

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN STRENGTHENING PEACE AND TOLERANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA

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Abstract

The diversity of religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages in Malaysia and Indonesia presents opportunities and challenges for peacebuilding. Differences that are not managed through inclusive education have the potential to give rise to prejudice, discrimination, and identity conflicts. This research aims to analyze the values, strategies, and challenges of Islamic education in strengthening peace and tolerance in multicultural societies in both countries. The research uses a qualitative approach with a comparative study design. Secondary data was collected through literature studies and document analysis, which included articles, academic books, education policies, curriculum, institutional reports, and relevant publications from Malaysia and Indonesia. Data are analyzed thematically-comparatively through reduction, categorization, interpretation, and triangulation of sources. The results show that Islamic education constructs tolerance as an active attitude to respect, understand, and cooperate with groups of different religions, ethnicities, and cultures. This strengthening is carried out through value-based, dialogical, reflective, collaborative, and social experience-based learning, which is supported by the example of educators and an inclusive institutional culture. Indonesia highlights the need for religious moderation, polarization management, and digital literacy, while Malaysia needs to strengthen equitable relations between communities in a pluralistic society structure. This study concludes that Islamic education can support positive peace if the values of mercy, justice, deliberation, and humanitarian brotherhood are integrated into inclusive pedagogy and supported by the synergy of schools, families, communities, and the state.

Keywords: Multicultural; Islamic Education; Peace; Tolerance



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INTRODUCTION

Multicultural society is a social reality inherent in Indonesia and Malaysia as countries inhabited by various ethnic groups, languages, religions, traditions, and socio-political orientations. This diversity can be social capital to strengthen national cohesion, but it also has the potential to cause prejudice, segregation, discrimination, and conflict if it is not managed fairly and inclusively. In this context, peace is not only understood as the absence of open conflict, but as a social condition that guarantees a sense of security, justice, respect for human dignity, and equal opportunities for all citizens. Tolerance is one of the important prerequisites for the formation of positive peace because it encourages acceptance of differences without eliminating the religious and cultural identity of each group (Baz, 2025). Therefore, strengthening the values of peace and tolerance requires a systematic, sustainable, and contextual educational process. Islamic education has a strategic position because it not only transmits religious knowledge, but also shapes the moral orientation, social character, and civic responsibility of students in the life of a pluralistic society.

Normatively, Islamic teachings contain principles that are relevant to the strengthening of peace, such as justice, compassion, deliberation, humanitarian brotherhood, respect for differences, and the prohibition of violence (Mohamed, Ridwan, Ibn, & Taymiyya, 2025). This value emphasizes that diversity is *sunnatullah* that must be managed through mutual knowledge, mutual respect, and cooperation in goodness (Riyanto, Fatimah, Millah, Saputra, & Pamungkas, 2025). Islamic education therefore needs to be directed to build a substantive, moderate, and open religious understanding of the reality of social plurality. Learning that is only oriented to memorization of doctrine risks producing a formalistic understanding of religion and being less responsive to the problem of intergroup relations. In contrast, Islamic education based on values, dialogue, reflection, and social experience can develop students' ability to resolve differences peacefully. Islamic education also has the potential to form an awareness that commitment to the faith does not conflict with respect for adherents of other religions, ethnicities, and cultures (Noe et al., 2026). Thus, educational institutions become an important space to habituate the practice of tolerance in daily life.

Previous studies on Islamic education and tolerance in general have shown that religious learning can contribute to the formation of inclusive attitudes if the materials, methods, and examples of educators are designed in an integrative manner (L. Hakim & Muhid, 2025). A number of studies emphasize the importance of multicultural education, interfaith dialogue, collaborative learning, and strengthening character education as a strategy to reduce exclusionary attitudes among students (Sulistyowati, Nida, Purnomo, & Naufal, 2025). Other studies have also shown that educators have a central role as facilitators, mediators, and role models in building a school culture that respects differences. From the perspective of peace education, the learning process needs to foster critical thinking skills, empathy, nonviolent communication, and constructive conflict resolution. However, most of the research still focuses on local contexts, specific educational units, or experiences of Islamic education in a single country. As a result, the understanding of similarities and differences in Islamic education approaches in responding to social pluralism in Southeast Asian countries has not developed adequately. This condition demands a study that links Islamic education with comparative multicultural social, policy and cultural dynamics.

Indonesia and Malaysia are two countries in Southeast Asia that have historical, cultural, linguistic, and Islamic traditions, but have characteristics of diversity management that are not entirely the same (Mudzill, Munandar, & Nuratika, 2025). Indonesia is known for its vast diversity of religions, ethnicities, tribes, languages, and religious organizations, while Malaysia has a pluralistic society structure formed by relationships between Malay, Chinese, Indian, indigenous groups, and diverse religious communities (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Both countries make Islam an important element in public life, but apply educational structures, cultural

policies, and state-religious relations through different patterns. These differences make Malaysia and Indonesia relevant to be studied comparatively. Comparative analysis allows researchers to identify universal patterns of Islamic education while also finding practices that are influenced by the socio-political context of each country. Through this approach, Islamic education is not only seen as a subject or formal institution, but as a process of cultivating values that interact with families, schools, communities, state policies, and public spaces in building a peaceful life.

The urgency of this research is also related to the increasing social challenges in the digital age, such as the spread of hate speech, religious disinformation, identity polarization, and the normalization of symbolic violence in public spaces. Students as the digital generation are faced with a fast, open, and not always in line with the value of moderation and respect for differences (Lustiari, Maghfiroh, & Rahmawati, 2025). This situation demands a renewal of the orientation of Islamic education in order to be able to connect the normative values of Islam with the real problems faced by contemporary multicultural societies (A. R. Hakim, Ruswandi, & Erihadiana, 2025). Islamic education needs to provide a safe space for dialogue, encourage meaningful social encounters, and train students to respond to differences rationally, empathically, and responsibly. In addition, strengthening peace cannot be imposed on schools alone, but requires synergy between families, religious communities, educational institutions, and the state. Comparative research on Malaysia and Indonesia is important to produce a more complete understanding of the strategies, challenges, and opportunities of Islamic education in building tolerance and peace in a plural, dynamic, and ever-changing society.

The research gap of this research lies in the tendency of previous studies that have more discussed Islamic education, tolerance, multicultural education, or peace education separately and in the national and local scopes. Studies that specifically compare the contribution of Islamic education to strengthening peace and tolerance in multicultural societies in Malaysia and Indonesia are still limited. Some previous research also tends to focus on curriculum content, student attitudes, or the role of teachers, without comprehensively linking it to the social context, history of intergroup relations, and multicultural life practices in both countries. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of three perspectives, namely values-based Islamic education, peace education, and multiculturalism, in the design of the Malaysia-Indonesia comparative study. This study not only examines the value of tolerance as a learning outcome, but also analyzes educational mechanisms, actors, pedagogical practices, and contextual conditions that allow these values to be internalized. Thus, this study offers a more contextual analytical framework for understanding Islamic education as an instrument for the formation of social peace in the Southeast Asian region.

This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic education in strengthening peace and tolerance in multicultural societies in Malaysia and Indonesia through a comparative approach. In particular, the research is directed to identify Islamic educational values that are relevant to the formation of a culture of peace, analyze the implementation strategies of Islamic education in fostering tolerance, and compare the supporting factors and challenges faced by the two countries. This research is expected to expand the discourse of Islamic education, peace education, and multicultural education by presenting an understanding based on the social context of Southeast Asia. The formulation of this research problem is: How Islamic educational values are constructed to strengthen peace and tolerance in multicultural societies in Malaysia and Indonesia. How Islamic educational strategies, pedagogical approaches, and practices are applied in building a peaceful and tolerant attitude in both countries. What are the similarities, differences, supporting factors, and challenges of Islamic education in strengthening peace and tolerance in Malaysia and Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative study design to analyze the role of Islamic education in strengthening peace and tolerance in multicultural societies in Malaysia and Indonesia (Fahmi et al., 2025). This approach was chosen because the research focuses on the meaning, process, strategy, and contextual conditions that shape the practice of Islamic education in both countries. Comparative studies allow researchers to identify similarities, differences, and peculiarities in the application of the values of peace and tolerance in educational and social life environments. The research analysis unit includes educational policies, curriculum, learning materials, pedagogical approaches, the role of educators, and tolerance-strengthening practices found in the literature as well as relevant documents. This study uses the perspectives of peace education, multiculturalism, and values-based Islamic education as an analytical framework. This perspective is used to understand the relationship between Islamic teachings, the educational process, social relations, and the formation of citizens' attitudes that respect differences. The focus of the research is not to measure causal relationships, but to interpret patterns of strengthening Islamic educational values, practices, and challenges in the context of the social plurality of the two countries in depth.

This study uses secondary data obtained through literature studies and document analysis (Na'afi, Sagalane, Yunita Sugiasuti, Muhaemin, & Innash, 2025). Data sources include reputable journal articles, academic books, official agency reports, education policy documents, curriculum, regulations, and organizational publications related to Islamic education, peace, tolerance, and multiculturalism in Malaysia and Indonesia. The selection of sources is carried out purposively by considering the substantive relevance, credibility of the publisher, novelty of information, and direct relevance to the focus of the research. The selected document should provide information on values, learning strategies, policies, programs, or educational practices related to peace and tolerance building. Data collection is carried out through searching, critical reading, recording, and systematic organization of information. Each document is classified by country, source type, theme, actor, and implementation context. To maintain accuracy, information is compared between sources and its consistency with the social context and education policies of each country is checked. Data that do not have source traceability or are not relevant to the purpose of the study are not used in the analysis process. This procedure supports the reliability of the findings.

Data analysis is carried out thematically and comparatively through three main stages, namely data reduction, thematic categorization, and comparative interpretation withdrawal (Prameswari & Wiwaha, 2026). In the reduction stage, the researcher selects information related to the value of peace, tolerance, learning approaches, the role of educational actors, and implementation challenges. The selected data is then coded and grouped into analytical themes, such as inclusivity, dialogue, respect for diversity, conflict resolution, educator examples, and policy support. The next stage compares the findings of Malaysia and Indonesia to find similar patterns, contextual differences, and factors influencing the implementation of Islamic education. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources, which is comparing information from policy documents, scientific works, and institutional reports. The researcher also applied reflective reading to avoid purely normative interpretations and ensure that the analysis took into account the social realities of both countries. The results of the analysis are presented in a descriptive-analytical manner by linking the findings to the framework of peace education, multiculturalism, and values-based Islamic education. With these procedures, research produces comprehensive, contextual, and accountable understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis show that the values of Islamic education that contribute to the strengthening of peace and tolerance in Malaysia and Indonesia are based on the principles of mercy, justice, deliberation, humanitarian brotherhood, respect for human dignity, and

recognition of diversity. In the framework of Galtung's positive peace, these values do not stop at the rejection of violence, but are directed at the establishment of just, safe, equal, and inclusive social relations. Islamic education constructs tolerance as an active attitude to understand, respect, and cooperate with groups of different faiths, ethnicities, and cultures. In Indonesia, the strengthening of these values is seen through an emphasis on religious moderation, diversity, and social dialogue. In Malaysia, the strengthening is related to the formation of harmony between communities in a pluralistic society. Both contexts show that Islamic education functions as a medium for internalizing civic ethics and developing awareness that differences are social realities that must be managed peacefully. These values are then translated into educational practices.

The findings of the analysis show that Islamic education strategies in building a peaceful and tolerant attitude in both countries place value-based learning as the main foundation. The strategy is realized through the integration of Islamic materials with the theme of respect for diversity, social justice, dialogue, and nonviolent conflict resolution. Relevant pedagogical approaches include dialogical, reflective, collaborative, and social experience-based learning. Educators play an important role as role models, facilitators, and mediators who help students connect normative teachings with everyday multicultural issues. In Indonesia, this strategy tends to be developed through strengthening religious moderation and diversity practices in the educational environment. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, the strategy of strengthening tolerance is related to the adjustment of education to the diverse structure of society. Both countries show the importance of cross-identity interaction spaces, teacher examples, and habituation of mutual respectful behavior. Thus, the effectiveness of Islamic education is determined by the interconnectedness between curriculum, learning methods, institutional culture, and social experience.

The comparison between Malaysia and Indonesia shows that there are fundamental similarities in the placement of Islamic education as an instrument for shaping public morals and strengthening social cohesion. Both countries affirmed the importance of religious values that promote peace, respect for differences, and social responsibility. However, differences are seen in the social configuration, educational institutional structure, and diversity management patterns that shape the implementation of Islamic education. Indonesia faces challenges in the form of widespread identity diversity, religious polarization, and the spread of hate speech in the digital space. Malaysia faces the need to strengthen equal relations amid a pluralistic and layered composition of society. Supporting factors in both countries include the commitment of educational institutions, educator capacity, policy support, and family and community involvement. Conversely, exclusive religious understanding, limited pedagogical competence, and weak intergroup interaction can hinder these goals. Therefore, strengthening positive peace requires a contextual, participatory, sustainable, and responsive approach to Islamic education.

This study uses Johan Galtung's positive peace theory as an analytical foundation to explain the contribution of Islamic education in strengthening peace and tolerance in multicultural societies in Malaysia and Indonesia (Subakir & Dodi, 2020). This theory views peace not merely as the absence of direct violence or negative peace, but as the creation of justice, equality, security, recognition, and dignified social relations or positive peace. In this perspective, conflict is not always interpreted as a threat, but as a social reality that needs to be managed through dialogue, empathy, cooperation, and nonviolent resolution (Uthman & Victor, 2024). Islamic education is positioned as a space for internalizing the values of grace, justice, deliberation, humanitarian brotherhood, respect for differences, and social responsibility. Galtung theory is relevant for analyzing the curriculum, pedagogy, educator examples, and social practices of Islamic education that encourage learners to build inclusive relationships. In comparative studies, this theory is used to identify similarities and differences in tolerance-strengthening strategies in the two countries, as well as assess the contextual factors that support or hinder the establishment of sustainable and inclusive social peace.

Islamic education in the context of multicultural societies in Malaysia and Indonesia constructs peace and tolerance through the internalization of theological values translated into social consciousness. The value of rahmah is an important basis because it directs students to treat others with compassion, including for groups of different religions, ethnicities, languages, and cultures (Adytiya, Noviani, Paizaluddin, & Laksita, 2024). The principle of justice affirms the obligation to provide recognition, proper treatment, and equal opportunities to every individual in social life. In addition, the value of deliberation forms the habit of resolving differences through communication, rational consideration, and joint decision-making (Pratama & Rahmi, 2025). Islamic education also instills ukhuwah insaniyah or humanitarian brotherhood as an orientation of social relations that transcend differences in group identity. With this construction, tolerance is not understood as a passive attitude to allow differences, but rather as an active willingness to respect, understand, and cooperate in a life together. Therefore, Islamic education functions to form students who have religious commitment as well as sensitivity to the reality of plurality of society.

The value of peace in Islamic education is also built through the understanding that diversity is a decree of Allah that has a social and humanitarian function. Differences are not positioned as a threat to belief, but as a reality that demands an attitude of knowing each other, respecting and doing good. This perspective is important to avoid students from an exclusive, stereotypical, or rejection-oriented understanding of religion towards other groups. In the educational process, teachings on faith, morals, jurisprudence, Islamic cultural history, and the Qur'an-Hadith can be contextualized with contemporary social life issues (Ismawati, Diyati, Jannatuzzahra, & Aziz, 2026). Learning about justice can be associated with the rejection of discrimination, while moral learning can be linked to communication ethics in the digital space. This contextualization makes Islamic Education material not stop at conceptual mastery, but develops into a guideline for action. Thus, Islamic values have gained practical relevance in forming peaceful and tolerant social relations in the multicultural societies of Malaysia and Indonesia.

Within the framework of Johan Galtung's positive peace theory, the values of Islamic education have strong relevance because peace is not only determined by the absence of physical conflict (Fauzy, Haikal, & Al Farizi, 2024). Positive peace demands the presence of social justice, a sense of security, recognition of human dignity, equality, and the opportunity to participate in a life together. Islamic education contributes to these conditions through character formation that rejects violence, strengthens empathy, and encourages social responsibility (Nesterova & Kim, 2024). The value of justice in Islam provides a moral basis to criticize the practice of marginalization and unequal treatment of minority groups. Meanwhile, the value of deliberation builds students' capacity to manage differences of opinion without using intimidation or verbal violence. Islamic education also teaches the importance of self-control, trustworthiness, and respect for the rights of others. Therefore, the construction of values developed through Islamic education is in line with the positive peace orientation, namely the creation of harmonious, just, inclusive, and sustainable social relations in the midst of the plurality of society.

In the Indonesian context, the construction of the values of peace and tolerance in Islamic education is closely related to the reality of diversity which includes the diversity of religions, tribes, languages, customs, and religious organizations. Islamic education has a strategic role to strengthen the understanding that Islamic identity can go hand in hand with national commitment and respect for different citizens (Essabane, Sterkens, & Vermeer, 2023). Strengthening religious moderation is one of the important orientations in building a balanced religious attitude, not excessive, and rejecting violence and discrimination. Through education, students are directed to understand that differences in religious views and social identities should not result in hostility. In Malaysia, Islamic education also plays a role in shaping social harmony in a society consisting of Malay, Chinese, Indian, indigenous groups, and other

groups. Although the social structure and education policies of the two countries are different, they share the same need for Islamic education that is able to link individual piety with social responsibility. The construction strengthens education as a vehicle for the formation of peaceful citizens.

Islamic educational values will not produce social change automatically if they are not supported by a consistent internalization process in the educational environment (Subairi, Husni, & Zaironi, 2025). Educators play a major role in translating the values of grace, justice, dialogue, and respect for differences through language, attitudes, learning methods, and daily interaction patterns. The example of educators is important because students tend to interpret religious teachings based on the real experience they gain at school or madrasah. In addition to educators, institutional culture also determines the success of the construction of tolerance values. The educational environment needs to provide a safe space for discussion, expressing opinions, and managing differences in a polite manner. Collaborative activities, social reflection, case-based learning, and cross-identity encounters can strengthen students' understanding of the meaning of coexistence. Thus, Islamic education needs to be placed as a process of inculcating values that involve curriculum, pedagogy, examples, institutional policies, families, and communities. Such a holistic approach allows the value of peace to evolve into a real and sustainable social disposition.

Analytically, these findings show that the strength of Islamic education in building peace lies in its ability to integrate normative, pedagogical, and social dimensions. The normative dimension provides moral principles through the teachings of grace, justice, deliberation, and humanitarian brotherhood. The pedagogical dimension determines how these values are understood, dialogued, reflected, and practiced by students. The social dimension ensures that the educational process is connected to real problems in a multicultural society. If one of these dimensions does not work, Islamic education has the potential to become normative-formalistic and less effective in dealing with prejudices and identity conflicts. In Galtung's perspective, strengthening tolerance must be directed not only at the control of direct violence, but also at the reduction of structural and cultural violence that can arise through discrimination, stereotypes, and inequality of recognition. Therefore, Malaysia and Indonesia need critical, dialogical, and contextual Islamic education. This kind of education allows students to connect the teachings of Islam with the responsibility to create justice, maintain human dignity, and build positive peace in a common life.

The strategy of Islamic education in building a peaceful and tolerant attitude in Malaysia and Indonesia departs from value-based learning that connects normative teachings with the realities of multicultural society. The material of the Qur'an-Hadith, beliefs, jurisprudence, and the history of Islamic culture is not enough to be conveyed as doctrinal knowledge, but needs to be directed to an understanding of justice, compassion, respect for human dignity, and social responsibility (Azmi, 2024). In practice, educators can relate religious themes to issues of discrimination, prejudice, social conflicts, hate speech, and the ethics of interacting in the digital space. This approach helps students understand that religious values have direct relevance in managing identity differences. Islamic education also needs to avoid delivering material that is dichotomous between one's own group and other groups. On the contrary, learning needs to emphasize that commitment to Islamic beliefs can go hand in hand with respect for the rights of citizens who have differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, and social views. Thus, learning becomes a means of forming a substantive, reflective, and contextual peace consciousness.

The dialogical approach is an important strategy in the application of Islamic education to strengthen tolerance. Dialogue provides a space for learners to express their views, ask critical questions, listen to others' experiences, and manage differences of opinion politely. In dialogical learning, educators not only play the role of conveyors of information, but also facilitators who create a learning environment that is safe, open, and respects diversity of

perspectives (Mansour, 2024). Students can be invited to discuss social cases related to intolerance, identity-based conflicts, and problems of inter-religious relationships. Through this process, they learn to distinguish between differences in beliefs that should be respected and discriminatory actions that need to be rejected. The dialogical approach also supports the formation of nonviolent communication skills, empathy, and deliberative decision-making. In the context of Malaysia and Indonesia, this strategy is relevant because both countries have social experiences shaped by ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural pluralities. Dialogue in Islamic education therefore does not aim to standardize views, but rather to build the capacity of students to live together in a dignified, peaceful, and responsible manner.

Reflective and social experience-based learning reinforces the internalization of the value of peace in Islamic education. This strategy places learners as active subjects who not only receive explanations of tolerance, but also critically interpret their social experiences. Educators can use case studies, observation assignments, reflection journals, conflict resolution simulations, and social projects as learning mediums. Students may be asked to analyze forms of discrimination in the surrounding environment, identify the impact of hate speech in digital media, or design social activities involving different community groups (Andriani, Fitri, & Muchtar, 2024). These activities allow the values of grace, justice, deliberation, and humanitarian brotherhood to be realized in concrete actions. In Indonesia, experiential learning can be developed through community service activities and diversity practices in the school environment. In Malaysia, a similar approach can be adapted to the structure of plural societies and typical inter-community relations. Through hands-on experience, learners not only understand tolerance conceptually, but also develop empathy, caring, moral courage, and responsibility to maintain social harmony in daily life.

The example of educators is a central element in the success of Islamic education strategies oriented towards peace and tolerance. Students tend to assess the meaning of religious teachings through the consistency between the material presented and the teacher's real attitude in the learning space and institutional life. Educators who use polite language, respect differences of opinion, reject stereotypes, and act fairly to all students will strengthen the credibility of the values of tolerance taught. Conversely, learning practices that are authoritarian, discriminatory, or demeaning to certain groups can undermine the internalization of peace values. Therefore, strengthening the competence of educators needs to include pedagogical, religious, social, and multicultural literacy aspects. Educators need to have the ability to respond to sensitive issues proportionately, mediate conflicts between students, and build non-judgmental learning. In the context of Malaysia and Indonesia, such examples are important to face the challenge of identity polarization that can develop through direct interaction and digital media. Islamic education teachers must appear as agents of moderation who connect personal piety with social concern, justice, and respect for the diversity of citizens.

The effectiveness of Islamic education strategies is also determined by the cultural support of institutions and the involvement of various educational actors. Schools, madrasas, families, religious communities, and policymakers need to build a consistent environment in implementing the values of respect, equality, and non-violent conflict resolution. Institutional culture can be realized through rules that reject discrimination, collaborative activities across backgrounds, conflict mediation mechanisms, and spaces for reflection on contemporary social issues (Bremer, Glavovic, Meisch, Schneider, & Wardekker, 2021). The family has an important role in strengthening the habits acquired by students at school, especially through communication patterns that do not instill prejudice against other groups. Religious communities also need to contribute through lectures, social programs, and community activities that encourage humanitarian brotherhood. In Malaysia and Indonesia, education policy support is needed to ensure that Islamic education is not disconnected from the agenda of strengthening social cohesion. This synergy allows dialogical, reflective, collaborative, and

experience-based approaches to be applied in a sustainable manner. Thus, strengthening tolerance does not become a ceremonial program, but develops as a lively, participatory, and responsive educational culture to the dynamics of a multicultural society.

In depth, Islamic education strategies in building peace must be understood as a process of transformation of consciousness, not just the delivery of moral values. Johan Galtung's positive peace theory emphasizes that sustainable peace requires the elimination of direct, structural, and cultural violence. In the context of education, cultural violence can arise through exclusive religious narratives, negative labeling, normalization of discrimination, and rejection of different groups. Therefore, dialogical, reflective, and experiential learning has a strategic function to dismantle prejudice and build students' ability to see humanity behind identity differences. The example of educators and the support of the institution's culture strengthen the process because the value of tolerance will be easier to internalize if it is present consistently in daily experience. The comparison of Malaysia and Indonesia shows that Islamic education strategies need to be adapted to the social structure and plurality character of each country, without neglecting the universal principles of Islam. Effective Islamic education does not only produce students who understand religious teachings, but also citizens who are able to uphold justice, nurture diversity, and resolve conflicts peacefully.

A comparison of Malaysia and Indonesia shows that Islamic education in both countries has fundamental similarities as an instrument for the formation of public morals, the strengthening of social cohesion, and the internalization of the value of peace. Both countries place Islam as an important element in people's lives, while facing the reality of ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, and social orientation diversity (Darmawan & Purwadi, 2022). Islamic education in both contexts is directed to instill the values of mercy, justice, deliberation, brotherhood, respect for human dignity, and social responsibility. This similarity shows that Islamic education has a strong normative basis to support peaceful coexistence in a multicultural society. However, the application of these values does not take place in a uniform social space. Indonesia has a very broad plurality character with a diverse distribution of social and religious groups, while Malaysia faces a plurality of societies in a social structure that has different historical and institutional configurations. These differences in context affect policy orientation, learning practices, forms of intergroup interaction, and tolerance strengthening strategies. Therefore, Islamic education needs to be developed contextually without neglecting the universal principle of peace.

In the Indonesian context, Islamic education is faced with the challenge of strengthening diversity in a very plural and geographically dispersed society. The diversity of religions, ethnicities, languages, customs, religious organizations, and religious patterns make Islamic education need to emphasize the balance between religious commitment and national responsibility. Strengthening religious moderation is relevant because it can form a way of religion that is fair, proportionate, non-extreme, and open to differences (Asmanidar, 2023). Islamic education in Indonesia also needs to respond to social dynamics that develop through digital media, especially the spread of unverified religious information, hate speech, and identity polarization. In such conditions, schools and madrassas not only function as a place for knowledge transfer, but also as a space for the formation of social and digital literacy of students. Educators need to guide students to distinguish benefit-oriented religious teachings from narratives that encourage hatred. With this approach, Islamic education can strengthen students' ability to maintain Islamic identity, respect differences, and participate constructively in democratic and multicultural life.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian context shows that strengthening tolerance through Islamic education needs to consider inter-community relations in a pluralistic society. Islamic education has the potential to strengthen social harmony when religious values are translated into mutual respect, justice, citizens' responsibility, and willingness to cooperate in public spaces (Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025). The main challenge is not solely the existence of

differences, but how these differences are managed so that they do not develop into social distance, prejudice, or inequality of recognition between groups. In this situation, Islamic education needs to build an understanding that respect for other groups does not diminish Muslims' belief in their religion. Rather, such respect is part of the ethical responsibility to maintain common peace. Islamic learning can integrate themes of social justice, humanity, dialogue, and non-violent conflict resolution in educational materials and activities. Thus, Islamic education is not only oriented towards the formation of individual piety, but also on developing the capacity of students as citizens who are able to build social relations in a fair, inclusive, and dignified manner in a pluralistic society.

Supporting factors for strengthening peace and tolerance through Islamic education in both countries include policy commitment, educator capacity, curriculum relevance, institutional culture, and family and community involvement. Education policies that provide space for character education, moderation, dialogue, and respect for diversity can strengthen the direction of inclusive learning ('azah & Sholeh, 2025). At the school and madrasah levels, educators play an important role in translating normative values into concrete learning experiences. Teacher example, non-discriminatory use of language, the ability to mediate differences, and the skill of managing sensitive issues are important prerequisites for the formation of a culture of peace. In addition, the curriculum needs to provide opportunities for students to discuss, reflect, work together, and engage in social activities. The family also determines the sustainability of the values learned through communication patterns and habits at home. The religious community also contributes through the delivery of soothing messages and social activities that involve the wider community. The synergy between these institutions makes peace education a sustainable collective practice, not just a formal learning agenda.

Nevertheless, the strengthening of Islamic education for peace and tolerance still faces a number of obstacles in Malaysia and Indonesia. These obstacles include exclusive religious understanding, the use of identity narratives for specific interests, the limitations of educators' pedagogical competence, and the lack of space for meaningful interaction between groups. Exclusive understanding can encourage learners to view differences as threats, not as social realities that must be managed through ethics and dialogue (Isnawati, Zamhari, Yusuf, Ningrum, & Rosyada, 2020). On the other hand, learning that is too oriented towards memorization and cognitive evaluation has the potential to ignore the affective dimension as well as the social skills necessary to build tolerance. The development of digital media also poses new challenges because students can be exposed to information that contains stereotypes, hatred, or religious propaganda quickly. Therefore, Islamic education requires strengthening digital literacy, critical thinking, and information verification skills. These challenges must be responded to through learning reforms, professional development of educators, strengthening school culture, and cooperation with families and communities. With these strategies, Islamic education can function more effectively in reducing prejudice and preventing social conflicts.

Based on Johan Galtung's positive peace theory, the similarities and differences between Malaysia and Indonesia show that peace is not enough to be realized through the absence of open conflict. Positive peace requires justice, recognition, equality, security, and the opportunity to participate in dignity in social life. Islamic education has an important role to develop these conditions through the formation of ethical awareness and social competence of students. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on the ability of educational institutions to translate the values of grace, justice, and deliberation into real practice. Indonesia needs a responsive approach to broad diversity, identity polarization, and digital dynamics, while Malaysia needs a strategy that is sensitive to inter-community relations in a pluralistic society structure. These differences should not result in conflicting educational models, but rather become the basis for learning exchanges between the two countries. Islamic education that is contextual, dialogical, reflective, and based on social experience can reduce cultural violence in the form of prejudices and stereotypes. Ultimately, the success of Islamic education is

measured by its ability to form citizens who are just, open, critical, and committed to maintaining peace in a multicultural life

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic education has a strategic role in strengthening peace and tolerance in multicultural societies in Malaysia and Indonesia. This role is built through the internalization of the values of grace, justice, deliberation, humanitarian brotherhood, respect for human dignity, and social responsibility. These values place tolerance not as a passive acceptance of differences, but as an active attitude to respect, understand, and cooperate with groups of different religions, ethnicities, cultures, and social views. Its implementation strategy includes value-based learning, a dialogical, reflective, collaborative, and social experience-based approach, which is strengthened by the example of educators and the inclusive culture of educational institutions. The two countries have similarities in making Islamic education a means of forming public morality and social cohesion, despite facing different contexts of plurality, institutional structures, and social challenges. Indonesia needs to strengthen religious moderation, digital literacy, and manage identity polarization, while Malaysia needs a sensitive approach to inter-community relations in a pluralistic society. Based on Johan Galtung's positive peace theory, Islamic education will be effective if it not only prevents direct violence, but also reduces prejudice, discrimination, injustice, and cultural violence. Therefore, the synergy of schools, families, communities, and state policies is needed so that Islamic education produces citizens who are just, inclusive, critical, and committed to sustainable peace.

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