values. From the perspective of contextual learning theory, teachers do not simply transfer knowledge but guide students in navigating cognitive dissonance when cultural values and religious teachings intersect. Therefore, the effectiveness of this integration depends heavily on institutional capacity to maintain structural inclusivity, ensuring that it becomes not merely a physical separation but a system that guarantees equitable access to education for all students. The future sustainability of this model requires a systematic evaluation of the validity of the curriculum to ensure that cultural adaptations remain within the fundamental corridors of Islamic teachings while also responding to dynamic social realities.

Discussion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the integration of local culture into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) materials at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu has successfully created a contextual and meaningful learning process rooted in the social life of the local community. This integration not only enriches the content of religious learning but also serves as an effective means of instilling Islamic values through local cultural practices relevant to students' daily experiences.

Through activities such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday (Mawlid), and participation in community social traditions, students learn to apply Islamic values such as Islamic brotherhood, cooperation, social awareness, and responsibility. This process ensures that religious learning goes beyond theoretical learning and encompasses affective and psychomotor aspects, thus facilitating the natural and sustainable internalization of Islamic values.

Furthermore, the multicultural approach implemented at this school demonstrates a clear demonstration of tolerance and respect for religious diversity. The learning system, which provides space for each student to learn according to their beliefs and encourages constructive interfaith dialogue, makes SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu an example of inclusive and harmonious religious education practices.

The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers is crucial in this process, both as facilitators of contextual learning and as role models in instilling Islamic and universal humanitarian values. Teachers use local cultural values such as respect for parents, mutual cooperation, and traditional spirituality as learning tools to explain Islamic concepts such as morality, ethics, and social responsibility.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the integration of local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu is an effective pedagogical strategy in transforming normative material into contextual, meaningful, and applicable learning experiences. Through the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) framework, this practice successfully bridges universal Islamic values with students' social realities, while simultaneously strengthening the school's social capital as a center for religious and tolerant character transformation. Students' active participation in local traditions and religious activities is not merely a routine activity, but a space for constructing meaning that deepens holistic religiosity and fosters multicultural awareness.

However, the success of this model requires a critical awareness that cultural integration is not a linear process or free from challenges. Behind the achievement of harmonious inclusivity lies a complex dialectic between normative Islam and cultural practices that must be managed through constructive dialogue to mitigate the risks of syncretism and institutional segregation. The future effectiveness of this model depends heavily on teachers' pedagogical capacity to guide students through cognitive dissonance, as well as institutional commitment to ensuring that interfaith dialogue remains substantive, not merely a physical separation. Therefore, sustainable integration must be based on systematic curriculum evaluation, capable of maintaining the fundamental teachings of Islam without losing relevance to the ever-evolving dynamics of local cultures. As a reference, the model at SMPN 6 Bolano Lambunu demonstrates that adaptive and inclusive religious education is key to shaping students' identities that are resilient in facing global challenges while remaining firmly rooted in a diverse national identity.

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