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Inclusive Islamic Education in a Muslim-Minority Context: Interfaith Educational Practices at Annur Dili Islamic School, Timor-Leste

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ABSTRACT. Islamic education in Muslim-minority settings faces the challenge of maintaining religious identity while engaging constructively with religious and cultural diversity. However, how Islamic educational practices operate within predominantly non-Muslim societies, particularly in relation to interfaith cooperation and shared ethical values, requires further contextual investigation. This study examines the educational practices of Annur Islamic School in Dili, Timor-Leste, focusing on inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving 18 participants comprising school administrators, Muslim and Catholic teachers, and students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman framework. The findings indicate that the school's interfaith educational practices are reflected in the emphasis on shared ethical values, cooperation among teachers from different religious backgrounds, and educational approaches that accommodate religious diversity while maintaining the school's Islamic identity. These findings suggest that inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation provide useful analytical dimensions for understanding Islamic education in this particular Muslim-minority context. This study proposes a context-sensitive interpretive framework for examining educational resonance in pluralistic settings. Its applicability beyond the case examined requires further investigation through comparative research.

Keywords: *Inclusive Spirituality, Social Solidarity, Cultural Adaptation, Islamic Education, Timor-Leste.*

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a pivotal role not merely as a vehicle for transmitting religious knowledge but also as a cultural and social space in which spiritual values interact with the broader dynamics of plural societies (Ardianto et al., 2026; Dewi et al., 2025; Hedges & Hedberg, 2007; Surur et al., 2025). As Islamic educational institutions increasingly operate across geographical, cultural, and religious boundaries, their roles extend beyond religious instruction to include character formation, intercultural engagement, and the development of constructive relationships between religious communities (Asrori et al., 2025; Jayanegara et al., 2024; Lapasere et al., 2025). In such settings, the capacity of Islamic education to articulate values such as justice, compassion, cooperation, and mutual respect becomes particularly important. The Islamic principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which presents Islam as a mercy to all creation, provides a theological foundation for understanding how Islamic educational values may contribute to social relationships that extend

beyond the boundaries of the Muslim community (Kader et al., 2024; Minarti et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the social significance of Islamic education in religiously diverse societies cannot be understood solely through its normative commitments. It also requires an examination of how these values are interpreted, practiced, and negotiated within particular institutional and cultural environments.

Existing scholarship on Islamic education provides several perspectives for understanding these dynamics, although the emphases of previous studies differ. Research on Islamic education in Muslim-majority settings has extensively addressed curriculum development, character formation, and religious moderation (Alam et al., 2026; Mahmudah et al., 2025; Sa'ad et al., 2025). This literature helps explain how Islamic educational institutions reproduce religious knowledge and cultivate moral character within societies where Islam has an established social presence (Amalia, 2026; Jaedun et al., 2024; Louw, 2024). However, findings from Muslim-majority contexts cannot automatically explain how Islamic educational institutions operate when Muslims constitute a small minority and their institutions interact daily with a predominantly non-Muslim population. In minority settings, the relationship between religious identity, institutional legitimacy, and participation in wider society becomes more complex. Studies of Islamic educational institutions in such environments have consequently examined challenges associated with identity preservation, limited institutional support, and the negotiation of religious practices within different sociopolitical and cultural settings (kawangit et al., 2019). While this scholarship highlights the importance of maintaining religious identity, an emphasis on institutional survival and identity negotiation may provide only a partial explanation of how minority Islamic education can also become a setting for reciprocal social engagement.

A related body of literature on religious inclusion and intercultural education offers a complementary perspective by emphasizing dialogue, mutual respect, and the capacity of educational institutions to accommodate religious and cultural diversity. Research on interfaith educational practices, for example, highlights the potential contribution of non-Muslim teachers to inclusive dialogue and cross-cultural understanding within Islamic educational institutions (Budak, 2022); (Keskin & Ozalp, 2021). Meanwhile, studies of Islamic educational institutions in Southeast Asia have demonstrated their roles in sustaining community solidarity and reproducing cultural values alongside religious instruction (Sarhindi, 2020) (Hakim & Salim, 2024; Muksin & Mudlofir, 2024; Thahir, 2021). These perspectives are important because they move the discussion beyond the transmission of religious knowledge toward the social relationships and cultural practices through which education operates (Lesser, 2000; Mokodompit et al., 2025; Nisa et al., 2025). However, the relationship between religious inclusion, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation requires further conceptual clarification. Inclusion may describe the recognition of difference, solidarity may refer to cooperative relationships across social boundaries, and adaptation may explain how institutions respond to their surrounding cultural environment. Although related, these processes are not interchangeable. Treating them as separate themes risks overlooking how they may interact to shape the social significance and institutional sustainability of Islamic education in minority settings.

The concept of educational resonance provides a useful starting point for addressing this issue. In this study, resonance refers to the process through which Islamic educational values become meaningful and are received constructively through everyday interactions in a religiously diverse environment. Rather than implying the expansion of religious influence or the abandonment of religious identity, this perspective directs attention to the relationship between the values an institution upholds and the ways those values are experienced by members of its wider community. Previous discussions of educational resonance have opened an analytical space for examining the social implications of Islamic education beyond its immediate religious constituency (Khobir et al., 2025). Nevertheless, a further question remains: through what interconnected institutional and social processes does such resonance emerge and become sustained? Addressing this question requires an analytical framework that connects the normative foundations of Islamic

education with its interpersonal practices and its adaptation to the surrounding sociocultural environment.

Timor-Leste provides a distinctive context in which to investigate this question. As a predominantly Catholic country, with a population commonly reported to be approximately 98% Catholic in the source cited by this study (Burns, 2017), Timor-Leste presents a socioreligious environment substantially different from that of Muslim-majority societies in which much of the literature on Islamic education has been developed. In Dili, the Annur Islamic School operates within this context while serving students and employing teachers from different religious backgrounds. The school's reported demographic composition is particularly relevant: Catholic teachers and students constitute a substantial, and in some school levels predominant, part of its community. This institutional configuration raises questions that cannot be answered simply by examining the preservation of Muslim identity or the formal inclusion of religious minorities. It also invites an investigation of how Islamic educational values are interpreted and practiced in everyday institutional life, how relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim members are formed, and how the school negotiates its Islamic identity in response to local social and cultural conditions. Timor-Leste therefore offers a context for examining Islamic education not only as an institution operating under minority conditions but also as a participant in the educational and social life of a predominantly non-Muslim society.

Despite the contributions of previous research, three related analytical issues remain insufficiently connected. First, studies of Islamic education in minority settings have highlighted identity preservation and institutional challenges, but these emphases do not fully explain how Islamic educational values may become socially meaningful to people from different religious backgrounds. Second, research on religious inclusion and interfaith education has emphasized dialogue and mutual respect, while the relationship between these interpersonal practices and the longer-term adaptation of an Islamic educational institution requires further examination. Third, studies of cultural adaptation and community solidarity have identified important social functions of Islamic educational institutions, but these functions need to be considered alongside the spiritual values that inform educational practice. The resulting gap is therefore not simply the absence of research on Islamic education in Timor-Leste. Rather, it concerns the need for an integrated explanation of how spiritual commitments, cross-religious social relationships, and contextual institutional practices interact to produce educational resonance in a Muslim-minority environment.

To address this gap, this study develops the concept of resonance architecture as an analytical framework for examining the interrelationship between three dimensions identified in the educational practices of Annur Islamic School: inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation. These dimensions are conceptually distinct but mutually reinforcing. Inclusive spirituality provides the normative and ethical foundation by interpreting Islamic values, including compassion, justice, and respect, in ways that can inform constructive engagement across religious boundaries. Social solidarity represents the relational dimension through which these values are expressed in cooperation, mutual trust, and everyday interactions among members of different religious backgrounds. Cultural adaptation represents the institutional and contextual dimension through which educational practices, communication, and curricular approaches respond to local sociocultural conditions while maintaining the school's Islamic identity. The relationship among these dimensions is not assumed to be a fixed sequence or a causal mechanism established in advance. Rather, the framework proposes that spiritual commitments can orient social interaction, social relationships can give practical expression to those commitments, and culturally responsive institutional practices can embed and sustain such interaction within the school's daily operations. In turn, experiences of cooperation and inclusion may reinforce how shared ethical values are understood and practiced. Resonance architecture thus offers an integrated analytical lens for examining the connections between normative orientation, social relationships, and institutional contextualization, rather than treating them as independent characteristics of inclusive education.

This research aims to examine the resonance of Islamic education within Timor-Leste's pluralistic social context through a case study of the Annur Dili Islamic School. Specifically, the research seeks to explore how Islamic educational values are expressed, adapted, and received within a predominantly Catholic society; to analyze the institutional practices through which inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation are enacted; and to describe how education at Annur functions as a vehicle for realizing harmonious interfaith coexistence in a theologically distinct social environment. Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing field of comparative Islamic education by extending the analytical framework of educational resonance to a non-Western, post-conflict, minority Muslim context. It advances the understanding that the transformative potential of Islamic education is not a function of demographic dominance but of the capacity of educational institutions to articulate Islamic values in dialogical, contextually adaptive, and humanistic ways. The findings enrich theoretical conversations on inclusive pedagogy, interfaith education, and the social function of religious schools in plural societies, offering a replicable model for Islamic educational institutions operating in similarly diverse environments across the Global South.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative research approach, utilising a case study design. This methodology was chosen because it facilitates an in-depth examination of meanings, values, and social dynamics within specific cultural contexts. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically and descriptively through words and language, within their natural settings, utilising various scientific methods (Moleong, 2017). Such an approach provides a nuanced understanding of complex social realities that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative inquiry.

The research was conducted at An-Nur Islamic School in Dili, Timor-Leste. The site was purposively selected because it provides a relevant context for examining how Islamic educational values are expressed and negotiated within a predominantly non-Muslim society. The selection of the site was based on its institutional characteristics and its relevance to the study's objective of exploring educational practices involving individuals from different religious backgrounds. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a technique used to identify individuals with relevant knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Sugiyono, 2020). The study involved 18 informants: six school principals and senior administrative staff, eight teachers comprising five Muslims and three Catholics, and four students representing different grade levels and religious backgrounds. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 54 years, comprising 11 males and seven females. Before finalizing the participant description, the researchers verified the informants' roles, religious backgrounds, ages, and gender distribution against the original research records. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Individual interviews lasted approximately 45–75 minutes and were conducted face-to-face on school premises or via video call when necessary. The interviews explored participants' experiences and perspectives on the implementation of Islamic educational values and interreligious interactions within the school. Observations focused on everyday educational practices and interactions among teachers and students from different religious backgrounds. Document analysis involved examining relevant school archives, curriculum documents, and records of educational and religious activities. Information on the overall composition of teachers and students was treated separately from the interview sample and was checked against school records for the relevant academic year. The source and year of these institutional data were documented to ensure that the reported figures could be traced and verified.

Data were analysed inductively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, following the analytical model proposed by (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection, enabling continuous refinement of

emerging insights. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on essential information, whereas data display took the form of reflective narratives that identified recurring patterns and central themes, such as inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation. The credibility of the findings was ensured through the triangulation of data sources and methods, which involved comparing results from interviews, observations, and documentation (Creswell, 2014). Member checking was also conducted to verify the accuracy of data interpretation with the informants. Through this rigorous qualitative approach, the research aims to uncover the deep resonance of Islamic education within the lived realities of Muslim minority communities in Timor-Leste.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study identified several recurring patterns in the educational practices of Annur Islamic School in Dili, Timor-Leste. The findings are organized into four empirical categories: the religious composition of the school community, curriculum and interfaith educational practices, the enactment of universal ethical values, and the experiences of non-Muslim teachers. These categories describe the practices and experiences reported in the interviews, observations, and institutional documents. Their theoretical implications are examined separately in the Discussion section. This research yielded findings that can be categorized into three main dimensions of Islamic education in predominantly non-Muslim settings: inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation. These three dimensions, along with data on the composition of the school community and the role of non-Muslim teachers, are summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Islamic Education Resonance at Annur Islamic School

Dimensions of Findings	Description	Concrete Manifestations
Inclusive Spirituality	Islamic values are presented as universal humanitarian ethics, not exclusive doctrines	Interfaith dialogue, interfaith joint activities, rahmatan lil 'alamin-based moral learning
Social Solidarity	Muslim-Catholic cooperative relations foster mutual trust and respect	Interfaith teacher teamwork, social service activities, and application of the value of ukhuwah insaniyah
Cultural Adaptation	Integration of Islamic values into the local socio-cultural context of Timor-Leste without sacrificing Islamic identity	Contextual curriculum, inter-institutional collaboration, inclusive language approach
Composition of Teachers & Students	The majority of teachers and elementary and high school students are Catholic, emphasizing the universal appeal of Islamic education	Elementary school: 7/12 Catholic teachers, 159/312 Catholic students; High School: 23/33 Catholic teachers, 1,024/1,088 Catholic students
The Role of Non-Muslim Teachers	Catholic teachers become interfaith mediators while strengthening the image of moderate Islam	Active involvement in academic, social, and religious activities based on universal values

Source: Qualitative research findings, 2026.

Table 1 shows that Annur Islamic School's success in Dili is not solely determined by its presence within a Catholic community, but rather by its ability to tangibly embody Islamic values that are a blessing to all creation in its daily educational practices. The fact that more than 90% of Catholic high school students choose to attend an Islamic school confirms that the resonance of Islamic education does not depend on demographic dominance, but rather on the power of universal values capable of transcending the boundaries of religious identity.

Composition of Teachers and Students

The research's results demonstrate that the Annur Dili Islamic School is a distinctive educational institution within the context of a Muslim-majority country such as Timor-Leste. This school is a concrete example of Islamic educational practices that are open to religious and cultural plurality. Based on observations and field documentation, it is known that at SD Islam Annur, there are 12 teachers, comprising 5 Muslim and 7 Catholic teachers, and 312 students, comprising

153 Muslim and 159 Catholic students. This composition demonstrates a social balance that reflects interfaith acceptance within an Islamic educational institution.

"Here we do not look at religion, the important thing is that children learn well and respect each other." (Muslim Teacher, Annur Islamic High School, Dili)

The interview excerpts directly reflect the empirical reality: the majority of teachers at Annur High School are Catholic (23 out of 33), yet they participate fully in Islamic institutions, demonstrating the inclusivity and resonance of Islamic education that transcend formal religious boundaries, as argued in the research findings. At Annur Islamic Junior High School, there are 23 teachers, comprising 9 Muslims and 14 Catholics, with a total of 322 students: 51 Muslims and 271 Catholics. This fact shows that Islamic educational institutions in Timor Leste are not only places of learning for the Muslim community but also attract the interest of the Catholic community due to the quality of their education and the humanitarian values they promote (Plyais, 2024). Meanwhile, Annur Islamic High School has 33 teachers, comprising 10 Muslims and 23 Catholics, and 1,088 students, comprising 64 Muslims and 1,024 Catholics. This condition is clear evidence of the resonance of Islamic education, which penetrates the boundaries of formal religion, strengthening its social function as a bridge of peace and social harmony (Dian, 2023). Thus, the An-Nur Islamic School is not only a symbol of Islam's presence in minority countries but also a representation of multicultural educational practices that instil the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence (Debisa, 2022).

Inclusive Curriculum and Learning

The curriculum integrates Islamic values with Timor-Leste's national education standards. Catholic teachers are also involved in general learning and socio-religious activities, guided by the principle of mutual respect. According to the researcher's observations, each student received religious lessons in accordance with their own beliefs. This approach shows a balance between Islamic identity and respect for plurality (Mahmud, 2023).

The research on the curriculum and inclusive learning at the Annur Dili Islamic School reveals a contextual adaptation of Islamic education to the social and religious realities of the majority of East Timorese, who are predominantly Catholic. The An-Nur Islamic School, which encompasses elementary, junior high, and high school levels, employs a learning system that integrates Islamic values with the principles of multiculturalism and interfaith dialogue. The curriculum model used emphasizes a balance between religious education, general science, and the formation of universal human character.

The curriculum document at this school is not exclusive but is designed to foster spiritual intelligence and social harmony. Islamic religious learning, for example, is delivered with a contextual and communicative approach, where universal moral values such as honesty, compassion, and responsibility take precedence over normative theological debates (Azis et al., 2022). This kind of approach makes non-Muslim students feel comfortable and actively involved in the learning process without feeling marginalized by religious identity.

"Here, we do not discriminate. Catholic teachers are also active, and all students learn the same values." (Catholic Teacher, Junior High School, interview, 2026)

The interview results demonstrate interfaith collaboration between Muslim and Catholic teachers, a non-discriminatory curriculum, and the implementation of ukhuwah insaniyah (human brotherhood) in daily learning practices at Annur Islamic School in Dili, as confirmed through interviews with teachers and students. The results of interviews with several teachers and students indicate that the school curriculum does not discriminate against students based on religion. Every student is invited to understand human values as a common moral foundation. This is in line with (Fergina et al., 2024) view, who stated that modern Islamic education needs to prioritize *ukhuwah insaniyah* (brotherhood of humanity) over the interests of narrow groups. In practice, Muslim and Catholic teachers collaborate in both academic and non-academic activities, creating a tolerant and productive learning atmosphere.

Learning activities at the An-Nur Islamic School also highlight the school's participatory and collaborative nature. For example, observations of project-based learning activities show that interfaith students are involved in social projects, such as environmental cleanup and literacy initiatives. This type of learning aligns with progressive educational theory, which emphasizes the active involvement of students in constructing meaning and knowledge (Yang et al., 2023). Consequently, education in Annur not only imparts knowledge but also instils the values of cooperation and empathy across religions.

Based on existing documents, schools also apply the principle of inclusive pedagogy, in which teachers are trained to understand students' diverse backgrounds and to design adaptive learning strategies. Islamic religious teachers, for example, teach religious material on faith and morals, emphasizing universal values such as justice and virtue rather than religious superiority. Catholic teachers also play an active role in Islamic religious activities as a form of respect for the institution's value system, which, in turn, fosters a sense of togetherness. This reflects the concept of resonance in Islamic education, where Islamic values have an inclusive and transformative impact on all students, regardless of their religious affiliation (Shuhaizam Said et al., 2023).

The curriculum used at Annur is flexible and integrative. In addition to general subjects such as math, language, and science, the school also offers character-building activities and cross-cultural education. For example, based on the researcher's observations, a Brotherhood Day activity is held that brings together Muslim and Catholic students to share experiences about moral values in the teachings of their respective religions. Programs like this reinforce (Wahyono et al., 2022) view that multicultural education serves as a means of social transformation, promoting justice and equality.

The curriculum and learning practices at the An-Nur Islamic School effectively combine spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions within a harmonious educational framework. This school not only functions as an institution for the transmission of knowledge, but also as a forum for interfaith dialogue and a vehicle for the formation of civilised interfaith citizenship. This strengthens the argument that the resonance of Islamic education does not depend on the quantitative dominance of Muslims, but on the ability of educational institutions to articulate Islamic values that are *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in the context of plurality (Parjiman et al., 2023).

The results of this research demonstrate that the curriculum and inclusive learning at the Annur Dili Islamic School have fostered a peaceful, equitable, and universally humanitarian-oriented educational environment. This model can serve as an inspiration for Islamic educational institutions in other Muslim minority areas to develop an education rooted in Islamic values but open to socio-cultural differences and diversity.

Implementation of Islamic Universal Values

The values of honesty, compassion, and fairness serve as the foundation for character development in all students. Activities such as community service, interfaith visits, and national day celebrations strengthen social solidarity. This shows the internalization of the concept *of rahmatan lil 'alamin* not just in theory, but in real social practice (Kamal, 2021). The research results show that the Annur Dili Islamic School is an educational space that embodies Islam as peaceful, open, and respectful of universal humanity, amid a predominantly Catholic community in Timor-Leste. The implementation of universal Islamic values in schools is reflected in three main aspects: humanistic learning, inclusive social and religious habits, and harmonious interfaith interaction.

First, in the humanistic learning aspect, the researcher observed that teachers at the An-Nur Islamic School applied an educational approach that focused on the values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy for all nature). This principle is evident in the way teachers facilitate learning for students regardless of their religion, race, or social background. Values such as honesty, justice, and compassion are taught as universal moral foundations that all learners can accept. Islamic education is actually inclusive and oriented towards human benefit, not just the strengthening of group identity. This approach transforms the classroom into a space for ethical dialogue, uniting Muslim and Catholic students in a spirit of mutual understanding and humanity (Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Second, in social and religious habits, schools inculcate non-exclusive Islamic moral practices. For example, researchers observe that joint prayer activities before learning are conducted in a universal language that emphasizes God's gratitude and compassion for all humans. Muslim students carry out worship with the support of Catholic friends, while all school residents respect Catholic religious activities. This practice aligns with the principle of *ta'aruf* (knowing each other) in Islam, which emphasizes harmonious interaction among human beings. (Munhanif, 2016) considers this kind of education to be a concrete form of cultural Islam that adapts to the social context without compromising the substance of its teachings.

Third, in the realm of interfaith interaction, the An-Nur Islamic School fosters open communication between teachers and students of different faiths. Based on the interviews, Catholic teachers not only teach general subjects but are also actively involved in social activities and character education that incorporate universal Islamic values, such as responsibility, honesty, and social concern. This demonstrates that Islamic values can be effectively implemented through moral and humanitarian actions that transcend formal religious boundaries. The implementation of Islamic universal values includes the dimensions *of akhlaqiyyah* (moral), *insaniyyah* (humanity), and '*alamiyyah* (universality), which are the foundation for the formation of a civilised multicultural society (Irawan et al., 2022).

"We do not feel like outsiders here. Islamic values like honesty and respect are values we also hold." (Headmaster, An-Nur Islamic School, Dili, Timor-Leste)

The leadership of Muslim principals and teachers plays a crucial role in instilling universal Islamic values through exemplary and equitable educational policies. In every decision, the principal emphasizes the principles of justice (*al-'adl*) and deliberation (*al-isyura*), which are at the core of Islamic ethics. Teachers also prioritize the principle of *uswah hasanah* (good example) in managing differences between students. Multicultural education requires educators who are open-minded and possess high moral and ethical standards (Jayadi et al., 2022).

In daily practice, researchers observe firsthand that the universal values of Islam are embodied through various social programs, including environmental cleanliness activities, interfaith social service, and character development classes. These activities not only strengthen social solidarity, but also become a means of *da'wah bil hal* (da'wah through real actions). Islamic education at the Annur School not only discusses religious doctrine but also explores humanity's praxis, celebrating each individual as God's creation. Thus, the resonance of Islamic education in Timor-Leste appears not in the form of an ideological expansion but in the dissemination of universal human values and morality relevant to all humanity (Deniz, 2023). The implementation of Islamic universal values at the An-Nur Islamic School has become the primary force maintaining interreligious harmony in Dili. The school is not only a formal educational institution, but also a platform for the exchange of values, where Islam resonates with universal moral beauty. With an inclusive and humanistic approach, in line with the researcher's observations, Annur has presented an Islamic education model that affirms the mission of peace and humanity across religious boundaries.

The Role of Non-Muslim Teachers

Researchers have observed that the involvement of Catholic teachers is clear evidence of Islamic education's inclusiveness. They feel accepted and actively involved in school activities. This portrays Islam as a religion of universal dialogue and brotherhood. This research found that non-Muslim teachers play a strategic role in promoting the universal values of Islam at the Annur Dili Islamic School in Timor Leste, an Islamic educational institution situated in a predominantly Catholic society. With the number of Catholic teachers, who are dominant at the elementary level, comprising 7 out of a total of 12, 14 out of 23 in junior high schools, and 23 out of 33 in high schools, their contributions are not only administrative and pedagogical, but also cultural and social.

"Here I do not feel like a stranger; the values taught by Islam about honesty and justice are also my values." (Catholic Teacher, An-Nur Islamic School, Dili, Timor-Leste)

This interview excerpt directly reflects three key research findings: (1) the transformation of non-Muslim teachers' views from stereotypes to positive empathy, (2) the resonance of universal Islamic values (*ṣidq* and *'adl*) felt across faiths, and (3) authentic acceptance as evidence of the inclusiveness of Islamic education in a predominantly Catholic environment. Non-Muslim teachers play a vital role in fostering an inclusive and tolerant learning environment. They demonstrate a professional attitude in respecting Islamic values, which form the basis of the school curriculum, through the implementation of joint prayers, socio-religious activities, and the commemoration of Islamic holidays (Budak, 2022). In this research, education is not only a means of knowledge transfer but also a forum for the encounter of interfaith human values (Sidqi & Rasidin, 2023). Reflectively, the researcher notes that the presence of non-Muslim teachers in Islamic institutions demonstrates a genuine form of praxic dialogue between faith and humanity. They serve as mediators, strengthening the social bridge between the Muslim and Catholic communities. Through daily interactions, both in the classroom and outside the classroom, a resonance is created of universal Islamic values such as honesty (*ṣidq*), hard work (*ijtihād*), and justice (*'adl*) (Bukhori Muslim et al., 2024).

The researchers also observed that non-Muslim teachers are role models in building the understanding that Islamic education is not exclusive but open to differences. Their presence is concrete proof that Islamic institutions can adapt to plurality without losing their religious identity. In learning practice, they support the implementation of a curriculum that instils universal values such as love of peace, mutual respect, and cooperation. This attitude of professionalism strengthens the image of Islam as a religion that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in a multicultural environment (Adinugraha et al., 2025).

The interviews showed that non-Muslim teachers felt well accepted by the school community. They admitted that they experienced a transformation of their views about Islam from previously stereotypical to more positive and empathetic. Intense social interaction with Muslim teachers and Muslim students enriches their understanding of the meaning of tolerance and spirituality (Surur et al., 2025; Sutisna & Khori, 2024; Zulkifli et al., 2026). On the other hand, for Muslim students, the existence of non-Muslim teachers actually strengthens multicultural awareness and faith. They learn to respect differences without losing religious beliefs. This mutual relationship fosters a harmony that is a genuine reflection of the resonance of Islamic education within non-Muslim societies (Keskin & Ozalp, 2021).

The results of this research indicate that the role of non-Muslim teachers at An-Nur Islamic School can be categorized into three main dimensions. First, the pedagogical dimension: involvement in cross-value teaching that enriches students' perspectives on humanity. Second, the socio-cultural dimension, namely the creation of a space for togetherness that fosters interfaith solidarity. Third, the moral-spiritual dimension, namely, the practical internalization of the universal values of Islam in school life. Thus, this research confirms that the presence of non-Muslim teachers in Islamic educational institutions is not a contradiction, but rather a tangible manifestation of a universal, open, and dialogical Islam. The implementation of these inclusive values not only strengthens the character of the school as a moral-forming institution but also strengthens interreligious relations in Timor-Leste. In the research of globalization and pluralism, this educational model serves as an inspiration for Islamic educational practices that are oriented towards peace and universal humanity (Ozer & Kamran, 2023).

Discussion

The findings provide a basis for examining how Islamic educational values are expressed and interpreted in a religiously diverse institutional setting. Rather than treating demographic diversity as direct evidence of educational impact, the discussion interprets the reported practices and participant experiences through three related analytical dimensions: inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation. These dimensions are used as an interpretive framework for the case, rather than as a causally validated model. The phenomenon that developed at the An-Nur Islamic School shows a complex and productive form of Islamic education resonance. First, the spiritual resonance is evident in the Islamic values, which are translated into universal compassion. Second, social resonance arises in a harmonious relationship between teachers and students across religions. Third, cultural resonance is evident in the adaptation of Islam to the local culture of Timor-Leste, without compromising the essence of faith (Amanallah, 2019). This educational model aligns with the thinking of (Al-Aharish, 2017), who emphasized that Islam must present itself as a moral and intellectual force within a pluralistic society. Furthermore, Annur's education also reflects the vision of Islam of the archipelago, a friendly, open, and contextual Islam (Thahir, 2021). This demonstrates that Islamic education serves not only as a tool for da'wah but also as a medium for cultural diplomacy and peace.

The research on the Resonance of Islamic Education in Muslim Minority Countries, with a case study of the An-Nur Islamic School in Dili, Timor Leste, reveals three key findings that are at the heart of the institution's sustainability in a pluralistic social context: inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation. These three dimensions not only describe the survival strategy of Islamic institutions within a Catholic-majority society but also demonstrate how Islamic education serves as a dialogical and transformational force across cultures and faiths.

Inclusive Spirituality

The inclusive spirituality found at the An-Nur Islamic School is rooted in the understanding that Islamic values are universal and can be lived by anyone regardless of religious background. In this school, religious activities serve not only as a means of faith formation for Muslim students but also as an educational space for Catholic students to understand and respect Islamic spiritual values.

This approach aligns with the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, as affirmed in the Qur'an (QS. Al-Anbiya: 107), which states that Islam is a blessing for all of creation, not just for Muslims. Spirituality in Islamic education encompasses the divine, humanitarian, and social dimensions, which are open to diverse perspectives (Sayekti, 2021). Thus, religious learning at the Annur School is not dogmatic but instead encourages reflective and empathetic understanding.

Muslim and non-Muslim teachers collaborate in designing school activities, such as joint prayer, social service, and interfaith discussions, that instil the values of tolerance and mutual respect. In this context, inclusive spirituality serves as a bridge for interfaith communication. Spiritual inclusiveness is a manifestation of the integrative and interconnective paradigm in Islamic education, where the value of faith is intertwined with universal human ethics (Zahroh et al., 2023).

These findings suggest that the practice of Islamic education in minority environments can strengthen the peaceful and open face of Islam. This is also the antithesis of the narrow view that sees Islamic education as exclusive and defensive toward difference. Inclusive spirituality at the Annur School promotes a shared understanding that values such as compassion, honesty, and responsibility are integral to a universal faith (Grigoriadis & Akdeniz, 2021).

This inclusive spirituality is a tangible manifestation of the resonance of Islamic education, specifically the ability of Islamic teachings to resonate in the cross-faith social space through dialogical and contextual educational practices. Amid the Catholic community's dominance, the Annur School does not isolate itself; instead, it opens space for spiritual interaction that enriches both parties.

Social Solidarity

The second finding, social solidarity, reveals that the An-Nur Islamic School plays a crucial role as a forum for fostering social awareness across communities. The interactions between Muslim teachers and students, as well as between Catholic teachers and students, take place in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect. This solidarity is built not because of the same faith, but because of the awareness of shared humanity that is grown through the practice of education. In various school activities, such as environmental cleanliness, social service, and inter-class cooperation, the value *of ukhuwah insaniyah* (brotherhood of humanity) is put into practice. Islam emphasizes the importance of harmonious social relations as a manifestation of faith (Khasasi et al., 2020).

Social solidarity in this school does not arise spontaneously; instead, it grows through a long process of interaction between individuals. Non-Muslim teachers feel a moral responsibility to the school's development, while Muslim teachers show an open attitude towards their contributions. In interviews, some Catholic teachers stated that they did not feel alienated, but instead entirely accepted into the extended family of Islamic schools. This phenomenon is a form of praxic multiculturalism, in which diversity is recognized not only normatively but also lived out in daily actions (Mansouri & Modood, 2021). Solidarity at Annur School is reflected in how teachers support one another, share learning resources, and overcome challenges regardless of their religious backgrounds.

This solidarity also contains moral and spiritual dimensions. Social solidarity in the context of Islamic education serves as a means of implementing the value of *ta'awun* (help in kindness), which forms the moral foundation of civil society (Nurbaeti & Suharyat, 2024). The Annur School has successfully implemented this principle as a living social practice within a multireligious educational environment. Reflectively, social solidarity at the Annur School emphasizes that Islamic education within minority communities is not only aimed at producing students of faith but also builds social bridges that foster a sense of togetherness. In the context of globalization, which often causes identity polarization, this model of solidarity is a significant contribution to contemporary Islamic education, emphasizing the importance of living together in diversity (Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Cultural Adaptation

The third finding concerns cultural adaptation, specifically the An-Nur Islamic School's ability to adapt to the socio-cultural context of the predominantly Catholic East Timorese society. This adaptation is evident in the curriculum approach, communication style, and institutional relationships. In terms of curriculum, this school not only teaches Islamic religious education to Muslim students, but also provides opportunities for Catholic students to learn universal moral values. Moral and ethical learning is presented in a contextual approach, allowing all students to accept it without feeling alienated. Multiculturally oriented Islamic education must be adaptable to the social context without compromising its spiritual essence (Halim, 2023).

When it comes to communication, the teachers at this school use language that emphasizes unity, not division (kawangit et al., 2019). For example, in school activities, they use the term Annur's extended family, which symbolically removes the boundaries of religious identity. This language adaptation reinforces a sense of belonging and minimizes the potential for symbolic conflict. Institutionally, the An-Nur Islamic School maintains strong cooperation with Catholic institutions in Dili, both in social and educational activities. This collaboration demonstrates Islamic schools' ability to adapt structurally within a predominantly Catholic social system. Cultural adaptation is an epistemological strategy in Islamic education, ensuring that Islamic values remain relevant in the midst of changing times and cultures (Aziz et al., 2025; Saefudin et al., 2023; Siswadi et al., 2026).

This cultural adaptation also demonstrates that Islamic education at Annur School has retained its identity. It is precisely through adaptation that Islamic values, such as justice, equality, and compassion, can be internalized in local contexts. (Aslihah & Wasehudin, 2023; Budiyono et al., 2024; Moussa et al., 2023) refer to this as a form of cultural Islamization, the process by which Islamic values are peacefully integrated into pluralistic social life. From a reflective perspective, the cultural adaptation at the Annur School is a clear example of the application of contextual Islamic

education. This education extends beyond doctrine, combining revelation with social reality. In this way, Islamic education resonates not only ideologically but also in practice in the local cultural space. These three findings, inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation, form a cohesive unit in describing *the* resonance of Islamic education in non-Muslim communities. Inclusive spirituality is the foundation of values; social solidarity manifests as action; and cultural adaptation serves as a sustainability strategy.

Islamic education at the Annur School has succeeded in presenting a face of Islam that is *tawassuth* (moderate), *tasamuh* (tolerant), and *ta'awun* (cooperation). These values are not only taught theoretically, but are brought to life through open and participatory educational practices. Thus, the resonance of Islamic education in this school serves as a social energy that strengthens interreligious and national harmony. Academically, this finding confirms that Islamic education can be an effective instrument in building a peaceful plural society, as long as it dares to recontextualize Islamic values according to local needs (Sahin, 2018). Inclusive spirituality provides a moral basis, social solidarity strengthens community cohesion, and cultural adaptation ensures the sustainability of institutions amid Timor-Leste's socio-cultural dynamics.

The three findings presented above demand a critical engagement with existing theoretical frameworks, not merely an affirmation of them. (Elewa, 2026) "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, which remains influential in framing Muslim-non-Muslim relations, is directly contested by the Annur case. Rather than producing institutional defensiveness or communal friction, Islamic education in this Catholic-majority context has generated what this research proposes as a resonance architecture: a self-reinforcing system in which inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation mutually sustain one another. This model challenges the assumption, implicit in much minority-religion scholarship, that institutional survival in a hostile majority environment requires either assimilation or enclave withdrawal.

Comparative evidence from Muslim minority contexts in Western Europe underscores this novelty. Studies from France, Germany, and the United Kingdom consistently document Islamic schools operating under conditions of state suspicion, symbolic marginalization, and identity-defensive posturing (Napitupulu & Fahmi, 2020) (Ozer & Kamran, 2023). In those settings, interfaith collaboration of the kind observed at Annur, where Catholic teachers constitute the institutional majority and actively internalize Islamic universal values, is virtually absent from the literature. The Southeast Asian and post-conflict Timorese context generates a structurally distinct dynamic: shared post-colonial nationhood and the urgent memory of collective suffering create a civic foundation upon which ukhuwah insaniyah operates not as an aspiration but as a social necessity.

This research also critically extends (Karwadi et al., 2025) critical pedagogy into Islamic educational discourse. (Rashid, 2025) has treated critical pedagogy as a predominantly secular-humanist framework, applied to Islamic education from outside (Sahin, 2018). The Annur case demonstrates that *rahmatan lil 'alamin* epistemology independently generates the conditions Freire associates with conscientization, dialogical learning, reflexive community engagement, and praxis-oriented moral formation, without importing secular premises. This is a theoretically significant finding: Islamic education does not merely accommodate critical pedagogy; it produces it from within its own normative tradition when institutionally liberated from doctrinal defensiveness.

This research makes a contribution that is both empirically and theoretically observed in this case study. No prior study has proposed or empirically validated a three-dimensional resonance architecture model, integrating inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation, as a unified explanatory framework for Islamic minority educational institutions. Existing studies address these dimensions in isolation: curriculum adaptation (Halim, 2023), identity preservation ((Srimulyani, 2021)), or interfaith relations (Mansouri & Modood, 2021) are each treated as separate analytical problems. This research synthesizes them into a coherent, transferable model. Furthermore, Timor-Leste as a research site is itself a scholarly lacuna: as one of the world's youngest post-conflict democracies with a 98% Catholic population, it represents an extreme case that tests

the boundaries of Islamic educational resonance in ways that majority-Muslim country studies cannot. The finding that Islamic education here functions as a proactive civilizational force, generating social capital and bridging communal divides, rather than a survival mechanism, reframes the entire field's understanding of what Islamic minority education can and should aspire to achieve.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Islamic education at the An-Nur Islamic School in Dili, Timor-Leste, resonates powerfully and constructively within a predominantly Catholic society through three interconnected dimensions: inclusive spirituality, social solidarity, and cultural adaptation. The most unexpected finding is that Catholic teachers, who constitute the institutional majority at all school levels, do not merely tolerate Islamic values but actively internalize and transmit them through daily pedagogical practice. This reversal of the conventional minority-majority dynamic, wherein the non-Muslim majority becomes a primary carrier of Islamic universal ethics, fundamentally challenges the assumption that Islamic educational resonance depends on Muslim demographic dominance. Far from being a fragile outlier, the Annur model reveals that Islamic education thrives most dialogically precisely when it operates without the protective comfort of majority status.

Theoretically, this study contributes the resonance architecture model to Islamic education, illustrating how inclusive spirituality (axiological foundation), social solidarity (lived praxis), and cultural adaptation (institutional dimension) interact to sustain religious identity amidst cultural diversity. Practically, this framework offers context-sensitive strategies for Islamic schools in minority contexts: implementing inclusive teacher-management, cultivating an institutional culture of mutual respect, integrating universal ethics into the curriculum, and actively fostering community engagement through structured interfaith collaboration. While grounded specifically in the An-Nur case rather than universally validated, this model provides a robust analytical lens for examining and optimizing Islamic educational practices in other pluralistic or post-conflict societies.

This study carries limitations that future research must address. Its single-site, qualitative design, while rich in contextual depth, restricts the generalizability of findings. Future studies should employ comparative multi-site designs across Muslim minority countries in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe to test the transferability of the resonance architecture model. Longitudinal research is also urgently needed to examine whether interfaith solidarity at Annur sustains across student generations and leadership transitions, ensuring that this model's contribution to peacebuilding is durable rather than institutionally contingent.

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