

Islamic Values as Social Glue: Pesantren Strategies in Shaping the Character of Multicultural Students at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

In the context of Indonesia's ethnically, culturally, and religiously pluralistic society, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a strategic role as religious educational institutions and agents of social integration. The focus of this study is to identify the Islamic values that form the basis for the formation of the social character of Islamic boarding school students (santri) and to examine their internalization strategies in daily life. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with kiai, ustadz, and students, and documentation analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the dominant Islamic values at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School are ta'dib (manners), tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), and ukhuwwah (brotherhood), which function as an effective moral and social system in building harmony in the multicultural student environment. Internalization of these values is carried out through three main strategies: the exemplary behavior of kiai and ustadz, socio-religious habits, and strengthening the pesantren culture. The synergy of these three strategies fosters the inclusive, moderate, and empathetic character of students, while strengthening social cohesion among them. This study concludes that Islamic values serve not only as theological teachings but also as social mechanisms capable of integrating diversity into harmony. These findings affirm the role of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as a relevant model of Islamic education in strengthening social cohesion in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Kata kunci:

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Abstrak

Dalam konteks masyarakat Indonesia yang plural secara etnis, budaya, dan agama, pesantren memainkan peran strategis sebagai lembaga pendidikan keagamaan sekaligus agen integrasi sosial. Fokus penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai Islam yang menjadi dasar pembentukan karakter sosial santri serta menelaah strategi penginternalisasiannya dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan kiai, ustadz, dan santri, serta analisis dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai Islam yang dominan di Pondok Pesantren Al Hidayah Kudus yaitu ta'dib (adab), tawasuth (moderasi), tasamuh (toleransi), dan ukhuwwah (persaudaraan) yang berfungsi sebagai sistem moral dan sosial yang efektif dalam membangun harmoni di lingkungan santri multikultural. Internalisasi nilai-nilai tersebut dilakukan melalui tiga strategi utama: keteladanan kiai dan ustadz, pembiasaan sosial-keagamaan, serta penguatan budaya pesantren. Sinergi ketiga strategi ini menumbuhkan karakter santri yang inklusif, moderat, dan empatik, serta memperkuat kohesi sosial di antara mereka. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa nilai-nilai Islam tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ajaran teologis, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme sosial yang mampu mengintegrasikan keberagaman

menjadi harmoni. Temuan ini menegaskan peran pesantren sebagai model pendidikan Islam yang relevan dalam memperkuat kohesi sosial masyarakat majemuk Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian society lives in a high diversity of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions, so its social life is very plural (Djamaluddin, Bahri, Halim, Nurlailah, & Chabibi, 2024; Rozanita, Usman, & Azzukhrufi, 2026). Diversity is essentially a social asset that enriches interaction and expands the space for tolerance, but it can also give rise to social boundaries that have the potential to cause friction and conflict if not managed properly through the glue of shared values (Ahwan & Karfida, 2025; Asrori et al., 2025; Indasari, Srinio, Ryandini, Rosyidi, & Fitriyah, 2025). In this context, pesantren play an important role not only as an institution for the transmission of religious knowledge, but also as a space for the formation of students' social character through an education system that emphasizes the values of solidarity, tolerance, responsibility, and togetherness (Baihaqi, Amaliyah, Awaliyah, Khoerunnisa, & Laksono, 2023; Sutisna & Khori, 2024; Wonuola, Kurnia, & Muyasaroh, 2025). Communal life in pesantren allows for intensive interaction between students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, so that it becomes a strategic space to build mutual respect in diversity (Faizal, Aqil, Aras, & Surahman, 2025; Sutisna & Khori, 2024). The Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School is a clear example of this multicultural environment, where the diversity of regional origins and culture of students requires a coaching strategy based on Islamic values as a social glue that is able to form a harmonious, adaptive, and inclusive character of students in daily life.

A number of studies show that pesantren have a significant contribution to the formation of the social character of students (Haramain, Muhammad Wildan Khadamul, 2025) emphasized that the internalization of Islamic values in the life of Islamic boarding schools is realized through discipline, independence, and a culture of living together that forms the social character of the students in an integral way. (Wadimah, S., Thohari, M. I., & Muslim, 2020) and (Retnasari, Hidayah, & Prasetyo, 2021) also shows that the formation of students' character takes place through the process of instilling values, habituation, and exemplary behavior that is carried out in a structured and sustainable manner. Meanwhile, (Shalehuddin & Sihabuddin, 2025) highlights the importance of pesantren strategies in strengthening moderate Islamic values in order to foster a tolerant and inclusive attitude in responding to pluralistic social realities. Other research also confirms that pesantren have a role in shaping the social character of students who are able to adapt to the dynamics of modern society. (Hifza, H., Antoni, A., Syakhrani, A., Hartati, 2020) and (Qodratulloh, Rafdinal, & Nurasman, 2025) added that a multicultural-based approach to Islamic education is relevant to strengthen awareness of diversity and prevent the emergence of exclusive attitudes that can damage the social order. In addition, strengthening character education in Islamic boarding schools is also carried out through the integration of Islamic values into the curriculum and learning methods. (Arifin, 2025) shows that learning Arabic in Islamic boarding schools not only teaches linguistic competence, but also becomes a means of internalizing Islamic moral values. In line with that, (Pepilina, Safitri, S, & Sari, 2025) developed a STEAM approach

based on *the principle of ta'dib* that integrates moral formation and strengthening 21st century skills simultaneously.

Although these various studies have discussed the role of pesantren in character formation, there is still a space for study that has not been touched much, namely how Islamic values specifically function as social glue in shaping the character of multicultural students, especially in the context of the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing how this pesantren internalizes Islamic values as the basis for the formation of the social character of students from various backgrounds. In particular, this study seeks to answer two main questions: (1) what Islamic values are used as the basis for the formation of the social character of students at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School, and (2) how the strategy of internalizing these values is carried out in the daily lives of students.

This study argues that Islamic values such as *ta'dib*, *tawasuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) function as social glue that unites students from different cultural backgrounds. The provisional hypothesis of this study states that the strategy of internalizing values through the example of kiai, habituation of social interaction, and the culture of life in pesantren is able to form the character of students who are multicultural, inclusive, and adaptive to social dynamics in society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach because it aims to deeply understand the process of internalizing Islamic values as a social glue in the formation of the character of multicultural students at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School. This approach emphasizes the meaning and understanding of social phenomena that occur naturally without the manipulation of variables. The unit of analysis in this study is the social interaction of students and pesantren caregivers, which reflects the application of Islamic values in daily life. The Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School was chosen as the location of the research because it contextually represents Islamic educational institutions that live in the ethnic and cultural diversity of students from various regions in Indonesia, so that it is an ideal location to observe how Islamic values function as a unifying force in the midst of differences.

The design of this research is descriptive-interpretive, namely systematically describing the social facts found in the field and interpreting their meaning based on Islamic and social contexts. (Creswell, 2014) explains that descriptive-interpretive design is used to understand human experience and interpret social phenomena contextually and reflectively². This opinion is in line with the view (Moleong, 2012) that qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning behind the actions, values, and social symbols that live in society. In this context, the researcher acts as the main instrument (*key instrument*) that directly interacts with the pesantren environment to observe, interpret, and understand the phenomenon being studied.

The source of information in this study consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews with caregivers (kiai), ustadz/ustadzah, and students who are considered to have relevant understanding and experience of the practice of Islamic values in Islamic boarding schools. Observations were made on the daily activities of the pesantren such as recitations, congregational prayers, social activities, and interactions between students in the dormitory. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from various official documents of the pesantren such as discipline, historical archives of the pesantren, photos of activities, and other written references relevant to the research

context. Informants were selected using the purposive sampling technique, which is based on the researcher's consideration of the informant's involvement and knowledge about the research topic.

The data collection technique is carried out through three main steps, namely participatory observation, *in-depth interview*, and documentation. Participatory observation is carried out directly in the pesantren environment to understand the practice of Islamic values that are revived in the daily activities of students. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that the researcher obtained broad and in-depth information about the pesantren strategy in shaping the character of students through Islamic values. Meanwhile, documentation is used to strengthen the data of observation and interview results through written and visual evidence such as archives of activities and pesantren diaries.

The data analysis in this study uses an interactive analysis model (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2014) which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. At the data reduction stage, the researcher selects and simplifies the data from observations, interviews, and documentation to focus on the main theme, namely Islamic values as a social glue. At the data presentation stage, the researcher compiled the findings in the form of a descriptive narrative that showed the patterns of social interaction and moral values that emerged in the lives of students. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions and verification, which is carried out through a process of triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the validity of the data.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Islamic Values as Social Glue at Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School

The Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School has applied Islamic values as the basis for the formation of the social life of students in the context of a multicultural educational environment. This practice is characterized by the diversity of backgrounds of students from various regions, such as Jepara, Pati, Rembang, Demak, Madura, and parts of Kalimantan. This diversity brings differences in culture, language dialects, life habits, and social characters that color the daily life of the Islamic boarding school. Based on pesantren administration data and the results of field observations, students live in a boarding education system that requires intensive interaction, both in congregational worship activities, learning the yellow book, dormitory deliberations, Islamic art activities, community service, and community service. This collective life practice shows that pesantren substantially seeks to create an inclusive educational environment, which allows students from various backgrounds to live and learn together in harmony.

The application of Islamic values at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School is not symbolic, but is actively and continuously practiced in the life of the Islamic boarding school. The caretakers of the pesantren consistently inculcate an understanding of Islam as a teaching that emphasizes unity and respect for differences. Ustadz Fauzan stated: "We instill in the students that Islam is not only about worship, but also about how to appreciate differences. Islam is rahmatan lil 'alamin, so it must be able to unite, not separate". (Fauzan 2025). The statement shows that Islamic values are used as a common moral framework in managing the social diversity of students, so that differences in backgrounds do not develop into open conflicts in pesantren life.

The Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School also integrates Islamic values into the educational system and culture of the pesantren through habituation, example of kiai and ustaz, and strengthening the rules of dormitory life. The value of ta'dib or adab is the main foundation in the formation of student behavior, which is taught through the recitation of the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* and applied in daily life.

The Fatkhuriyyah stated: "*Manners are higher than knowledge. We are used to students respecting each other regardless of their regional origin*" (Fatkhuriyyah 2025).

The value of ta'dib is reflected in the attitude of the students who maintain speech, dress modestly, respect the teacher, comply with the rules of the Islamic boarding school, and maintain the cleanliness and order of the dormitory environment. This habituation forms an orderly and respectful pattern of social interaction in the midst of the diversity of students.

In addition, Islamic boarding schools also apply the value of tawasuth or moderation as a principle of religion in the life of students. This value is realized through fiqh and scientific halaqah discussion activities that open up space for students to understand differences of opinion in the Islamic scientific tradition.

Santri from Rembang Hanif: "Here we are taught to respect differences of opinion. It should not be easy to blame others" (Hanif 2025). This practice shows that pesantren builds a non-extreme religious culture and encourages students to be open to differences in religious understanding.

The value of tasamuh or tolerance is also an important part of the social life of students at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School. Tolerance is realized through cross-regional cooperation in dormitory picket activities, community service, and deliberation as a mechanism to solve social problems. Ahmad Romdlon emphasized: "If there is a small conflict between students in this pesantren, we will resolve it with deliberation and a tasamuh value approach" (Ahmad Romdlon 2025). This practice shows that the differences in the character and habits of the students are managed through a dialogical approach and Islamic values, thus creating harmonious social relationships.



Figure 1. Students work together in pesantren activities

The value of ukhuwwah or brotherhood is a reinforcement of social solidarity among students. Ukhuwwah is realized through various collective activities, such as mutual cooperation, mutual aid for sick students, and joint involvement in Islamic boarding school and social community activities. Hanif stated: "We are like family here. There are no terms Java, Madura, or Sumatra. All are the same: students" (Hanif 2025). This value forms a strong sense of togetherness and erodes cultural barriers among students.

Overall, the results of the study show that the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School consistently applies Islamic values as a strategy to build a harmonious social life in a multicultural educational environment. The application of the values of ta'dib, tawasuth, tasamuh, and ukhuwwah not only shapes the individual behavior of students, but also creates an inclusive, tolerant, and conducive social order of Islamic boarding schools, so that Islamic values function effectively as social glue in the lives of diverse students.

Strategies for Internalizing Islamic Values in the Formation of Multicultural Student Character

The process of internalizing Islamic values in the formation of the character of multicultural students at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School takes place through an integrated and continuous education system, which empirically can be traced through the exemplary practice of kiai and ustadz, socio-religious habits, and strengthening the Islamic boarding school cultural system. The three strategies do not run separately, but are intertwined and form a moral education ecosystem that lives in the daily lives of students. This system clearly guides students to develop a moderate, inclusive, and multicultural Islamic character, in line with the mission of pesantren which not only emphasizes the mastery of religious sciences, but also the formation of students' social personalities so that they are able to coexist harmoniously in a pluralistic society. (Observation November 25, 2025)

The example of kiai and ustadz occupies a very central position in the process of internalizing Islamic values in the pesantren environment. In the educational culture of the Al Hidayah Islamic Boarding School, the kiai is not only understood as a figure of scientific authority, but also as a moral example whose daily behavior is observed, assessed, and imitated by students. Values such as simplicity, patience, discipline, and an open attitude to different student backgrounds are instilled not through normative lectures or verbal instruction alone, but through real practice in daily life. This was emphasized by Ustadz Fauzan: "The students not only hear, but see. So we try to be an example, especially in manners, simplicity, and how to respect differences" (Fauzan 2025). The ustadz consciously try to show examples in manners, simplicity of life, and how to appreciate the differences in student backgrounds in daily interactions. This statement shows that character education in Islamic boarding schools takes place affectively and practically, where Islamic values are revived through direct relationships between educators and students.

Kiai and ustadz are directly involved in community service activities with students. In these activities, kiai can be seen working with students without creating social distancing or rigid hierarchies, for example by helping with physical work, arranging activities, and interacting informally. (Observation November 25, 2025). This practice fosters a sense of emotional closeness, trust, and sincere respect from students to kiai and ustadz. This kind of example slowly shapes the moral consciousness of students, because Islamic values are not only taught, but experienced directly in equal

and humane social relations. In the context of multicultural education, the exemplary practice becomes a concrete model for students to appreciate the differences in ethnicity, culture, and social backgrounds that exist in the pesantren environment.

In addition to through examples, the internalization of Islamic values at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School is also carried out through social-religious habituation that is structured, repetitive, and involves all students. Islamic boarding schools routinely organize various religious and social activities, such as community service, mass tahlil, Qur'anic sermons, istighosah, and manaqib. These activities were attended by students from various regions with diverse cultural backgrounds, so that it became an intensive social interaction space without primordial barriers. In community service activities, students work together collectively in renovating cottage facilities and the surrounding environment. Each student is involved according to their own abilities, from physical work to logistics management, without any distinction based on regional origin or social background.

This kind of habit instills an awareness that cooperation, solidarity, and social concern are integral parts of the value of worship in Islam. Collective activities that are carried out repeatedly encourage students to interpret jama'i charity as a form of devotion to Allah as well as service to fellow humans. This practice reflects the process of tazkiyah al-nafs, in which the repetition of righteous deeds consistently forms a character that settles in the student. In addition, mass tahlil activities and Qur'an sermons are also a means of forming spiritual solidarity that strengthens emotional bonds between students. In this activity, students learn to appreciate religious traditions, foster empathy, and feel spiritual togetherness without questioning differences in cultural backgrounds.



Figure 2. Istighosah and manaqib activities

Istighosah and manaqib activities also make a significant contribution to the formation of students' spiritual and moral sensitivity. Through istighosah, students are trained to be tawadhu' and realize human dependence on Allah collectively. The solemn atmosphere of prayer together creates a deep religious experience, while strengthening a sense of togetherness in facing various life problems. Meanwhile, the reading of

manaqib presents stories of exemplary scholars who are a source of moral inspiration for students. Values such as zuhud, tawakal, patience, and compassion are not only understood cognitively, but are internalized through religious narratives that are alive and continue to be inherited in the pesantren's tradition.

The strategy of internalizing Islamic values is further realized through the strengthening of the Islamic boarding school cultural system which functions as an institutional framework for the formation of student character. The pesantren culture at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School includes a set of values, norms, and traditions that govern all aspects of student life, ranging from social ethics, worship discipline, to social responsibility. Yellow book readings, tomb pilgrimages, and dormitory deliberations are the main media to revive Islamic values in the context of real life. The results of the observation show that the reading of the yellow book is carried out regularly and disciplined, where students sit in a circle with the kiai to understand classical Islamic texts which are then contextualized with contemporary social realities. This activity not only strengthens religious understanding, but also instills manners towards knowledge, *tawadhu'* attitude, and perseverance in learning. (Observation November 25, 2025)

In addition, the practice of pilgrimage to the graves of the founders of the Islamic boarding school and local scholars is a spiritual experience that deepens the transcendental consciousness of students. In a solemn atmosphere, students are invited to reflect on the struggles of their predecessors in da'wah and education, thereby fostering respect for history and moral responsibility to continue these values. One of the caretakers of the pesantren, KH. Ahmad Romdlon: "Our pesantren culture teaches students to live simply, respect each other, and not discriminate. This is not a theory, but a habit that has been inherited". (Romdlon 2025).

Overall, the example of kiai and ustadz, socio-religious habits, and the Islamic boarding school cultural system form a holistic and sustainable process of internalizing Islamic values. Exemplary presents values in the form of real behavior, habituation reinforces values through routine practice, while pesantren culture institutionalizes these values in the social structure of student life. The combination of the three results in the formation of student characters who have a moderate attitude, high social empathy, and the ability to interact harmoniously in a multicultural society. Thus, Islamic education at the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School not only forms individual religiosity, but also gives birth to students as social agents who play an active role as the glue of social cohesion in the life of a pluralistic Indonesian society.

Discussion

This research demonstrates that Islamic values play a crucial role as *social glue* in fostering social harmony and shaping multicultural character within the Indonesian Islamic boarding school environment. Islamic values such as *ta'dib*, *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, and *ukhuwwah* function not only as theological doctrines but also as moral frameworks that regulate social interaction and collective life among students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These findings are consistent with studies showing that multicultural Islamic education strengthens social cohesion through the integration of religious ethics and communal interaction, particularly when values of moderation and tolerance are embedded in everyday educational practices (Fahmi, Nuruzzaman, Hilmy, & Yuni, 2025); (Ainiyah, Mirrota, & Khasanah, 2025; Amaroh, Prasetyoningrum, & Husain, 2024; Ilham & Ramadani, 2024; Qodratulloh et al., 2025).

In the pesantren context, these values are manifested concretely through community-based educational practices and character education rooted in Islamic orthodoxy. Research indicates that graduates of Islamic boarding schools nurtured with moderate Islamic principles (*Islam wasathiyah*) tend to develop inclusive, adaptive, and dialogical attitudes, reflecting the compatibility of Islamic teachings with Indonesia's pluralistic socio-cultural reality (Mujahid, 2021);(Qodratulloh et al., 2025). This perspective aligns with the view that religious moderation constitutes the core of pesantren education, as it encourages tolerance, empathy, and cooperation among students from diverse backgrounds (A'alul Huda, Saihul Atho', Maskuri, Ghony, 2023); . Empirical evidence from Islamic education studies further confirms that moderation-oriented learning models effectively cultivate ethical awareness and social responsibility in multicultural educational settings (Rohmah, Rena, Pahrurraji, & Syarif, 2023; Sopian et al., 2025; Zainudin, Faqih, & Supandi, 2025).

Furthermore, character education based on Islamic values has been shown to effectively promote social harmony through the cultivation of cooperation (*ta'awun*) and social justice (*'adl*) in students' daily routines. (Nabilla, 2025) observed that the habituation of these values in pesantren life strengthens interpersonal trust and mutual care among students. This finding resonates with Durkheim's classical notion that moral consensus maintained through shared values constitutes the foundation of social solidarity in heterogeneous societies. In pesantren, such moral values are not merely taught normatively but are internalized as lived values through joint worship, social service, and mutual assistance, thereby transforming religious teachings into practical social ethics (Hasanah & Husna, 2025; Irfani, Makbula, Fariduddin, & Aly, 2025; Sarbini et al., 2025; Wala, Mislani, 2025).

These findings are further reinforced by studies on the management of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools, which conclude that inclusiveness-based education fosters mutual understanding and effectively prevents potential social conflicts (Muhajir, Adiyono, & Patimah, 2025). Similarly, research by (A'alul Huda, Saihul Atho', Maskuri, Ghony, 2023) demonstrates that inclusive character education in pesantren is capable of transforming diversity into a source of moral enrichment rather than division. Such educational practices reflect the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* principle of *maṣlahah* (common good), indicating that the Islamic ethical framework inherently supports unity, justice, and peaceful coexistence within diverse communities (Wala, Mislani, 2025).

At a broader level, Islamic education has been shown to contribute significantly to national social cohesion by fostering tolerance and cross-cultural understanding in a plural society such as Indonesia. (Kuncoro, M. E. H., Maufur, 2024) emphasize that pesantren function as a "microcosm of social integration," where religious values are translated into concrete social ethics through everyday interaction. Supporting this view, (Mardatillah, F., Muchlinarwati, M., & Abdurrahman, 2025) argue that the institutional integration of Islamic educational values enhances peacebuilding capacities and conflict resolution skills, which are essential for maintaining harmony in pluralistic societies. Empirical studies in Islamic education journals further highlight that value-based learning and inclusive institutional culture strengthen students' social adaptability and collective responsibility (Aryasutha, Kusri, Ulya, & Septiani, 2025; Aziz, Maryati, Azizah, Malintang, & Fahmi, 2025; Budiyo, Suroso, & Priyanto, 2024; Qodratulloh et al., 2025);(Firdaus, 2025).

Overall, Islamic boarding schools such as Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School serve as concrete examples of how Islamic moral values, namely *ta'dib*, *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, and *ukhuwwah*, function as unifying mechanisms for students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Through the synergy between moral education, daily practices, and exemplary leadership, pesantren are able to transform theological values into a living social reality while simultaneously affirming their role as arenas for social character formation that are relevant to the needs of Indonesia's multicultural society (Aziz et al., 2025; Dewi, Mujiono, & Kholis, 2025; Karyono, Isa, & Masunah, 2025; Martanti, Nurkaenah, & Sholikhin, 2026).

These findings provide empirical support for the view that pesantren are not merely religious institutions focused on ritual piety, but also spaces for cultivating social character. The internalization of Islamic values has been shown to shape not only individual morality but also to foster social trust, mutual respect, and social norms that sustain cohesion in pluralistic societies. In line with various contemporary studies, Islamic values contribute significantly to building a strong foundation for social cohesion, in accordance with the Islamic vision of *rahmatan lil 'alamīn* (mercy for all creation). Therefore, the pesantren educational model that integrates exemplary leadership, habituation, and an institutional cultural system holds strong potential to be replicated in other Islamic educational institutions as an inclusive and contextual strategy for strengthening character education and promoting social harmony.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the Al Hidayah Kudus Islamic Boarding School consistently applies Islamic values as the main foundation in building the social life of students in the midst of a multicultural educational environment. The main findings of this study show that the internalization of the values of *ta'dib* (adab), *tawasuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) not only functions as a normative guideline, but has a greater impact than what has been assumed in the management of student diversity. These values have been proven to be able to reduce the potential for cultural conflicts, build harmonious social interactions, and create strong social cohesion among students with diverse cultural, regional, and social character backgrounds. These findings challenge the long-held assumption that diversity in the boarding education system has great potential to give birth to social friction, and instead shows that if managed through inclusive and moderate Islamic values, diversity can actually become social capital that enriches pesantren life.

In terms of scientific contribution, this study strengthens previous findings on the role of Islamic education in building tolerance and social cohesion, especially in the context of pesantren-based educational institutions. On the other hand, this research also challenges the view that sees pesantren education narrowly as a homogeneous and exclusive institution. Through a qualitative approach in the field, this research introduces a more comprehensive understanding of the internalization of Islamic values as an integrated system that includes the example of *kiai* and *ustadz*, socio-religious habituation, and strengthening pesantren culture. The concept of internalizing Islamic values as a "multicultural social glue" in the life of pesantren is a conceptual contribution that enriches academic discourse on Islamic education, multicultural education, and character formation in a pluralistic society.

However, this study has a number of limitations that need to be considered. This study was conducted in a specific case context with a limited number of informants, so the results could not be generalized widely to all Islamic boarding schools or other Islamic educational institutions. In addition, data variations based on gender factors, age of students, and socio-economic background have not been explored in depth. Therefore, further research with a larger sample coverage, diverse locations, and comparative approaches is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Islamic values in building a multicultural social life in various Islamic educational contexts.

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