

Multicultural Narratives in Islamic Cultural History Textbooks: Content Analysis of Grade VII Madrasah Tsanawiyah Materials

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity is a social reality that necessitates the strengthening of multicultural values through education. One strategic medium for internalizing these values is learning materials, specifically the Islamic Cultural History (SKI) textbook at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. The textbook functions not only as a historical resource but also as a character-building instrument. Therefore, this study aims to identify and describe the multicultural values embedded in the Grade VII SKI textbook, with a specific focus on tolerance and humanity. The study utilizes a qualitative library research method, employing content analysis techniques to collect and interpret data from the textbook as the primary source. The findings indicate that the textbook contains substantial representations of tolerance and humanity values through the narrative of the Prophet Muhammad's da'wah, the Medina Charter, and social dialogue. Additionally, humanity values are consistently portrayed through the Muhajirun-Ansar brotherhood, the abolition of slavery, and the Prophet's noble character. The impact of these findings provides a solid basis for educators to maximize textbooks in fostering inclusive mindsets. In conclusion, the SKI textbook possesses strong relevance as an effective medium for strengthening multicultural-based Islamic Religious Education in a pluralistic society

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia stands on the reality of pluralism, encompassing religion, ethnicity, culture, language, and social traditions. This diversity has become a national identity formulated in the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), affirming unity amidst differences. In social practices, diversity can act as an integrative strength, but it can also trigger social friction if not accompanied by an awareness of equitable coexistence. Multicultural education serves as a space to construct this awareness, establishing a perspective that respects plurality and positions differences as part of the divine design (*sunnatullah*) in human life. This idea aligns with the perspective of Banks (1993), who posits multicultural education as an effort to build recognition of cultural diversity in the formation of social and educational identities.

The history of Islam in the archipelago demonstrates that multicultural values are deeply rooted and not merely a novel concept. The Walisongo da'wah serves as a prominent example of how Islam developed through cultural approaches, social dialogue, and immense respect for local traditions. Previous studies have highlighted that the established da'wah pattern presented a humanist, inclusive, and peaceful face of Islam (Muna, 2020; Riyadi & Karim, 2023). This practice indicates that Islamic education possesses a strong historical foundation in fostering tolerance and humanity.

In the context of formal education, the internalization of multicultural values occurs not only through teacher-student interactions but also comprehensively through learning resources, particularly textbooks. Textbooks hold a strategic position as the primary medium for delivering knowledge, shaping attitudes, and strengthening character values. Hasanah et al. (2024) explain that learning resources encompass all facilities that simplify the learning process, while Tolingguhu & Karsum (2024) affirm that textbooks remain the fundamental learning instrument in schools. Recent studies affirm that integrating multicultural values into Islamic Religious Education curricula significantly fosters interfaith tolerance, empathy, and positive social attitudes among students (Baharuddin et al., 2024; Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025; Muhajir et al., 2025; Sechandini et al., 2023). Furthermore, such inclusive educational frameworks, when supported by school culture, are proven to strengthen social cohesion and mitigate identity-based conflicts in diverse societies (Fahmi et al., 2025; Hakim & Muhid, 2025; Raharjo et al., 2025; Zamharil et al., 2024).

Despite the acknowledged importance of multicultural values in Islamic education, previous literature has predominantly focused on general multicultural concepts or educators' pedagogical strategies, leaving a critical gap regarding how these values are textually and narratively constructed within standardized state curricula. While textbooks have the potential to promote democracy and reject discrimination (Nugroho, 2019), some critical analyses reveal that certain materials remain dominated by traditional jurisprudence, thereby marginalizing interfaith dialogue and requiring teachers to actively bridge the multicultural gap (Farouq et al., 2025; Meriyati et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2022). What remains undiscovered and unanalyzed by these recent studies is how textbook narratives strategically reconstruct delicate historical turning points such as pre-Islamic social contracts and inter-group friction into constructive psychological frameworks for early-stage learners. Specifically, critical content analysis on the newly compiled Grade VII SKI textbook for Madrasah Tsanawiyah based on KMA Number 183 of 2019 remains highly superficial, often limiting itself to simple item checklists rather than deep narrative exploration.

Furthermore, this article argues that tolerance (*tasamuh*) and humanity (*insaniyah*) stand as the most critical anchors within multicultural materials compared to other values like democracy or systemic justice. While democracy and structural justice operate at institutional or legislative levels, tolerance and humanity are intensely interpersonal and functional, serving as direct socio-psychological shields for seventh-grade students navigating identity formation. In an era deeply impacted by digital polarization, internalizing these two primary values from a textbook level provides students with immediate, actionable mechanisms to resist radicalism and navigate pluralistic encounters in their daily lives. Therefore, this research aims to bridge this literature gap by critically examining the textbook's narrative depth. Theoretically, this article relies on the multicultural education frameworks developed by Baidhawiy (2015), Banks (1993), and Yaqin (2021).

Finally, to achieve the research objectives, this study generates the following research questions: (1) How are the values of tolerance constructed within the historical narratives of the Grade VII SKI textbook? and (2) How does the textbook represent the values of humanity to strengthen students' socio-religious character? The significance and core novelty of this research lie in providing clear empirical evidence on how a state-mandated historical textbook functions as an analytical

instrument for inclusive character education, offering practical insights for educators to optimize socio-religious learning.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design, which centers on written documents as the primary source of analysis. This approach was chosen based on the object of study, namely the Grade VII History of Islamic Culture (SKI) textbook for Madrasah Tsanawiyah published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The library research method is utilized to examine, comprehend, and identify the content of multicultural values embedded in the narratives, materials, and learning illustrations within the book. This model is highly relevant as text content analysis allows for a systematic reading of the educational messages contained within the teaching materials (Moleong, 2017; Putra & Santi, 2012). Furthermore, this study utilizes the content analysis paradigm as the primary technique to unravel the structure of meaning within the textbook. Content analysis is applied to discover patterns of multicultural values that emerge explicitly or implicitly within the Islamic Cultural History materials. The analytical framework refers to the concept of multicultural educational values developed by Banks (1993) and Baidhawi (2005), with conceptual reinforcements from Suryana (2015), who position tolerance and humanity as fundamental aspects of multicultural education (Baidhawi, 2005; Banks, 1993; Suryani, 2025). This technique helps map the textbook's content into specific value categories, making the identification process more directed and structured.

The primary data source in this study is the Grade VII History of Islamic Culture (SKI) textbook for Madrasah Tsanawiyah, used within the Islamic Religious Education and Arabic Language curriculum of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia based on the Decree of the Minister of Religion (KMA) Number 183 of 2019 (RI, 2020). Supporting sources were obtained from scientific literature discussing multicultural education, learning resource theories, and Islamic education values. The use of supporting sources serves to strengthen the interpretation of the primary data while clarifying the conceptual construction of tolerance and humanity values found in the textbook. Meanwhile, data collection was conducted through three main stages: intensive reading, noting critical sections, and classifying data based on multicultural value categories. Intensive reading was carried out across all chapters in the book to locate narratives containing elements of tolerance and humanity. The note-taking process focused on relevant text quotes, illustrations, and learning dialogues. The classification stage was executed by grouping the data according to the previously determined multicultural value indicators, thereby facilitating a deep and structured analysis as systematically outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Stages of Data Collection

Stage	Activity	Output
Reading	Reviewing the entire content of the Grade VII SKI textbook	Initial data
Note-taking	Marking narratives containing multicultural values	Data excerpts
Classification	Grouping data based on value categories	Structured data

Source: Adapted from the content analysis concept by (Pratama, 2023).

Data analysis was performed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting sections relevant to the focus of the study. Data display was presented in the form of narrative descriptions and value categorization tables. Conclusion drawing was carried out by interpreting the relationship between the textbook's content and the theory of multicultural education. This model aligns with the view of (I. Gunawan, 2016), who positions qualitative analysis as a process of systematically organizing data so that the inherent meaning can be deeply understood (I. Gunawan, 2016). The comprehensive flow of this textbook content analysis is sequentially illustrated in Figure 1. This entire methodological approach was chosen because it is capable of providing a deep reading of the textbook content, ensuring that the embedded multicultural values can be comprehensively understood as part of strengthening multicultural-based Islamic religious education in Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

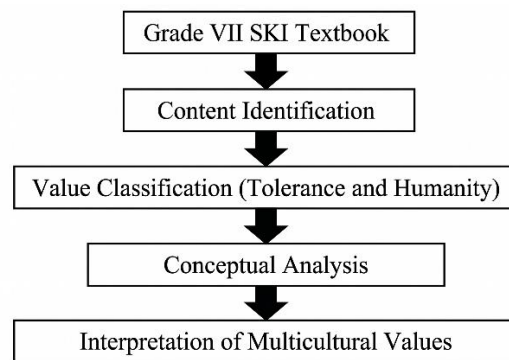


Figure 1. Flow of SKI Textbook Content Analysis

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Textual Representations of Tolerance (Tasamuh) in the Textbook

The systematic screening of the Grade VII History of Islamic Culture (Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/SKI) MTs textbook confirms that multicultural values are integrated within its material layout, historical narratives, and explicit moral summaries. The primary focus of this content review targets how the book systematically frames the value of tolerance (tasamuh). Textually, this value is primarily embedded within the discussions concerning the da'wah of Prophet Muhammad in both the Mecca and Medina phases. The textbook directly implies that Islamic da'wah was established not upon coercion, but through active dialogue, exemplary conduct, and persuasive approaches. To strengthen this historical frame, the textbook utilizes a normative scriptural foundation by incorporating QS. Al-Kafirun: 6: "For you is your religion, and for me is my religion."

Table 2. Findings of Tolerance Values in the SKI Textbook

Learning Material	Form of Tolerance Value	Educational Meaning
The Prophet's Da'wah in Mecca	Patience in facing rejection	Self-control
Medina Charter	Recognition of other groups' rights	Peaceful coexistence
Da'wah Strategy	Dialogue and deliberation	Peaceful resolution

Source: Grade VII SKI Textbook Content Analysis Data (2026). Based on the data presented in Table 2, the construction of tolerance within this state curriculum relies on three primary domains: the patient endurance of the Prophet during the Mecca phase, the contractual design of the Medina Charter, and dialogue-driven communication strategies. The narrative detailing the Mecca period illustrates how the Prophet encountered immense social pressure, systemic rejection, and hostile

treatment from the Quraysh tribe without responding with reactive violence. This textual framing is designed to model behavioral mechanisms such as emotional regulation, perseverance in core values, and acknowledging the civil rights of others despite profound theological differences. Furthermore, in describing the Medina Charter, the textbook highlights how a mutual social compact was formulated among diverse civic components, including Muslim factions, Jewish tribes, and other localized groups, ensuring shared defensive obligations and group stability.

Textual Representations of Humanity (Insaniyah) in the Textbook

The second core value identified in the textbook is humanity (insaniyah). The textbook frames this value within the historical narrative of Arab society's social transformation from the jahiliyyah era to early Islamic civilization. The material explicitly highlights the principle of human equality, emphasizing the eradication of discrimination based on ethnicity, race, and social status that were previously ingrained in Arab traditions. To provide a scriptural basis for this human equality, the textbook includes QS. Al-Hujurat: 13:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا

“(O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another...)”

The textbook utilizes this verse to textually signify that human diversity is intended as a means to build mutual acquaintance and brotherhood, rather than serving as a justification for discrimination. Furthermore, the textbook illustrates the implementation of this value through specific historical events, which are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings of Humanity Values in the SKI Textbook

Learning Material	Form of Humanity Value	Educational Meaning
Muhajirin-Ansar	Social solidarity	Empathy
Brotherhood		
Abolition of slavery	Human equality	Anti-discrimination
The Prophet's Noble Character	Universal compassion	Islamic humanism

Source: Grade VII SKI Textbook Content Analysis Data (2026).

As outlined in Table 3, the textbook presents humanity through three main narratives: the social solidarity between the Muhajirin and Ansar, the systemic abolition of slavery practices, and the universal compassion demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad's character. The text describes the event of the Ansar sincerely welcoming the Muhajirin after their migration (hijrah) to Medina as a concrete reflection of human solidarity that transcended tribal and blood ties, where they shared shelter and wealth. Additionally, it details the Prophet freeing slaves as a historical example of establishing human equality and rejecting unequal social castes. Lastly, the textbook narrates the Prophet's interactions with children, the elderly, the weak, and his enemies as tangible models of Islamic humanism.

The Quantitative Distribution of Multicultural Values

The content classification also yielded quantitative data regarding the distribution of these two primary values across the textbook's materials.

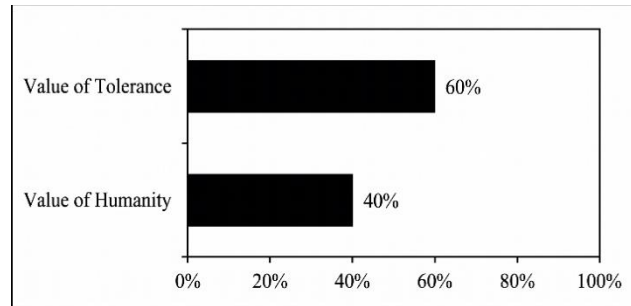


Figure 2. Distribution Diagram of Multicultural Value Findings

The distribution diagram indicates that narratives categorized under the value of tolerance appear more frequently, comprising 60% of the multicultural content, particularly within discussions regarding da'wah and cross-group social relations. Meanwhile, narratives focusing specifically on the value of humanity stand at 40%, appearing more prominently in materials regarding social change and the formation of the Medina society.

DISCUSSION

Socio-Pedagogical Interpretation of Tolerance and Dialogue-Based Narratives

The empirical findings from the Grade VII SKI textbook demonstrate a deliberate pedagogical effort to shift historical learning from mere memorization to active character building. The narratives of the Mecca phase, where the Prophet endured systemic rejection without retaliating with violence, function to shape students' understanding that tolerance is not a sign of weakness, but rather a profound emotional control and moral strength. Furthermore, the textbook's extensive focus on the Medina Charter serves as a critical analytical tool. Modern educational scholarship widely recognizes the Medina Charter as an early constitutional model. For instance, studies by Hamzah (2022) and Muslim (2023) highlight how it effectively translates principles of religious freedom and minority protection into contemporary peace education. This aligns with Nawi (2024) and Samosir et al. (2025), who emphasize its specific role in establishing equal obligations within religious moderation programs.

Moreover, the Charter's emphasis on dialogue and consensus-building provides a robust historical framework for non-violent conflict resolution. Ghazali (2020) and Yildirim (2009) argue that this consensus-based approach is highly applicable for cultivating social unity. Extending this perspective, recent literature from Embong et al. (2021), Mufadda et al. (2020), and Pratama (2023) demonstrates how these conflict resolution mechanisms can be practically integrated into multicultural school management. Gunawan and Kawakip (2024), alongside Syarif and Habibi (2024), further affirm that the Charter's principles successfully instill democratic values within modern educational institutions. Consequently, these historical precedents affirm that teaching the Medina Charter extends beyond historical recall. As Nurhikma et al. (2025) and Wildan (2023) articulate, it actively functions as a normative guide for inclusive civic formation. This is corroborated by Nurhaidah et al. (2025), Rosyid et al. (2026), and Samosir et al. (2023), who position the Charter as a definitive blueprint for sustaining peaceful coexistence in modern plural societies. This proves that the textbook acts as a character education medium that strengthens students' social competencies by moving towards shaping mature social mindsets.

The Conceptual Mechanics of Islamic Humanism (Insaniyah) in Character Building

Beyond tolerance, the textbook embeds the value of humanity as a vital foundation for mutual respect. The narratives regarding the Muhajirin and Ansar brotherhood illustrate that Islamic humanism is built upon empathy and social care that transcend tribal, blood, or political interests. These sections demonstrate that Islamic teachings affirm the importance of interpersonal relationships (*hablum minannas*) built upon compassion and equality. Additionally, the historical

account of the abolition of slavery is utilized to teach students to actively reject all forms of discrimination, oppression, and unfair treatment toward fellow human beings. This pedagogical message is profoundly relevant in modern educational environments, specifically in addressing contemporary issues such as bullying, social marginalization, and identity-based discrimination in schools. By profiling the Prophet's noble character as a figure of universal compassion, the textbook ensures that humanity is not presented merely as an abstract theory but as an actionable daily behavior.

The Tiered Framework of Multicultural Education in State Curricula

The quantitative distribution revealing a 60% focus on tolerance and 40% on humanity suggests a tiered and deliberate pedagogical orientation within the textbook. Tolerance is positioned dominantly because it acts as the initial gateway or external mechanism for students to understand and navigate diverse social lives safely. The heavy orientation toward conflict resolution and harmonious social life utilizes historical momentum as an effective medium, showing students the real-world consequences and impacts of a tolerant attitude, rather than relying on normative theories alone. Once this external boundary of tolerance is established, the 40% focus on humanity emerges to deepen the internal consciousness, ensuring students realize that all humans possess an equal degree before Allah. This structural balance between external social relations (tolerance) and internal human dignity (humanity) indicates that the state-mandated SKI textbook aligns solidly with the core frameworks of multicultural education proposed by Baidhawiy (2015), Banks (1993), and Yaqin (2021). Ultimately, the textbook serves as essential pedagogical capital in shaping a generation that is religious, open-minded, and highly socially aware.

CONCLUSION

The examination of the Grade VII History of Islamic Culture (SKI) textbook reveals that multicultural educational values are profoundly embedded within its curriculum, serving as a vital instrument for character building in a pluralistic society. The textbook successfully transcends mere historical documentation by providing a substantive pedagogical framework that fosters social sensitivity, moderate attitudes, and a profound respect for human dignity. The overarching generalization of this study affirms that state-mandated religious textbooks possess a strategic role in mitigating social friction through the early cultivation of inclusive mindsets and civilized generations. However, this study is subject to certain limitations. The analysis is strictly confined to the textual and visual content of a single textbook designated for Grade VII, which may not holistically represent the progression of multicultural values across all secondary educational levels. Additionally, this study relies exclusively on a document analysis approach without capturing the empirical impact of these materials on students' actual behaviors or teachers' pedagogical execution in the classroom.

Therefore, it is recommended that future studies expand the scope of analysis to include textbooks across various educational tiers. Furthermore, subsequent research should incorporate field observations or empirical methodologies to evaluate how these multicultural values are practically implemented by educators and internalized by students. Developing teaching materials that actively bridge theoretical knowledge with practical moral and social awareness must remain a continuous priority in the development of Islamic Religious Education.

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