



Interreligious Coexistence in Islam: Implications for Islamic Education and the Achievement of SDGs

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Abstract

The practice of interreligious coexistence in Islam holds significant relevance for Islamic education, particularly in shaping tolerant, just, and inclusive character within multicultural societies. Islam, as a religion that emphasizes peace and justice, provides a normative foundation for curriculum development and educational practices that encourage learners to respect differences, build harmonious relations with adherents of other faiths, and understand the rights and obligations among religious communities. This study aims to analyze the practice of interreligious life from an Islamic perspective with a focus on its implications for Islamic education. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected from 20 informants consisting of academics, education practitioners, and community leaders through in-depth interviews. The data were analyzed thematically using NVivo 12 software to identify key patterns and themes. The findings reveal four major aspects: respect for each religion's principles, universal justice without discrimination, inclusive social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, and equality of rights and obligations among religious groups. The implications highlight that Islamic values can serve as a normative framework for strengthening multicultural-based Islamic education and fostering tolerance, while simultaneously contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly quality education (SDG 4), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), peace and justice (SDG 16), and global partnerships (SDG 17).

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INTRODUCTION

Religious, racial, ethnic, and cultural conflicts remain a serious challenge in many parts of the world (Hadi et al., 2024; Harpendya et al., 2022). Discrimination and intolerance often hinder social development and educational progress. Studies indicate that identity-based conflicts reduce the quality of education and widen social inequalities (Easterbrook et al., 2019; Murphy et al., 2016). Globally, religious conflicts have become one of the major obstacles to achieving peace and sustainable development.

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In Indonesia, a multicultural nation with more than 300 ethnic groups and diverse religions, the potential for intergroup tensions is evident. Cases of intolerance in schools and communities highlight the urgent need for education that instills coexistence values (Setiawan et al., 2024; Zembylas, 2011). Although Indonesia's history demonstrates that unity in diversity is the foundation of national development, intolerance continues to manifest in social and political discrimination.

The impact of such conflicts is not only local but also global. The inability to manage diversity hampers the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly quality education (SDG 4), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16). Aimaganbetova et al., (2023); Rais et al., (2025) emphasizes that tolerance-based education is one of the most effective strategies to prevent identity-based conflicts. Islam, as a religion that emphasizes the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), provides a strong normative foundation for building peaceful and just social life. Values such as justice, respect for differences, and universal brotherhood are essential in developing Islamic education relevant to multicultural contexts (Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025; Supriyatno & Ubabuddin, 2019).

In practice, however, many Islamic educational institutions remain focused on normative and ritual aspects without integrating interreligious coexistence into the curriculum. As a result, students often lack learning experiences that nurture tolerance and inclusivity (Fitriani, 2023; Shaleh et al., 2024). Yet, education that internalizes coexistence values is more effective in fostering harmonious societies. Moreover, multicultural education in Islam is often understood only partially, limited to acknowledging diversity without embedding it into pedagogical practice. This creates a gap between the ideal values of Islam and the realities of education. Anugrah et al., (2024); Nila et al., (2025) argue that multicultural education must be systematically integrated into curricula to shape inclusive character.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the practice of interreligious coexistence from an Islamic perspective and identify its implications for Islamic education. Using a qualitative approach, the study explores the experiences and perspectives of academics, education practitioners, and community leaders on how Islamic values can be implemented in multicultural life (Creswell, 2014; Lewis, 2015; Sugiyono, 2019). Another objective is to explain the contribution of Islamic education to the achievement of the SDGs. Islamic education grounded in coexistence values is expected to strengthen quality education (SDG 4), reduce inequalities (SDG 10), and promote peace and justice (SDG 16). Adeoye, (2026) highlights that integrating Islamic values into educational systems can support SDGs from early childhood.

Finally, this study aims to provide recommendations for policymakers in Islamic education to design more inclusive curricula. Such curricula are expected to instill tolerance, justice, and universal brotherhood, enabling students to become agents of peace in society (Khilji & Jogezeai, 2023).

The urgency of this study lies in its social relevance to addressing intolerance in multicultural societies. Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping students' character to live peacefully alongside adherents of other religions (Maidugu et al., 2024; Pujianti & Nugraha, 2025). Academically, this study contributes to Islamic education scholarship by integrating interreligious coexistence values into the SDG framework. This is crucial because Islamic education is often perceived as

normatively oriented, whereas it has significant potential to support global development agendas (Saada, 2023).

Practically, this study serves as a reference for policymakers and practitioners in designing inclusive curricula. Coexistence-based curricula not only strengthen tolerance in schools but also build more harmonious societies. Muhja & Shahnaz, (2026) confirms that tolerance-based education directly contributes to achieving SDG 16 on peace and justice. Previous studies have discussed tolerance in Islamic education but have not explicitly linked interreligious coexistence practices with the achievement of the SDGs. Most research emphasizes normative aspects without connecting them to global development agendas (Mahmud et al., 2025).

Furthermore, earlier studies often focused on a single aspect of coexistence, such as tolerance or justice, without integrating the four key dimensions: respect for religious principles, universal justice, inclusive relations, and equality of rights. These dimensions are interrelated and form a comprehensive framework for building interreligious coexistence (Yana et al., 2024). This study offers a new contribution by linking Islamic values integratively with the SDGs. Thus, it enriches Islamic education scholarship and provides fresh perspectives on the role of religion in sustainable development. This research gap forms the basis for the study's academic and practical significance.

Building on the research gap identified above, this study seeks to explore how the practice of interreligious coexistence from an Islamic perspective can be integrated into multicultural Islamic education and how such integration contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The inquiry focuses on examining the conceptual foundations of coexistence in Islamic thought, the ways in which these values can be embedded within Islamic education curricula, and the broader implications of such practices for advancing SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, and SDG 17 on global partnerships. By framing the research questions in this way, the study positions itself to address both theoretical and practical dimensions of Islamic education in relation to global development agendas.

METHODS

Research method and design this study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables the exploration of meanings, values, and social experiences that cannot be measured quantitatively, particularly in relation to the practice of interreligious coexistence from an Islamic perspective (Abishev et al., 2025; Akem et al., 2025; Creswell, 2014; Dasrizal et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2023, 2024; Sugiyono, 2019; Zurayah & Lubis, 2026). The descriptive-analytical design was used to provide an in-depth account of the social phenomena under investigation while simultaneously analyzing their implications for Islamic education. Thus, the research was oriented toward contextual and interpretive understanding of the data obtained from informants.

The primary data sources were informants consisting of academics, education practitioners, and community leaders with direct experience in managing multicultural life. A total of 20 informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that involves selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Elizabeth, 2016; Engkizar et al., 2024, 2025; Moleong, 2002; Rahman et al., 2025). This technique allowed the

researcher to obtain rich and detailed information from individuals considered most knowledgeable about issues of interreligious coexistence within the context of Islamic education.

Instruments the main instrument in this study was the researcher, functioning as the key instrument (human instrument) responsible for planning, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. In addition, a semi-structured interview guide was used as a supporting instrument to facilitate the process of data collection. The interview guide was designed to be flexible, enabling the researcher to adapt questions to the context and dynamics of the conversation while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

Data analysis tools NVivo 12 software was employed as the primary tool for data analysis. This software assisted in organizing, coding, and categorizing interview data systematically. The use of NVivo facilitated the identification of patterns, themes, and relationships across categories, thereby enhancing the transparency, structure, and academic rigor of the analysis (Busral et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2022; Jackson & Bazeley, 2019; Khairunisa et al., 2025).

Data analysis technique thematic analysis was applied to interpret the data, involving the process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring patterns or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This technique enabled the researcher to uncover deeper meanings from the informants' experiences regarding interreligious coexistence in the Islamic perspective. The analysis process included data reduction, categorization, coding, and interpretation, ultimately producing comprehensive findings aligned with the study's objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before presenting the four principal findings in detail, it is important to emphasize that the results reflect the experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of the informants, consisting of academics, education practitioners, and community leaders. Data collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically with the support of NVivo 12 software revealed consistent patterns that highlight the relevance of Islamic values in fostering interreligious coexistence. These findings not only provide an empirical account of multicultural life practices but also demonstrate how Islamic principles can serve as a normative framework for strengthening multicultural-based Islamic education. Accordingly, the results of this study form a critical foundation for understanding the four key dimensions that will be elaborated in the subsequent sections.

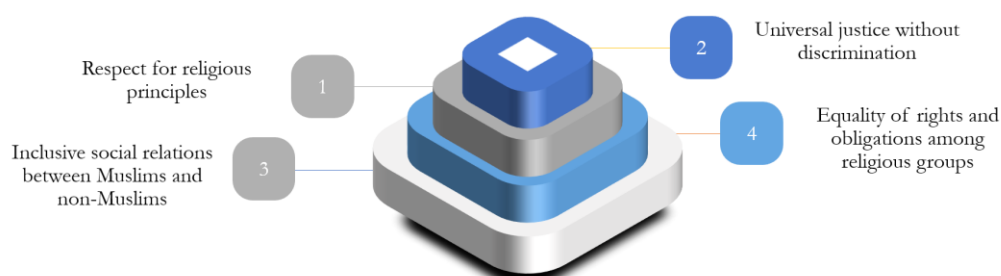


Fig 1. The Practice of Living with People of Different Religions in Islam According to the Quran and Hadith

Respect for religious principles

The first finding reveals that the practice of interreligious coexistence in Islam is rooted in respect for the principles of each religion. Islam emphasizes that every faith has the right to practice its teachings and rituals without interference from others. This was reflected in the interview with a religious leader, who stated: *“Islam teaches us not to impose our beliefs on others. The principle of *lakum dinukum waliya din* (‘to you your religion, and to me mine’) is a foundation that must be preserved in religious life.”* His statement underscores that respect for other religions is embedded in Islamic normative teachings.

From the community perspective, one informant actively engaged in multicultural social activities explained that respect for religious principles is essential for maintaining harmony: *“In our village, we often hold joint events such as communal work or cultural celebrations. Even though we belong to different religions, we respect each other’s worship practices. That is what keeps our relationships strong.”* This illustrates that respect for religious principles is not merely normative discourse but a lived reality in everyday multicultural life.

An academic further emphasized that respect for religious principles should be integrated into Islamic education curricula: *“Islamic education must teach that religious diversity is a social reality to be respected. If this value is embedded in the curriculum, students will grow accustomed to viewing differences as natural and positive.”* Thus, respect for religious principles emerges as a crucial dimension in strengthening multicultural-based Islamic education.

Universal justice without discrimination

The second finding highlights that Islam advocates universal justice applicable to all humanity without discrimination. A religious leader explained: *“Justice in Islam is not limited to Muslims but extends to all people. The Prophet Muhammad emphasized that upholding justice is obligatory, even toward those of different faiths.”* This demonstrates that justice in Islam is inclusive and universal.

From the community perspective, a neighborhood leader shared: *“In daily life, we strive to act fairly. For example, when distributing social assistance, we do not differentiate based on religion. All residents are entitled to receive it according to their needs.”* This practice reflects the application of universal justice in social contexts, where rights are respected without discrimination.

An academic added a critical perspective, noting that universal justice must be embedded in Islamic education: *“Islamic curricula should emphasize justice as a universal value. If students are only taught justice within the internal Muslim community, they will struggle to understand justice in multicultural societies.”* Hence, universal justice without discrimination is a vital dimension to be internalized in Islamic education.

Inclusive social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims

The third finding demonstrates that inclusive social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are a tangible practice of interreligious coexistence. A religious leader remarked: *“Islam teaches us to build good relations with everyone. The Prophet Muhammad himself established relationships with non-Muslims in Medina, and that serves as a model for us.”* This highlights that inclusive social relations have both historical and normative foundations in Islam.

From the community perspective, a youth organization member explained: *“We often collaborate with non-Muslim friends in social activities, such as environmental clean-ups or sports. Our relationships are strong because we do not differentiate based on religion in daily activities.”* This statement illustrates that inclusive social relations can be realized

through simple yet meaningful social interactions.

An academic emphasized that inclusive social relations should be incorporated into Islamic education: *“Islamic education must teach students to interact positively with non-Muslim peers. If students are accustomed to inclusive interactions, they will grow into tolerant and open-minded individuals.”* Thus, inclusive social relations are a critical dimension in developing Islamic education relevant to multicultural societies.

Equality of rights and obligations among religious groups

The fourth finding affirms that Islam recognizes equality of rights and obligations among religious groups. A religious leader explained: *“In Islam, all human beings have the same right to live peacefully and securely. There must be no discrimination in fundamental rights, such as the right to life, worship, and participation in society.”* This underscores that equality of rights is a fundamental principle in Islam.

From the community perspective, a cooperative manager shared: *“We treat all cooperative members equally, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Their rights to receive services and benefits are the same, as are their obligations to contribute.”* This practice reflects the application of equality of rights and obligations in socio-economic life.

An academic added that equality of rights and obligations must be embedded in Islamic education: *“Islamic education should teach that all citizens have equal rights and responsibilities, regardless of religion. If this value is taught from an early age, students will grow into fair and responsible individuals.”* Thus, equality of rights and obligations among religious groups is a crucial dimension in strengthening multicultural-based Islamic education.

These four findings respect for religious principles, universal justice without discrimination, inclusive social relations, and equality of rights and obligations demonstrate that Islamic values can serve as a normative framework for reinforcing multicultural-based Islamic education. Interviews with religious leaders, community members, and academics reveal that interreligious coexistence is not only a normative ideal but also a social reality that can be systematically integrated into Islamic education curricula.

The first finding reveals that the practice of interreligious coexistence in Islam is rooted in respect for the principles of each religion. The Quran emphasizes freedom of belief in *“lakum dinukum waliya din”* (Q.S. Al-Kafirun: 6), and the Prophet Muhammad reinforced this principle by declaring *“There is no compulsion in religion”* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 256). Hamka interprets diversity as *sunatullah*, a divine reality that must be acknowledged (Shukri, 2023; Tang et al., 2018; Trisnani et al., 2025). This was reflected in the interview with a religious leader, who stated: *“Islam teaches us not to impose our beliefs on others. The principle of lakum dinukum waliya din is a foundation that must be preserved in religious life.”* His statement underscores that respect for other religions is embedded in Islamic normative teachings.

From the community perspective, one informant actively engaged in multicultural social activities explained that respect for religious principles is essential for maintaining harmony: *“In our village, we often hold joint events such as communal work or cultural celebrations. Even though we belong to different religions, we respect each other’s worship practices. That is what keeps our relationships strong.”* This illustrates that respect for religious principles is not merely normative discourse but a lived reality in everyday multicultural life. Empirical evidence from Rahman et al., (2024); Shawmi et al., (2025) confirms that cultural values and education foster religious harmony through mutual respect.

An academic further emphasized that respect for religious principles should be integrated into Islamic education curricula: *“Islamic education must teach that religious diversity is a social reality to be respected. If this value is embedded in the curriculum, students will grow accustomed to viewing differences as natural and positive.”* This aligns with [Hadi et al., \(2024\)](#); [Srinio, \(2025\)](#), who argue that Islamic educational philosophy integrates intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions, making it relevant for teaching coexistence. Thus, respect for religious principles emerges as a crucial dimension in strengthening multicultural-based Islamic education. This finding also directly contributes to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), as it fosters inclusive and peaceful societies by ensuring that every community has the right to worship freely and without interference.

The second finding highlights that Islam advocates universal justice applicable to all humanity without discrimination. The Quran commands believers to uphold justice even against themselves or their kin (Q.S. Al-Ma’idah: 8), while the Prophet Muhammad emphasized fairness toward non-Muslims in several hadiths. This resonates with Galtung’s (1996) theory of positive peace, which requires fairness and equity across social groups. A religious leader explained: *“Justice in Islam is not limited to Muslims but extends to all people. The Prophet Muhammad emphasized that upholding justice is obligatory, even toward those of different faiths.”*

From the community perspective, a neighborhood leader shared: *“In daily life, we strive to act fairly. For example, when distributing social assistance, we do not differentiate based on religion. All residents are entitled to receive it according to their needs.”* This practice reflects the application of universal justice in social contexts, where rights are respected without discrimination. [Ibrahim et al., \(2024\)](#) argue that justice in Islamic education must be contextualized to prevent exclusion, while [Basri, \(2022\)](#); [Zahra et al., \(2025\)](#) highlights Quranic values of diversity (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13) as a solution to discrimination.

An academic added a critical perspective, noting that universal justice must be embedded in Islamic education: *“Islamic curricula should emphasize justice as a universal value. If students are only taught justice within the internal Muslim community, they will struggle to understand justice in multicultural societies.”* [Hutagaol et al., \(2025\)](#) empirically found that inclusive Islamic Religious Education promotes fairness and nondiscrimination. Hence, universal justice without discrimination is a vital dimension to be internalized in Islamic education. This finding resonates with SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), which emphasizes the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of fairness across social groups.

The third finding demonstrates that inclusive social relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are a tangible practice of interreligious coexistence. Historically, the Prophet Muhammad established the Constitution of Medina, which guaranteed coexistence and cooperation among diverse religious groups. [Sahin, \(2017\)](#) argues that Islam provides a framework for pluralism and interfaith engagement. A religious leader remarked: *“Islam teaches us to build good relations with everyone. The Prophet Muhammad himself established relationships with non-Muslims in Medina, and that serves as a model for us.”*

From the community perspective, a youth organization member explained: *“We often collaborate with non-Muslim friends in social activities, such as environmental clean-ups or sports. Our relationships are strong because we do not differentiate based on religion in daily activities.”* This statement illustrates that inclusive social relations can be realized through simple yet meaningful social interactions. [Yusuf et al., \(2025\)](#) found that

religious inclusivity in Muhammadiyah universities strengthened positive relations among students of different faiths.

An academic emphasized that inclusive social relations should be incorporated into Islamic education: *“Islamic education must teach students to interact positively with non-Muslim peers. If students are accustomed to inclusive interactions, they will grow into tolerant and open-minded individuals.”* [Rockenbach et al., \(2017\)](#) reported that non-Muslim students responded positively to multicultural Islamic education environments, while [Al-Obaydi, \(2023\)](#) confirmed that inclusive education promotes moderation and humanism. Thus, inclusive social relations are a critical dimension in developing Islamic education relevant to multicultural societies. This finding also supports SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), as inclusive relations encourage collaboration and solidarity across religious and cultural boundaries.

The fourth finding affirms that Islam recognizes equality of rights and obligations among religious groups. The Quran teaches that all humans are created equal (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13), and the Prophet Muhammad emphasized equality in rights and obligations in the Charter of Medina. [Khair et al., \(2024\)](#) argues that multicultural education must ensure equal participation of all groups. A religious leader explained: *“In Islam, all human beings have the same right to live peacefully and securely. There must be no discrimination in fundamental rights, such as the right to life, worship, and participation in society.”*

From the community perspective, a cooperative manager shared: *“We treat all cooperative members equally, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Their rights to receive services and benefits are the same, as are their obligations to contribute.”* This practice reflects the application of equality of rights and obligations in socio-economic life. [Maghfiroh & Sugiarto, \(2024\)](#) highlight that inclusive pedagogy fosters equal humanity through religious and legal education, while [Elius, \(2023\)](#) emphasize that interfaith dialogue requires respect and equality.

An academic added that equality of rights and obligations must be embedded in Islamic education: *“Islamic education should teach that all citizens have equal rights and responsibilities, regardless of religion. If this value is taught from an early age, students will grow into fair and responsible individuals.”* [Faridah et al., \(2025\)](#) demonstrated that inclusive Islamic education for children with special needs emphasized equal rights and obligations, showing the applicability of equality across diverse contexts. Thus, equality of rights and obligations among religious groups is a crucial dimension in strengthening multicultural-based Islamic education. This finding aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education), which calls for inclusive and equitable education for all.

These four findings respect for religious principles, universal justice without discrimination, inclusive social relations, and equality of rights and obligations demonstrate that Islamic values can serve as a normative framework for reinforcing multicultural-based Islamic education. Moreover, each dimension directly contributes to the achievement of the SDGs: respect for religious principles supports SDG 16, universal justice aligns with SDG 10, inclusive social relations advance SDG 17, and equality of rights and obligations strengthens SDG 4. Interviews with religious leaders, community members, and academics reveal that interreligious coexistence is not only a normative ideal but also a social reality that can be systematically integrated into Islamic education curricula, thereby linking local practices with global development agendas.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that interreligious coexistence in Islam provides a strong normative foundation for multicultural-based Islamic education. The findings respect for religious principles, universal justice without discrimination, inclusive social relations, and equality of rights and obligations highlight how Islamic values can be systematically integrated into educational curricula to cultivate tolerant, just, and inclusive character. Beyond academic contribution, these values also serve practical purposes for community service programs, offering guidance for initiatives that foster harmony, solidarity, and cooperation across diverse religious groups.

The novelty of this article lies in its normative-empirical approach, which explicitly connects Islamic teachings on coexistence with contemporary educational needs and the global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By aligning Islamic values with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), the study enriches the literature on Islamic education and positions interreligious coexistence as a pedagogical strategy for building sustainable peace and inclusivity in multicultural societies.

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Author contribution

Gulzhaina K. Kassymov & Engkizar: data curation, writing-original draft preparation, **Mustafa Tevfik Hebebcı:** conceptualization, methodology, **Yerassyl K. Talgatov:** visualization, editing, analysis.

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