



## Deradicalization Through Multicultural Islamic Religious Education at The Islamic University

Burhan Djamaluddin,<sup>1</sup> Syamsul Bahri<sup>✉2</sup> Abdul Halim,<sup>3</sup> Nurlailah<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Chabibi<sup>5</sup>

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia<sup>1,4</sup>

Lembaga Studi Agama dan Masyarakat, Aceh Indonesia<sup>2</sup>

Universitas Islam Darul Ulum, Lamongan, Indonesia<sup>3</sup>

Universitas KH Abdul Chalim, Mojokerto, Indonesia<sup>5</sup>

Email correspondence: [syamsulbahri167@gmail.com](mailto:syamsulbahri167@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

In the context of preventing radicalism, it is important to research educational institutions that have implemented multicultural Islamic education. This article explains how deradicalization is pursued through Multicultural Islamic Education at Universitas Islam Malang (UNISMA). This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to understand the role of Islamic religious education in shaping students' multicultural attitudes. Data were collected through observations, interviews with 15 alumni from three cohorts, and documentation, focusing on the integration of multiculturalism concepts in the course materials. The findings indicate that the Multicultural PAI doctoral program at UNISMA significantly contributes to preventing radicalism by promoting tolerance and inclusive religious education. The program encompasses both theological and socio-cultural aspects, which help transform students' mindsets to become more open and reinforce the values of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika and Pancasila within the framework of Islamic education. The curriculum serves as a deradicalization tool by deepening the understanding of diversity and encouraging positive interactions within and between religious communities. However, its effectiveness is influenced by students' subjective factors, such as their attitudes, and external factors like the sociopolitical context. Further research is needed to assess the program's long-term impact and refine the curriculum based on student feedback.

**Keywords:** Deradicalization, Islamic Religious Education, Multiculturalism, Islamic University.

### Abstrak

Dalam konteks upaya pencegahan radikalisme, pentingnya dilakukan penelitian pada suatu lembaga pendidikan yang telah menerapkan pendidikan agama Islam multikultural. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana deradikalisasi dilakukan melalui pendidikan Agama Islam Multikultural di Universitas Islam Malang (UNISMA). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi untuk memahami peran pendidikan agama Islam dalam membentuk sikap multikultural mahasiswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara dengan 15 alumni dari tiga angkatan, serta dokumentasi, yang berfokus pada integrasi konsep multikulturalisme dalam materi perkuliahan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program doktor PAI Multikultural di UNISMA berkontribusi secara signifikan dalam pencegahan radikalisme dengan mempromosikan toleransi dan pendidikan agama yang inklusif. Program ini mencakup aspek

*teologis dan sosial-budaya, sehingga mampu mengubah pola pikir mahasiswa menjadi lebih terbuka serta memperkuat nilai-nilai Bhinneka Tunggal Ika dan Pancasila dalam kerangka pendidikan Islam. Kurikulum yang diterapkan berfungsi sebagai alat deradikalisasi dengan memperdalam pemahaman tentang keberagaman dan mendorong interaksi positif, baik di dalam maupun antar komunitas agama. Namun, efektivitas program ini dipengaruhi oleh faktor subjektif mahasiswa, seperti sikap dan respons mereka terhadap program, serta faktor eksternal seperti konteks sosial-politik. Oleh karena itu, penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk mengevaluasi dampak jangka panjang program dan memperbarui kurikulum secara berkesinambungan berdasarkan umpan balik mahasiswa.*

**Keywords:** Deradikalisasi, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Multikulturalisme, Pendidikan Tinggi Islam.

## INTRODUCTION

Talking about deradicalization involves discussing activities to develop non-radical attitudes through various programs.<sup>1</sup> The government, universities, and certain institutions have implemented numerous strategies.<sup>2</sup> However, if a program only focuses on the internalization stage without comprehensively addressing the implementation of the curriculum, the deradicalization program will not be effective and tends to be temporary. Nevertheless, various studies on “radicalism,” “deradicalization,” “extremism,” and “multiculturalism” conducted today emphasize that these aspects are crucial for further research, as they will play a significant role in the dynamics of social and religious contexts.<sup>3</sup>

In Indonesia specifically and almost globally, incidents of bombings, vandalism, and murders often involve perpetrators identified as adherents of radicalism.<sup>4</sup> Radicalism is often associated with deviant interpretations of religion, which can lead to intolerant attitudes toward other religious beliefs and rejection of policies deemed contrary to the views of certain groups.<sup>5</sup> This misinterpretation usually stems from a narrow and dogmatic understanding of religious teachings, which is then used to justify extreme actions. In this context, radicalism not only creates social friction but also threatens stability and social cohesion by inciting conflict based on belief differences. In line with this thought, doctrinal and rigid Islamic religious education also tends to produce extreme understanding and has the potential to trigger radicalism.<sup>6</sup> Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> Pratama Maulidyawanto, Hernawati RAS, and Nandang Sambas, “Penanganan Radikalisme Melalui Program Deradikalisasi Sebagai Upaya Untuk Mencegah Tindak Pidana Terorisme Di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Hukum Lex Generalis* 4, no. 2 (February 14, 2023): 155–69, <https://doi.org/10.56370/jhlg.v4i2.301>.

<sup>2</sup> Anton Irawan and Arthur Josias Simon Runturambi, “Kebijakan Deradikalisasi Dalam Rangka Penanggulangan Terorisme Dalam Pandangan Beberapa Stakeholder,” *Jurnal Kajian Statejike Ketahanan Nasional* 5, no. 2 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.7454/jkskn.v5i2.10069>.

<sup>3</sup> Leonie Schmidt, “Aesthetics of Authority: ‘Islam Nusantara’ and Islamic ‘Radicalism’ in Indonesian Film and Social Media,” *Religion* 51, no. 2 (April 3, 2021): 237–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2020.1868387>.

<sup>4</sup> Karman et al., “The Design for Emancipatory Quran Interpretation Learning to Deradicalize Students’ Quran Understanding,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (December 2021): 165–80, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v7i2.12720>; Siti Amaroh, Ari Kristin Prasetyoningrum, and Husna Husain, “Women and Investment Decision in Sharia Instruments: Moderating Effect of Financial Spirituality Orientation,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 12, no. 2 (May 30, 2024): 877–98, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i2.1332>.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Khairul Rijal, Muhammad Nasir, and Fathur Rahman, “Potret Moderasi Beragama Di Kalangan Mahasiswa,” *PUSAKA* 10, no. 1 (July 5, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.31969/pusaka.v10i1.672>.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Rizqi Kader, Muhammad Husnur Rofiq, and Muhammad Anas Ma`arif, “Religious Moderation Education Strategy at the Mualaf Assembly,” *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 2024): 35–46, <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v3i1.46>; Zakariyah Zakariyah, Umu Fauziyah, and Muhammad Maulana Nur

Religious Education is a crucial aspect of the education system in Indonesia, aimed at shaping well-rounded Muslims and developing human potential both physically and spiritually.<sup>7</sup> However, if this education is not properly structured and presented from a single perspective, it can give rise to intolerance and radicalism.<sup>9</sup>

In several cases, monocultural Islamic religious education has been identified as a cause of intolerance and the emergence of radicalism.<sup>10</sup> To anticipate friction in a pluralistic society, the Islamic religious education curriculum should be aligned with aspects of multiculturalism.<sup>11</sup> Given the importance of a multicultural-based curriculum in education in Indonesia, its development cannot be done carelessly. The development of a multicultural-based curriculum requires a strong foundation.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the implementation of multiculturalism in Islamic education goes beyond the internalization of values; it also touches on the ontological aspects, reaching the fundamental level and becoming a way of life.

Multicultural Islamic Education is an educational approach that emphasizes principles of democracy, equality, equity, and justice, focusing on humanitarian values, togetherness, and peace. This education has a strong orientation toward reinforcing attitudes that recognize, appreciate, and accept diversity, based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.<sup>13</sup> This approach highlights the importance of understanding and advocating for the rights of every individual, regardless of religious, cultural, or other background differences. Through Multicultural Islamic Education, it is hoped that society can develop within an inclusive framework that promotes peace and harmony among individuals and groups in the community.<sup>14</sup>

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Kholis, "Strengthening the Value of Religious Moderation in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 1 (January 29, 2022): 20–39, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v3i1.104>.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad Matinul Haq and Erny Roesminingsih, "Situational Leadership Skills of Foundation Heads in Human Resource Development for Early Childhood Education," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (2024): 26–40, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i1.545>.

<sup>8</sup> Azizah Hanum Ok, Mohammad Al-Farabi, and Feri Firmansyah, "Internalization of Multicultural Islamic Education Values In High School Students," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 3 (2022): 221–28, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v3i3.265>; Radhia Ainun Sehandini et al., "Multicultural-Based Learning of Islamic Religious Education for the Development of Students' Social Attitudes," *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (August 26, 2023): 106–17, <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i2.27>.

<sup>9</sup> S. Bahri, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Berbasis Multikulturalisme Di Indonesia (Landasan Filosofis Dan Psikologis Pengembangan Kurikulum Berbasis Multikultural)," *Jurnal Ilmiah DIDAKTIKA* 19, no. 1 (January 14, 2018): 69–88, <https://doi.org/10.22373/JID.V19I1.4195>.

<sup>10</sup> Milla Ahmadi Apologia et al., "Child-Friendly School Management: A Study of Ukhuwah Wathoniyah at Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama," *Dirasab International Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (August 2, 2024): 106–19, <https://doi.org/10.59373/drs.v2i2.28>.

<sup>11</sup> Syarif Syarif, Faisal Abdullah, and Saifuddin Herlambang, "Multiculturalism among Students in Madrasah: Knowledge, Challenges, and Social Capital," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (June 16, 2024): 390–408, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i2.4710>.

<sup>12</sup> S. Bahri, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Berbasis Multikulturalisme Di Indonesia (Landasan Filosofis Dan Psikologis Pengembangan Kurikulum Berbasis Multikultural)"; M. Mukhibat et al., "Development and Evaluation of Religious Moderation Education Curriculum at Higher Education in Indonesia," *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (December 31, 2024): 2302308, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2302308>.

<sup>13</sup> Firmansyah, Romli Sa, and Munir, "The Urgency of Social Ethics in Santri Tradition at Muhammadiyah's Pesantren," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 2024): 153–70, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v5i1.991>.

<sup>14</sup> Nur Ali et al., "Interreligious Literacy Learning as a Counter-Radicalization Method: A New Trend among Institutions of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 32, no. 4 (October 2, 2021): 383–405, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2021.1996978>; Khalid Kamal Saim and Ahmad El-

In the context of efforts to prevent radicalism, it is crucial to study an educational institution that has implemented multicultural Islamic education, specifically at the University of Islam Malang in East Java, particularly in its Doctoral Program in Islamic Education. This research is highly relevant given that the educational environment plays a significant role in shaping the multicultural attitudes and values of society. The question is, how does the deradicalization of religious understanding occur through Islamic Education at the University of Islam Malang? By focusing on deradicalization through multicultural Islamic education, this study aims to provide important insights into the effectiveness of this approach in countering radicalism and strengthening tolerance and harmony among individuals and groups. The findings of this research are expected to serve as a foundation for developing more effective educational strategies to promote inclusive religious understanding and reduce the potential misuse of religion for radical purposes.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach, chosen to understand the in-depth experiences and perceptions of alumni regarding the implementation of multicultural Islamic Education in the doctoral program at UNISMA. The phenomenological research aims to explore the meanings and experiences directly felt by the informants, thereby providing a richer depiction of the educational practices involved.

The data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with 15 alumni from the 2016, 2018, and 2019 cohorts of the doctoral program at UNISMA, who were purposively selected to represent various regions. The process involved collecting data through in-depth interviews, focusing on the informants' experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of multicultural Islamic Education. The collected data were then analyzed by identifying significant statements, formulating the meaning of each statement, and grouping the main themes that emerged from the informants' experiences. The researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of the teaching materials in the program, starting by setting aside personal biases to focus on the data. All data were thoroughly analyzed, identifying significant statements that emerged. The researcher then provided a detailed description of the content related to multiculturalism in the curriculum, explaining how these concepts were integrated and presented from an Islamic perspective. The context and conditions influencing the presentation were examined, and a comprehensive understanding was developed to capture the core themes and deeper meanings associated with the integration of multicultural content in the program.

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Muhammady, "Confronting Extremism and Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Educative Approach," *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal* 4, no. 1 (2025): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v4i1.80>.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### Deradicalization from the Students' Perspective

Findings from interviews with students from Java indicate that the Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) program in the doctoral program at the Islamic University of Malang (UNISMA) is considered highly relevant and important in the context of Indonesia's diversity. The students appreciate the multicultural approach offered, as it reflects the need to adapt religious education to a plural social context, encompassing various religions, cultures, and ethnicities.

They also stated that their decision to continue studying Multicultural PAI at UNISMA was driven by two main factors: first, the relevance of this program to their educational background at the master's level; second, in some cases, the desire to broaden their perspectives beyond the theological-normative approach they had previously studied. Traditional PAI was deemed too focused on theological-normative aspects, which were considered insufficient to address the realities of diversity and current social challenges. The students view Multicultural PAI as an important innovation in religious education, which is more aligned with the times and Indonesia's national ideals of appreciating plurality. This program is seen as providing broader and more relevant insights into building tolerance and diversity, which are essential in the context of Indonesia's multicultural society.

Data from interviews with students from Sulawesi show high appreciation for the Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) program, as a form of deradicalization based on the study program. Particularly in the context of the urgent need to address social issues in Indonesia, especially those related to conflicts and religious diversity. One student described the traumatic experiences of the community due to conflicts in Poso as the main reason for their interest in Multicultural PAI. According to them, these conflicts reflect a lack of understanding and respect among citizens of different religions. They emphasized the importance of strengthening multicultural-based education on campuses, especially in Sulawesi, as a preventive measure against similar conflicts. For this reason, they chose to research conflict resolution through the Multicultural PAI approach in their dissertation. Another student considered Multicultural PAI an important innovation in Indonesia's education system. According to them, this approach should be applied to all PAI programs, as integrating multicultural insights makes PAI more relevant to Indonesia's diverse context.

The students believe that the values of multiculturalism are reflected in PAI teachings, but the delivery has so far been too focused on the aspects of fiqh. They argue that, in Islamic history, the Prophet Muhammad and his companions practised multiculturalism, but in the PAI curriculum, this has not been properly explored, requiring changes in teaching methods. This data indicates that students from Sulawesi see the importance of Multicultural PAI not only as an academic approach but also as a solution to social conflicts and as a means of improving the understanding of diversity in Indonesia.

Data from interviews with students from Sumatra show diverse perspectives, focusing on the comparison between multicultural conditions in Java and Sumatra, particularly Aceh and North Sumatra. A student from Aceh acknowledged that the multicultural situation in Java is different from Aceh, where 99% of the population is Muslim. Nevertheless, they observed

multicultural aspects in Aceh, especially in areas with Chinese communities and non-Muslim residents. Conflicts based on religious differences are rare, and incidents that have occurred, such as in Aceh Singkil in 2015, were more triggered by political, and economic issues, and misunderstandings of the prevailing regulations. They explained that friction often occurs within the Muslim community itself, particularly regarding differences in fiqh. According to them, the uniqueness of multiculturalism in Aceh lies in its ability to be integrated with the implementation of Sharia law. The student from Aceh concluded that Sharia does not ignore differences, as exemplified in the Charter of Medina established by the Prophet Muhammad, where regulations were made to create a harmonious life in a diverse society.

Meanwhile, a student from North Sumatra believes that Multicultural PAI is highly relevant to Indonesia's values of diversity. They see Multicultural PAI as a vital means to internalize the values of Pancasila and "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Unity in Diversity). According to them, Multicultural PAI should emphasize universal human values, national values, and the development of Pancasila-based character. This program is considered to play a role in strengthening diversity and tolerance in Indonesia. This data shows that Multicultural PAI has facilitated the understanding of religious and ethnic diversity in Indonesia. Multicultural PAI should accommodate both local and national values, including Sharia in Aceh and Pancasila values in North Sumatra, to create social harmony. The summarized data is presented in the table below:

**Table 1.** Deradicalization in the Doctoral Program of PAI Multicultural (Student Perspectives)

Aspect of Deradicalization	Student Perspectives
Prevention of Radicalism	PAI Multikultural provides an understanding of the importance of tolerance and prevents the development of radicalism through inclusive religious education.
Understanding Diversity	The program emphasizes the importance of recognizing and appreciating religious, cultural, and ethnic differences in Indonesia, reducing the potential for conflict.
Inclusion in Religious Education	PAI Multikultural offers a more open approach to diversity, making religious education not only focus on theological-normative aspects but also on sociocultural aspects.
Transformation of Mindset	The program contributes to transforming students' mindsets to be more inclusive, open, and avoid exclusive and radical attitudes.
Humanitarian and Tolerance Approach	Emphasizes universal humanitarian values and the importance of interfaith tolerance as part of peaceful religious education.
Strengthening Diversity Values	The program helps students understand the importance of <i>Bhinneka Tunggal Ika</i> and Pancasila in creating national harmony and preventing extremism.
Education for Conflict Resolution	PAI Multikultural is considered a tool for reducing interfaith tensions and encouraging peaceful conflict resolution.

Synergy with Islamic Law PAI Multikultural can align with Islamic law, accommodating diversity without neglecting Islamic principles, as exemplified by the Medina Charter.

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### Students' Reflections on the Curriculum

Based on interviews and classroom observations, students in the Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) program at UNISMA Malang felt that the curriculum plays a significant role in shaping a deeper understanding of diversity and tolerance. Students from Java, Sulawesi, and Sumatra all acknowledged that courses such as "*Multicultural Studies of the Qur'an and Hadith*" and "*The Genealogy of Multicultural Islamic Education*" encouraged them to reflect on their own life experiences and revisit their understanding of religious and cultural diversity within their communities.

Students from Java mentioned that when living in areas with a high degree of religious diversity, they often encountered various forms of stereotypes and prejudice between religious communities. The course "*Methodology of Multicultural Islamic Education*" not only provided theory but also facilitated class discussions, encouraging students to share their personal experiences of facing intolerance and understanding how differences could be managed more constructively. In the interviews, the students expressed that they experienced a shift in their perspective on how to interact with diverse communities after studying multicultural concepts in Islam.

Students from Sulawesi had more complex experiences related to religious conflicts, particularly in Poso, which had previously witnessed religious violence. Some students revealed that the course "*Mediation and Conflict Resolution in Multicultural Islamic Education*" was highly relevant to their experiences, where conflicts were often caused by a lack of dialogue and understanding between communities. These students felt that the knowledge they gained from the course provided them with practical skills in conflict resolution and interfaith dialogue, which are crucial for preventing future violence in their home regions. They also emphasized that the multicultural perspectives they learned helped them delve deeper into the root causes of conflicts, which are not only religious but also involve social and economic factors.

Students from Sumatra, particularly North Sumatra, expressed that they faced challenges when teaching students in their previous campuses, who showed a lack of respect for Indonesia's diversity. After taking courses such as "*Development of Multicultural Islamic Education Curriculum Design*" and "*Multidisciplinary Studies in Multicultural Islamic Education*," they realized the importance of integrating pluralism and national values into their teaching, helping to internalize the principles of Pancasila and "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Unity in Diversity). They mentioned that their learning experiences at UNISMA enriched their perspectives and provided them with better strategies for applying inclusive approaches to education, especially in regions where pluralism is often overlooked.

Students from Aceh highlighted the unique conditions in their region, where Sharia law is dominant, but there are also non-Muslim communities such as Chinese and Christian groups. They noted that in the course "*Philosophy of Islamic and Western Education*," they learned how Islamic values can be integrated with multicultural principles that acknowledge diversity. Class discussions frequently emphasized the importance of cross-cultural and interreligious understanding to create harmonious coexistence in diverse societies. These students felt that the

educational approach at UNISMA provided them with the tools to address social tensions, both locally and nationally.

Furthermore, some students related their experiences with direct community involvement during their studies. They felt that courses such as "*Development of Multicultural Islamic Education Curriculum Design*" enabled them to design educational programs that better suited community needs, by incorporating elements that teach openness to diversity and peaceful conflict resolution. For instance, students from Sulawesi planned to adapt this approach to the school curriculum in their region, hoping to prevent potential interreligious conflicts in the future.

These findings indicate that the Multicultural PAI curriculum at UNISMA successfully connects theory with practice through the reflection of students' personal experiences, reinforcing the importance of a multicultural approach in religious education as an effective means of deradicalization. Students found that this program not only enriched their academic understanding but also shaped their character and attitudes towards diversity, making them better equipped to actively contribute to building a more tolerant and inclusive society.

The data on the courses and dissertation series for researchers was obtained from the academic section. Specifically, the final task for doctoral students is to complete a dissertation. The latest data shows that the doctoral program at UNISMA has graduated 101 doctoral students. The dissertations from these students cover various aspects of multicultural dimensions in different societal and educational contexts. This indicates that the final project for doctoral students in PAI at UNISMA is a reflection of the education provided and is tested in the field.

**Table 2.** *Aspects of Deradicalization from Doctoral Dissertations at UNISMA*

Finding	Description of Dissertation
Focus of Dissertations	Doctoral dissertations focus on various dimensions of multiculturalism, including its application in society and educational institutions.
Educational Output	The final project, in the form of a dissertation, reflects the education received, demonstrating the application of theories and methods learned in practical settings.
Dimensions of Multiculturalism	Dissertations cover various aspects of multiculturalism, including how ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity is integrated into educational and societal contexts.
Context of Application	Research is conducted in diverse societal and educational contexts, showing the diversity and relevance of the research in both local and national settings.
Field Evaluation and Testing	Doctoral dissertations are tested in the field, assessing the effectiveness and application of multiculturalism theories in real-world situations, and providing practical evidence of the education received.



In the Multicultural Islamic Education Program at Universitas Islam Malang (UNISMA), hadiths about multiculturalism are taught, such as:

“Do not initiate greetings of peace to Jews and Christians, and if you encounter them on the road, force them to the narrowest part of the road.”<sup>15</sup> However, this hadith is not to be understood textually but contextually, meaning that it was revealed against the backdrop of a discordant relationship between Muslims and Jews.<sup>16</sup> There is no superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs (*‘ajam*). There is no superiority of people with red skin over those with black skin, and vice versa, there is no superiority of people with black skin over those with red skin, except by their piety (*taqwa*):<sup>17</sup>

**Table 3.** The Study of the Qur’an and Hadith with Multiculturalism Content

Topic
Concept of the People of the Book: Recognition of adherents of the People of the Book
Points of convergence between religions
Teachings of Wisdom: Non-sectarian and non-communal teachings
Teachings of all religions: Surrender to God
Continuity and Commonality of Religions
Greeting non-Muslims
Attending the celebrations of other religions
Joint prayers with followers of different religions
Interfaith marriage
Interfaith inheritance
Jurisprudence supportive of pluralism
Forms of cooperation between adherents of different religions
Cultural pluralism
Non-Muslim leadership in a predominantly Muslim country

### Multicultural Learning and Its Impact on Students' Attitudes

The multicultural culture developed at UNISMA, especially through Islamic education materials, significantly influences students' attitudes toward understanding issues of religious tolerance. Students directly observe how practices such as greeting non-Muslims are accepted on campus, and although they may not always engage in this practice themselves, they do not object if others do. This reflects a broader understanding of the context behind interreligious greetings in their environment.

#### *Greeting Non-Muslim.*

Law must adhere to benefits and wisdom, not the other way around. Benefits should not be subject to law. Benefits are the goal of Sharia, while law is the means or way to achieve that goal. There have been several cases where Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists respect each

<sup>15</sup> Abi al-Husaini Muslim bin al-Hujaj al-Qasyiri Al-Nasaburi, *Shahih Muslim*, Juz 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Abi ‘Abdillah Muhammad Ibn Isma’il Ibn Ibrahim Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Bukhari* (Kairo: Dar Ibn al-Haitsam, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal*, Juz V (Beirut: Darul Ilmiyyah, 1995).

other and exchange greetings. Muslims say Merry Christmas, and conversely, Christians say al-Salamu'alaikum. However, after a fatwa from Islamic scholars prohibiting Muslims from saying Merry Christmas to Christians, the relationship between adherents of these religions became strained.<sup>18</sup> This dimension becomes an important narrative in multicultural-based Islamic religious education at UNISMA. According to the researcher's interviews with students, they focus on this issue and consider it crucial to be implemented in Indonesia while respecting local characteristics. The multicultural culture developed at UNISMA, especially through Islamic education materials, significantly influences students' attitudes toward understanding issues of religious tolerance. Students expressed that they became more open to the practice of greeting non-Muslims after studying at UNISMA, although this is done with contextual considerations. One student from Aceh mentioned that before studying at UNISMA, he felt uncomfortable with such greetings because it was not customary in his home region. However, after observing that lecturers and other colleagues on campus did not find it problematic, he became more flexible in accepting people greeting non-Muslims. He would offer greetings to non-Muslim friends when the context seemed appropriate, but not all the time. Students also emphasized the importance of understanding the situation to ensure that the greeting is not misunderstood or makes others uncomfortable.

*Saying Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to Other Religions.*

In the books of hadith, there are no specific hadiths detailing whether it is permissible or not to wish Christians a Merry Christmas. As a result, there are differing opinions among scholars. Quraish Shihab, a well-known Indonesian Qur'anic scholar, states that based on verse 33 of Surah Maryam, there is no prohibition on greeting anyone, provided that the greeting is understood and practised under the Qur'an to maintain the purity of faith. A student from Aceh informed the researcher that wishing Merry Christmas and other festive greetings to non-Muslims is not an obligation and highly depends on the context of one's environment. If an environment supports interfaith cooperation, such greetings can be positive and beneficial. Students' experiences at UNISMA taught them that offering holiday greetings to followers of other religions is a gesture of social respect, provided that it is done contextually. A student from Sulawesi stated that he did not feel it was always necessary to say Merry Christmas, but he understood why some of his friends did. For him, such greetings depend on the situation and the intention behind them. For instance, if the purpose is to strengthen social bonds, then it can be a positive gesture. However, if it is just a formality without understanding the meaning, he felt that the greeting was less needed.

*Attending Religious Holidays of Other Religions*

The culture at UNISMA, which promotes religious tolerance, also influences students' views on attending celebrations of other religions. Students stated that even if they did not always attend other religious celebrations themselves, they respected those who did as a form of social support. A student from Mojokerto mentioned that whether to attend depended on the purpose and benefits of the event. If attending the celebration could strengthen

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<sup>18</sup> Mun'im A. Sirry, ed., *Fiqih Lintas Agama, Membangun Masyarakat Inklusif-Pluralis* (Jakarta: Yasan Waqaf Paramadina, 2004).

interreligious relations, then it was worth considering. However, attendance was not seen as an obligation and depended on context and good intentions. In a discussion, doctoral students at UNISMA confirmed that attending major religious celebrations by officials is considered important for such events. However, if there is no specific need, students suggested that it might be better not to attend. Similarly, a student from Mojokerto stated that if attending has more positive aspects, a Muslim should participate; otherwise, it is not necessary. According to this perspective, attending the celebrations of other religions' major holidays does not incur sin for a Muslim.

#### *Interfaith Prayer Gathering*

Prayer is not exclusive to Islam but is also found in other religions. It can be said that prayer is a universal phenomenon present in all religions. Considering this reality, there is no issue with different religious communities in Indonesia participating in joint prayer processes, with shared hopes and goals for the nation's interests. In such gatherings, adherents pray according to their beliefs. In discussions with students, interfaith joint prayers are seen positively as a form of religious harmony, openness, mutual tolerance, and cooperation. Interfaith prayer gatherings, which have taken place at UNISMA on occasion, are viewed positively by students, though they still emphasize the importance of understanding the context of such activities. A student from North Sumatra noted that he felt comfortable participating in interfaith prayer if the goal was clear, such as for the sake of peace or in response to a natural disaster. However, he also pointed out that interfaith prayers could be misunderstood by some people if not properly explained, sometimes leading to discomfort. Students viewed this practice as a form of interreligious cooperation, as long as each participant continued to pray according to their own beliefs.

### **Discussion**

In multicultural Islamic education, absolute truth belongs solely to God, not to humans.<sup>19</sup> Historically, the Prophet Muhammad's establishment of a nation-state in Medina, which accommodated religious, ethnic, and social diversity, serves as a key lesson: majority groups should not discriminate against minorities.<sup>20</sup>

The research findings show that students recognize the diversity of opinions in Islamic history and the idea that humans do not possess absolute truth. This is evident in the field of Islamic jurisprudence, where scholars like Imam Al-Shafi'i, Imam Malik, Imam Abu Hanifah, and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal have held different interpretations of Islamic law based on varying evidence and circumstances. Even within a single scholar, such as Imam Al-Shafi'i, differing opinions (old and new) emerged due to changes in context, such as the availability of water, which influenced his rulings on ablution.<sup>21</sup> This diversity in interpretations reflects the

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<sup>19</sup> Kamaruddin Hasan and Hamdan Juhannis, "Religious Education and Moderation: A Bibliometric Analysis," *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (December 31, 2024): 2292885, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2292885>; Moch Sya'roni Hasan, Mar'atul Azizah, and Abd Rozaq, "Service Learning in Building an Attitude of Religious Moderation in Pesantren," *Tajfir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 4 (October 12, 2023): 559–76, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v4i4.714>.

<sup>20</sup> Syamsul Bahri, *Pendidikan Multikultural Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Banda Aceh: Lembaga Studi Agama dan Masyarakat Aceh, 2017), vi.

<sup>21</sup> Sirry, *Fiqih Lintas Agama, Membangun Masyarakat Inklusif-Pluralis*, 1.

inevitability of human differences in understanding divine law. Faced with such differences of opinion, these Islamic jurists respected each other's viewpoints.<sup>22</sup>

Deradicalization carried out through the Islamic Multicultural (*PAI Berbasis Multikultural*) program is a mandate from the ideology of Indonesian nationalism. In Indonesia, to achieve interfaith harmony, the government has made various efforts, the latest of which is through the religious moderation program (*moderasi beragama*).<sup>23</sup> The emergence of religious moderation is indirectly also influenced by the reality that there are two aspects within a person. The first is the given aspects brought from birth, such as skin colour, body shape, race, ethnicity, and so on.<sup>24</sup> The second are aspects that can be pursued by humans, such as knowledge. Denying the first aspects is akin to denying the will of God, or the sunnah of Allah. Diversity, which is a given, cannot be avoided and must be accepted according to the existing reality, as it is beyond human will and effort.

Alumni of the S3 program at UNISMA have recognized that the core values of multiculturalism include: monotheism (*tauhid*), living together, love, and egalitarianism. Meanwhile, the attitudes and behaviours associated with multiculturalism are coexistence, mutual understanding, mutual respect, competence in achievements, trust, positive living, tolerance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and conflict resolution.<sup>25</sup> These multicultural values are integral components of the curriculum, which has been effectively and systematically implemented through coursework in the Multicultural Islamic Education program at UNISMA. This course is mandatory for all students. However, students' understanding of the practical aspects of deradicalization varies, with some students adapting their perspectives based on their local contexts. Misguided religious education can lead to radicalism if educators impart religious teachings inappropriately.<sup>26</sup> This underscores the importance of implementing multicultural Islamic education from the foundational levels of schooling.<sup>27</sup>

In the history of Islamic politics, radical groups are quite similar to the Khawarij.<sup>28</sup> This group opposed the two dominant political factions of the time: the faction of Ali bin Abi Talib

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<sup>22</sup> Moh Wardi et al., "Implementation of Education Based on Religious Moderation," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 1 (April 7, 2023): 163–79, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v4i1.313>; Tasnim Idris et al., "A Multicultural Approach in Islamic Education Learning to Strengthen the Islamic Identity of Moderate Students in PTKIN Aceh," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 3 (August 11, 2024): 478–93, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v5i3.1138>.

<sup>23</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), 15–17.

<sup>24</sup> Muhamad Afrizal Sholichuddin, Nicky Estu Putu Muchtar, and Rizky Dwi Ratna, "The Relationship of Islam and The State in Contemporary Islamic Political Discourse in Indonesia," *Dirasab International Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (October 29, 2023): 78–88, <https://doi.org/10.59373/drs.v1i2.11>; Masturin Masturin, "Development of Islamic Religious Education Materials Based on Religious Moderation in Forming Student Character," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 4 (2022): 346–55, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v3i4.310>; Abd Latif, Ubaidillah, and Mundir, "Embedding Aswaja Values in Strengthening Religious Moderation in Students," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 3 (July 9, 2023): 601–9, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v4i3.521>.

<sup>25</sup> Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, *Pendidikan Agama Islam Bernawasan Multikultural* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2005), 121.

<sup>26</sup> Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Al-Shahwah al-Islamiyah Bayn al-Jubud Wa al-Tattarruf* (Cairo: Bank al-Taqwa, n.d.), 59.

<sup>27</sup> Arif Khairur Rozaq, Basri Basri, and Indah Indah, "Kiai's Leadership in Strengthening Santri's Moderation Attitude in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (July 25, 2022): 284–94, <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v7i2.2322>.

<sup>28</sup> Yaqut Cholil Qoumas et al., "Sociology of Religious Extremism in The Malay World: An Early Analysis," *TEMALI: Jurnal Pembangunan Sosial* 6, no. 1 (May 16, 2023): 55–64, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jt.v6i1.24001>.

and the faction of Mu'awiyah. Dissatisfied with the political policies of both factions, they separated themselves and became opposition. They even deemed both Ali and Mu'awiyah as unbelievers.<sup>29</sup> Multiculturalism in Islam is reflected in the numerous verses in the Quran that indicate God did not create humanity in a single religion, nation, race, belief, skin colour, language, or other multicultural aspects (Qs. al-Rum:22).

Indeed, at first glance, this religiosity appears to be total and unwavering. Islam is understood not only as a religion but also as a formal and legalistic system and framework. However, one concern we share is that Islam may become a religion that extends compassion only to its followers, while consistently generating hatred and suspicion towards other religions. At this point, Islam would be considered righteous for itself (*salib li nafsih*) but not righteous for others (*ghair salib li ghairih*). This represents a negative impact and a misinterpretation of the concept of Islam as relevant for all times and places (*al-Islam Salib li Kulli Zaman wa Mekan*). Here, there needs to be a deconstruction of the doctrines adhered to by conservative Islamist groups, because according to them, truth is defined by a set of doctrines from the past.<sup>30</sup> New and modern developments must refer back to the past. This group views modernity as a threat to traditions, leading to a religious perspective that is "always condemning" and "always dismissing" others, whether they come from "within" or "outside" the group. Consequently, we can observe the inability of these Islamist groups to understand contemporary realities. Islam, from their perspective, becomes an extremely exclusive religion, unable to grasp diversity. Islam appears to be living in alienation and colonization. It is seen as a religion that is both defensively and offensively oriented. This attitude creates various serious problems, as discussed in the context of Interfaith Jurisprudence by Paramadina.

Firstly, there is the emergence of truth claims, where Islamism imposes its standard of truth. This approach restricts the concept of truth to the Islamist community alone, leading to a perception that truth is no longer universal across all religions, ethnicities, and races.<sup>31</sup> Instead, each religion becomes an isolated "island" of truth, with Islam seen as the only religion capable of fully addressing and representing absolute truth.

Secondly, the tendency toward interpretative monopoly arises as a consequence of these truth claims. This leads to the sacralization of religious interpretation, where interpretations become monopolized and are often influenced by political interests. Historically, there has been a collaboration between religious scholarship and political authority, as seen in the prominence of al-Ghazali's work in Islamic thought while ibn Rushd's writings were marginalized. Such

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<sup>29</sup> Ahmadi Ahmadi et al., "Construction of an Islamic Studies Curriculum Based on Religious Moderation in Higher Education Institutions," *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 2 (August 20, 2022): 339–52, <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v17i2.17335>; Iffatin Nur et al., "Embracing Radicalism and Extremism in Indonesia with the Beauty of Islam," *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, January 31, 2020, 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.9734/arjass/2020/v10i230141>.

<sup>30</sup> Evan Supriyadi Evan and Rahmat, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Multikultural Pada Budaya Sakai Sambayan Dalam Menumbuh Kembangkan Sikap Toleransi Masyarakat Lampung Pepadun," *Academicus: Journal of Teaching and Learning* 2, no. 1 (August 10, 2023): 22–27, <https://doi.org/10.59373/academicus.v2i1.11>; Raihani, "Report on Multicultural Education in Pesantren," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 42, no. 4 (July 1, 2012): 585–605, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2012.672255>.

<sup>31</sup> Danial Danial, Nur Sari Dewi, and Kafrawi Kafrawi, "The Development Model of Human Resources at Islamic Universities in Aceh," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 9, no. 1 (January 30, 2021): 103–22, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v9i1.450>.

examples reflect how religious interpretation has become monolithic, discriminatory, and centralized.<sup>32</sup>

Thirdly, there is the emergence of violence carried out in the name of religion. This violence is driven by rigid truth claims and monopolized interpretations, leading to actions justified by religious grounds

The discussion above highlights a crucial point in the aspect of deradicalization: the doctoral program at UNISMA is a significant pioneer among higher education institutions in Indonesia, embracing diversity within an academic framework and having implications for the implementation of deradicalization in Indonesia. Field research findings reveal several important points: *Firstly*, UNISMA, through its Multicultural-Based Islamic Education Doctoral Program, is a higher education institution that addresses significant social and religious issues and plays a central role in developing similar programs at other universities.

*Secondly*, doctoral students at UNISMA come from various backgrounds across Indonesia, including different sectors of employment and regions. In this diversity, it is crucial to provide multicultural education to students so that it can be disseminated to the public, at least in their local areas or workplaces. This is evidenced by the fact that some research informants are directly involved in the implementation of religious moderation at their campuses. *Thirdly*, UNISMA, through the courses it offers, plays a vital role in staying updated with contemporary international issues so that the implementation of deradicalization is effective and beneficial for all groups.

## CONCLUSION

The Multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) doctoral program at Universitas Islam Malang (UNISMA) is both theoretically and practically designed to prevent radicalism by promoting tolerance and inclusive religious education. Students perceive this program as a crucial initiative in addressing the religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity of Indonesia. The program's inclusive approach to diversity has helped transform students' mindsets to become more open, reduce exclusivity, and emphasize human values and tolerance. Additionally, it reinforces the principles of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and *Pancasila* while integrating them with Islamic Sharia. The Multicultural PAI curriculum functions as a deradicalization tool by providing a deeper understanding of diversity and preventing extremism. Through the courses and dissertations that cover various dimensions of multiculturalism, the program offers a practical way to foster positive interactions both within the same faith and among different religions, encouraging mutual respect and supporting government initiatives for national harmony.

While the program is considered to make a significant contribution to deradicalization, its effectiveness is still influenced by the subjective aspects of the students, including their responses and attitudes toward the program. The research did not explore the long-term impact of the program on students' behaviors and perceptions after completing their studies. Moreover, the study mainly focused on the experiences of students within the program, without extensively

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<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Anas Ma`arif, Muhammad Husnur Rofiq, and Akhmad Sirojuddin, "Implementing Learning Strategies for Moderate Islamic Religious Education in Islamic Higher Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 1 (June 6, 2022): 75–86, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i1.19037>.

examining external factors, such as the sociopolitical environment, that might affect the program's success.

Further research should investigate the long-term effects of the Multicultural PAI program on graduates' attitudes and behaviours in their respective communities. It is also recommended to explore the influence of external factors, such as the broader sociopolitical context, on the program's effectiveness. Moreover, continuous feedback from students should be incorporated to ensure ongoing improvements in the curriculum and teaching methods, enhancing the program's impact on deradicalization efforts.

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