



The Role Of Pesantren In Realizing Multicultural Citizenship In Society Through Multicultural Education

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the role of pesantren in realizing the values of multicultural citizenship that live and develop within Indonesian society through multicultural education. Pesantren, as one of the educational institutions and centers of Islamic religious teaching, has a very urgent role in maintaining and creating the unity and integrity of the nation. Religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity is an undeniable reality in Indonesian society. Multicultural-oriented religious education brings a dialogical approach as a means of instilling awareness of living together in diversity and difference. Multiculturalism is not merely the recognition of diversity, but rather an idea or political policy to address and manage cultural diversity and moral, legal, and political claims made in the name of loyalty to ethnicity, religion, language, or nationality. Using a qualitative approach, the author attempts to reveal the role of pesantren in realizing multicultural citizenship within Indonesian society.

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Introduction

The life of Indonesian society, which is plural in nature, is faced with challenges from various social conflicts (such as ethnicity, social strata, unemployment, and criminality) that can lead to national disintegration. The issues of ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations, which are massively reported, signal the importance of instilling the values of tolerance and multiculturalism in young Indonesian citizens as the next generation to prevent the occurrence of horizontal conflicts in the future. Horizontal conflicts that occur in society are a strong signal that must be anticipated by the government and all elements of citizens as a form of a new “Divide et Impera” model aimed at undermining the unity and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia (Wibowo & Wahono, 2017).

Diversity, in fact, can be used as one of the great potentials for Indonesia to become a developed and great nation. However, on the other hand, this diversity also has the potential to cause various problems if all elements of society are unable to properly manage and utilize it. Muslims, as the majority religious community in Indonesia, must be at the forefront in managing this dimension of national diversity. Islamic education, as one of the important instruments of civilization, needs to be optimized as much as possible to manage the dynamics of diversity so that it can become a potential driver of progress for the Indonesian nation.

Pesantren, as one of the educational institutions and centers of Islamic religious teaching, has a very urgent role in maintaining and creating the unity and integrity of the nation. As an institution that emphasizes religious understanding as the spirit of human life, pesantren offers extraordinary potential. According to official records from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there are currently more than 27,000 pesantren spread across Indonesia. With such conditions, pesantren become very potential arenas for instilling multicultural citizenship values in students (santri) who, after leaving pesantren, will become part of the wider society.

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are the most urgent educational institutions in Indonesia, as they were the first to be established, long before schools or madrasas. As the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools must be able to respond to the challenges of globalization, ensuring that their Islamic education model can dynamically adapt to the needs of the times. Besides being educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools also serve as missionary institutions, actively promoting good and forbidding evil. They also serve as centers for community development, actively working to solve the problems of the surrounding community (Abu Kholish & Wafa, 2022).

Linking the paradigm of multicultural citizenship with pesantren is very relevant in the midst of Indonesia’s diverse and plural society, because the existence of pesantren on a macro level is expected to maximize its role and contribute effectively to social engineering and sociocultural transformation of the Indonesian nation. The life of pesantren, with its positive and negative sides, is certainly not a new phenomenon. Many positive aspects can be found, one of which is shaping santri as the sons and daughters of the Indonesian nation into future generations with noble character (akhlaq al-karimah). The hope is that with strong character, santri as young citizens will be able to continue the struggle of the nation’s predecessors in the future.

Based on this alarming reality, the existence of pesantren in implementing multicultural citizenship through multicultural-based education is highly necessary. Multicultural education

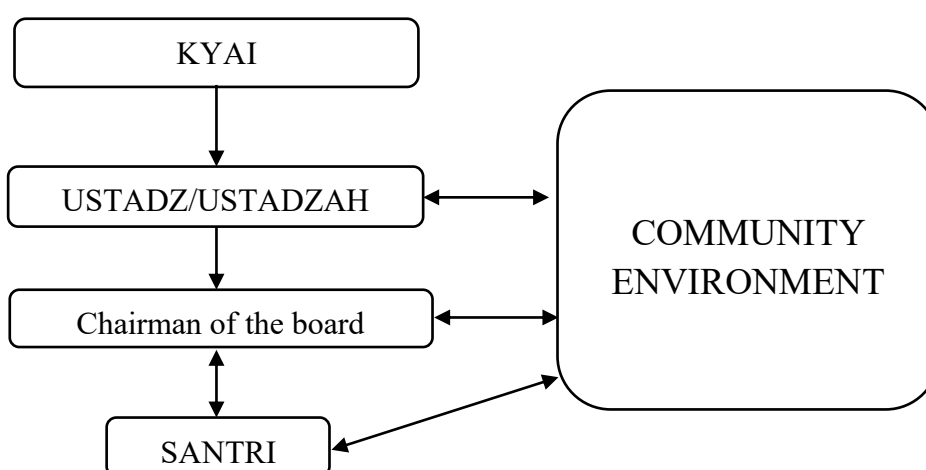
is an educational strategy applied to all types of subjects by utilizing the cultural differences among students, such as ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, social class, race, ability, and age differences, so that the learning process becomes effective and easy (Wardhani, 2020). Such diversity directly affects teachers' ability to implement the curriculum.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because it is able to understand phenomena as experienced by the subjects, so that a comprehensive picture can be obtained regarding the role of pesantren in implementing multicultural citizenship. Qualitative research is a process of inquiry that investigates social issues. It is a form of research that seeks to find meaning as a result of exploring data, after which the collected data is analyzed comprehensively and in depth by involving informants or participants as sources of information (Creswell, 2016). This article is a conceptual study conducted by analyzing problems from relevant sources, both journal articles and related books. The analysis is built based on theory or theoretical understanding. Jon Jonker (2011) states that a conceptual model is a verbal or visual construction that helps to distinguish between what is important and what is not. A conceptual model is a framework that logically describes the causal relationship between related factors.

Results and Discussion

To observe the process of implementing multicultural citizenship practices within the pesantren environment, it is necessary to describe the patterns of interaction that occur among the actors involved. The interaction pattern at Pesantren Annur Lasem can be illustrated in the following scheme:



The social interaction that takes place within the pesantren is vertical in nature, as a form of obedience between one actor and another, with the kyai as the highest authority. The kyai determines various policies in the pesantren and serves as the final decision-maker when problems arise. When issues occur among santri, the head of pesantren management is the first to respond. If the problem remains unresolved, then the ustadz or ustadzah intervene, and ultimately, all final decisions rest in the hands of the kyai.

Multicultural-oriented religious education takes a dialogical approach as a medium to instill awareness of living together amid diversity and difference. In essence, education is built upon the spirit of egalitarian relations—mutual trust, mutual understanding, appreciation of similarities, differences, and uniqueness, and interdependence (Saifulah, 2014). This provides an integral and comprehensive renewal within religious education, establishing a new knowledge foundation about religions free from prejudice, racism, and negative stereotypes. Multicultural-oriented religious education acknowledges the plurality of learning resources and transforms indoctrination into dialogue to build mutual understanding and agreement.

More specifically, there are several aspects that can be developed from the concept of multicultural Islamic education. First, multicultural Islamic education is education that respects and embraces all forms of diversity. In doing so, wisdom is expected to grow in viewing the various forms of diversity that exist. Second, multicultural Islamic education is a systematic effort to build students' understanding and awareness of pluralistic and multicultural realities. Without systematic efforts, diversity will be understood sporadically, fragmentarily, or may even foster extreme exclusivity. At this point, diversity is regarded as inferior and may even create ambitions to dominate or subjugate others who are different.

Third, multicultural Islamic education neither discriminates against nor rejects students because of their ethnic, religious, racial, or group identities. Those who come from different backgrounds must be treated equally, given an egalitarian position, and provided with appropriate means to appreciate their unique characteristics. In this condition, no student is superior to another, and each must receive the same treatment. Fourth, multicultural Islamic education provides opportunities for every student to develop a sense of self. This is important to build self-confidence, especially for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or relatively isolated groups.

The pesantren curriculum, inspired by multicultural perspectives is not easy to design. Rahman explains that there are two things to consider when drafting a multicultural curriculum within pesantren (Rahman, 2022):

1. Indonesia has hundreds of local cultures. From these, only several relevant cultures should be chosen, with a sufficiently complete inventory.
2. In line with educational autonomy, the decision of which elements are relevant to include in the curriculum should be left to local autonomous regions to deliberate.

Life within pesantren, as noted by Azra, represents a traditional form of Islamic life preserving the continuity of Islamic traditions developed by scholars across generations, not limited to any particular period in Islamic history (Azra, 2014). Pesantren in Indonesia are educational assets that have managed to survive amid modernity and rapid development in various aspects of life. They operate independently, both in curriculum structure and implementation, without direct intervention from the government. Even so, pesantren play a very important role in maintaining national unity and integrity. This is not coincidental, but rather because pesantren possess unique subcultural elements, both in suprastructure and infrastructure, that allow them to sustain this role.

The endurance of pesantren across eras is due to their ability to maintain their identity as a kyai-dominated education system, while simultaneously reaffirming their complementary role in national education (Wahono et al., 2021). Geertz concludes that the role of ulama will

persist as long as they establish madrasahs, pesantren, or Islamic educational institutions that are religiously satisfying for society and function to support the growth of the Indonesian state (Mufid, 2019).

The success of pesantren in realizing multicultural citizenship through multicultural education is not only determined by curriculum and models of instilling multicultural values, or by the role of ustadz and ustadzah as teachers, but also by the leadership of the pesantren caretaker (kyai). The kyai's role in implementing multicultural education includes acting as a leader (mudir), an educator, and a member of the community. The mudir's authority includes overseeing teaching and learning processes, implementing the curriculum, and guiding santri. Beyond this, the kyai also participates in community activities as a citizen.

According to research conducted by Makarim (2018), the implementation of tolerance values in realizing multicultural citizenship at Pesantren Annur Lasem includes: (1) respecting differences, (2) mutual respect among peers, (3) cooperation in goodness, and (4) strengthening unity. Makarim further explains that instilling these tolerance values occurs through several ways. First, the kyai acts as a role model for santri. In pesantren, the kyai is not only responsible for imparting religious knowledge but also serves as a moral example. The kyai's way of giving advice, behaving, and engaging with society is closely observed by the santri, making the kyai central to the success of shaping students' character.

Second, problem-solving education: in practice, santri are given authority to address problems that arise. Senior santri, who serve as pesantren managers, are responsible for maintaining order. Their experiences in solving problems serve as character-building lessons. Third, habituation in daily life: santri strive to practice tolerance and multicultural values in their daily activities, for example, helping one another, forgiving, understanding, avoiding discrimination despite differences in origin or ability, queuing for meals, bathing, or walking to the mosque. Outside the pesantren, santri also practice these values by greeting, conversing, and interacting with local residents.

A pluralist approach emphasizes and encourages multiculturalism in both private and public spheres. In contrast to liberal neutrality, a pluralist state openly adopts policies to promote the development of certain groups, recognize them as legitimate, and shape political communities around them. Minority cultures may choose to assimilate fully, partially, or not at all, depending on their relationship with the dominant culture. What matters most is that they are recognized as having equal rights and status. The essence of multicultural education itself is developing human awareness to respect and appreciate differences among people. These differences can be ethnic, national, racial, or cultural (Muchasan, 2018). Multiculturalism, however, is not only about recognizing diversity, but also about developing political policies to address cultural diversity and moral, legal, and political claims made in the name of ethnicity, religion, language, or nationality.

Shachar argues that it is mistaken to see multiculturalism as merely granting "external protections" to cultural groups, because individuals often belong to multiple groupspolitical parties, organizations, professions, religious activities, or social groups (Shachar, 2020). The key question, therefore, is how to allocate jurisdiction to identify groups in legal contexts while respecting their members' rights as citizens. Similarly, Joppke (2001, p. 431) notes that multicultural citizenship represents a concern for reconciling universal rights and liberal

nation-state membership with ethnic diversity and identity-based claims. This underscores the importance of multicultural citizenship education in managing diversity, addressing national concerns about identity, human rights, and reducing prejudice and discrimination—ultimately building a just and progressive society. Islamic boarding schools have integrated the values of inclusivity into their daily lives, both in formal learning and social activities. For example, at the Al-Hikmah Benda Islamic boarding school, the values of multiculturalism and inclusivism have been internalized by the students and the community, then transformed into everyday reality by recognizing the abilities and strengths of others, thus fostering respect for others (Ramadhan & Rahman, 2020).

Conclusion

As an integral part of national life, pesantren play an important role in realizing multicultural citizenship by taking responsibility for the problems faced by the Muslim community. Consequently, pesantren are required to participate in addressing these problems and challenges. Multicultural education for santri is an effort to shape students' character. Without multicultural education being incorporated into the pesantren curriculum, it will be difficult for santri to understand and practice multicultural education, whose ultimate goal is to form multicultural citizenship. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of multicultural education can serve as an alternative in realizing strong multicultural citizenship for the Indonesian nation.

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