



The Frame of Islam in Multicultural Education at Kinderglobe Kindergarten

Maftuhah¹, Raswan²

^{1,2}*UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia*
maftuhah@uinjkt.ac.id, raswan@uinjkt.ac.id

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Abstract

This research is based on recognizing the Islamic concept of multiculturalism and multicultural coaching in Kinderglobe Kindergarten, where the people involved in the kindergarten (principals and teachers) have a thick Islamic background and experience. This research aims to know the pattern of multicultural development and religious reasons used in multicultural development at Kinderglobe Kindergarten. This qualitative case study, using an analytic descriptive method, was conducted at Kinderglobe Kindergartens in two locations, in Pamulang Tangerang Selatan City of Banten Province and Gunung Sindur Bogor Regency. Data were collected using observation, interviews, and documentation. They were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al., i.e., data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion. The data, then, were validated using the triangulation technique. The results showed that multicultural coaching was implemented intentionally and planned through the activities in the class (curricular) and outside the class (non-curricular). For religious reasons, multiculturalism is part of Islamic values, and practicing multicultural education is part of *da'wa bil hal*. This *da'wa bil hal* is also called multicultural *da'wa* because it is practiced in a multicultural society. The research implies that *da'wa bil hal* must be implemented in children's education because it is fundamental to develop their personality in a plural society.

Keywords: *Da'wa bil hal*, multiculturalism, multicultural education, multicultural *da'wa*

1. Introduction

Multiculturalism is a necessity in a plural society. It considers race, ethnic structure, language, gender, age, disability, social class, education, religious orientation, and other cultural dimensions (Sherpa, 2019). The diversity of communities that are not managed

properly can lead to endless horizontal and vertical conflicts. Managing diversity can be done in various ways, including regulation, communication between interfaith and cultural figures, dissemination of ideas of pluralism and multiculturalism, and multicultural education in educational institutions.

Very diverse Indonesia faces many multicultural problems. Conflicts between religious communities, hatred and attacks against ethnic Chinese in 1998, the blasphemy incident "Ahok", the expulsion of Shia groups, and riots in Singkawang, Poso, Ambon, and Mesuji Lampung, are some of these multicultural problems. Not only in Indonesia, the problems of racism, discrimination against minority groups, and so on have also occurred in other parts of the world. Nguyen & Mutum (2012) researched multiculturalism in British and Dutch society and described several events in the two countries from the 1970s to the 1990s. Even today, although British society seems to accept the idea of multiculturalism and pluralism that can be seen in their daily lives, they are still worried and reluctant about this concept. Then Lebanon, whose school climate is dominated by a monocultural climate, finally faces a society that is divided and prone to violence and conflict. Although educational reform has focused on nation-building and nationalism, it fails to promote a multicultural school climate, social cohesion, or national identity (Baytiyeh, 2019).

Kindergarten, as one of the educational institutions formally organized in Indonesia and the most basic formal educational institution, is considered very important in the context of multicultural education. Kindergarten students are children aged 4-6 years old who, in some studies, said that the age range 0-6 years is a period of physical and mental formation for the next life. The development of the child at this age greatly determines the ability and quality of learning outcomes afterward, as well as the journey of the next life. Early childhood education is not a transfer or transformation of science and technology but growth and development aspects and potential of children, i.e., aspects of motor, cognitive, language, social, emotional, religious, and moral. Therefore, the approach of teachers and schools in multicultural education is very important.

Kinderglobe Kindergarten is a formal education for early childhood. The school has two locations: Pamulang Tangerang Selatan and Gunung Sindur Bogor. In accepting new students, schools do not see them as coming from family, religious, or ethnic backgrounds or backgrounds. What is interesting about this school is the headmaster, and all the teachers are Muslim; even teachers use the 'syar'i' Muslimah dress and are active in religious texts, but this school has a very realistic multicultural mission in its development activities and is visible in the vision and school mission.

Some research on multicultural education, like Foteva et al. (2023), found the challenges faced by international graduate students, the pivotal role of supervisors in their academic journey, and the tendency of international students to seek support among peers from similar cultural backgrounds. Mekhail et al. (2023) also found that an extended home visiting intervention showed statistically significant improvements in CHL from premeasures to post-measures in a subgroup of parents who required language interpreters

($F = 11.429$; $p < .001$), and in contrast to an equivalent subgroup that was given only the standard Swedish Child Health Care Centers program ($F = 5.025$; $p = .027$). Erga-Johansen & Bondas (2023) also found that "With an emphasis on providing equal quality care to all women, multicultural doulas can help optimize the care given to immigrant women during pregnancy and childbirth. The results may increase understanding of cultural competency in midwifery practice. Further study is required to create new models that integrate multicultural doulas into medical guidelines. Likewise, Soubra et al. (2024) concluded that Americanization continues into adulthood, extending past adolescence and the transitional adult years, and emphasizes the value of preserving a positive attitude toward one's native culture or cultures to safeguard one's well-being. At the social level, the formation of a cluster that places a high value on national identity supports initiatives to advance a dominant national identity. It may signal a substantial change in the social and political landscape of Lebanon. The difference from this research is the religious reason that encourages multicultural coaching in kindergarten.

2. Literature Review

In Arabic, multicultural is termed by *متعدد الثقافات* (*muta'adid al-tsaqafat*), which in Indonesian is understood as a variety of cultures. In the Qur'an, some verses use the word *عدد* ('adada) and its derivatives to describe something numerous and varied. Q.S al-Jin: 24 used the word 'adada ("... *wa aqallu 'adada...*") interpreted by fewer numbers; and Q.S Yusuf: 20 uses *ma'dudah* ("... *darahim ma'dudah...*") is defined by some dirhams.

About culture, the Qur'an mentions this cultural diversity in Ar-Rum: 22. This verse indicates that Islam considers the universe of God's creation to be deliberately diverse and distinct. Al-Zamakhshari said that differences in language, culture, nation, and so on were made by Allah so that people could know each other because if Allah only created one type of man (not diverse or different), then man would only be trapped in his ignorance (Arifin & Valestin, 2019). In another verse, God declares that if He wants man to be of the same kind in all things, then He will do, but He does not do that (Q.S. Huud: 118).

Another verse that also contains the recognition of multiculturalism by Islam is Q.S al-Hujurat: 13. This verse seems to affirm that the distinction was deliberately created by God not to be contradicted but to greet each other side by side. Alwi et al. (2021) stated that this verse not only shows that humans are different descendants of Adam and Eve but also shows human social interaction with fellow humans and other different creatures.

Multicultural education is the process of developing all human potential that values plurality and heterogeneity as a consequence of cultural diversity, ethnicity, and religion (Santi & Ponorogo, 2016; Sherpa, 2019; Supriyatno et al., 2020). In multicultural education, acceptance of the diversity of lives of students and their families is taught, and at the same time, equality and social justice are built. Equity here is a guarantee that all students are given equal access to all educational benefits regardless of their background. Social justice

is to provide teachers with broader access to help all students (Hourihan, 1976; Osler, 2015; Santamaría, 2013).

The main principles of multicultural education are as follows: (a) Education for empathy, (b) Education for solidarity, (c) Education for intercultural respect, and (d) Education against the nationalistic way of thinking (Veugelers, 2019). The teacher occupies a very important position in the learning process of multiculturalism at school. Teacher's ability, knowledge, and skills for the diversity management and learning environment affect students' behaviours, nature, and interest in learning (Huh et al., 2015; Leung & Hue, 2020; Sherpa, 2020).

Da'wa bil hal is da'wa is carried out through attitudes and behaviours or real actions (Firdaus et al., 2021; Nasichah et al., 2018; Yusuf, 2017) according to what is needed by the recipient of the da'wah (Farmawati, 2017). *Da'wa bil hal* is an activity or an effort of humans to invite or call on other human beings for good. The contents of the invitation are al-khayr (virtue), *amar ma'ruf nahyi munkar* (command the good and forbid the bad) (Ali & Hasan, 2019), and multiculturalism is the virtue value in Islam. Meanwhile, some call da'wah *bil hal* with the term da'wah *bil qudwah*, which means practical da'wah by displaying *akhlaq al-karimah* (Firdaus et al., 2021). *Da'wa bil hal* is one type of da'wah, that is, beyond the speech (*bil lisan*) and writing (*bil kitabah*) (Turhamun, 2017).

Multicultural da'wa is preaching (da'wa) that focuses on conveying Islamic messages in the context of diversity in society by finding common ground about things that are agreed upon, valued, and tolerated (Huda, 2016). This da'wa is also a way of how the message of Islam is conveyed in a pluralistic society, both in terms of culture and beliefs, without involving 'moral monism', which can damage the plurality of cultures and beliefs themselves (Zaprul Khan, 2017). This multicultural da'wa can be done through speech (*bil lisan*), writing (*bil kitabah*), or actions (*bil hal*).

Multicultural da'wah is usually based on multicultural Islamic theology, namely the theological perspective of diversity, solidarity, and tolerance drawn from the verses of the Qur'an and history. The multicultural theology that describes this care and concern, according to Turhamun (2017), affects life and transcends the boundaries of religious and cultural communities.

3. Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative case study, using an analytic descriptive method, conducted at Kinderglobe Kindergarten located in two locations, in Pamulang Tangerang Selatan City of Banten Province and Gunung Sindur of Bogor Regency. Data were collected using observation, interviews, and documentation. It was a non-participant observation, done to the teacher's activities while teaching, starting from activities before entering class and continuing until the completion of activities in class. Interviews were conducted in-depth with people who have key information, that is, the headmaster and kindergarten

teachers at Kinderglobe. The teachers who were selected are teachers who have more experience than other teachers in carrying out multicultural education in the classroom and outside the classroom. Documentation was conducted to find files related to multicultural data. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al., i.e., data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion (Miles et al., 2014). Data were validated using the triangulation technique.

4. Results

Kinderglobe Kindergarten was built with a vision and mission to Indonesia and diversity. Its vision is to create students who are creative, intelligent, faithful, and have an Indonesian spirit. Its mission is to provide quality and affordable education, to provide direct experience for children to interact with other children from various ethnics and religious backgrounds.

Indonesia and the diversity contained in this vision and mission are based on the fact that Indonesia is a nation whose society is not single, but it has various ethnics, religions, and classes. Thus, multiculturalism is a necessity in Indonesian society, and multicultural education is also something that must exist. Multicultural education conducted by Kinderglobe Kindergarten is very important amid the diversity of Indonesian society, as Salgur & Gursoy (2015) said that the problem of education in a society that has different ethnic groups can be found in multicultural education (Sherpa, 2019).

Multiculturalism education in Kinderglobe Kindergarten can be seen in coaching in the classroom (curricular) and outside coaching (co-curricular). Multicultural curricular development occurs in several activities, i.e., praying and interaction of students with teachers and students with students. The multicultural co-curricular activities are carried out through graduate programs and religious holidays.

Prayer activities are carried out starting from lining up before entering class, before and after 'breakfast' in class, and before going home from school. 'Breakfast' is a joint meal activity that students do by eating their food and beverages from their homes. This activity is preceded by a common prayer and closes with the prayers of each student who has finished his lunch in front of the teacher. This closing prayer is guided by teachers according to the religion of the students. In teacher-led prayer activities, it is clear that the students do so by their respective religions. While praying with a loud voice, non-Muslim students were seen joining the prayers of their Muslim-majority friends, but the classroom teachers and companion teachers tried to remind students to pray according to their religion. (Classroom observation). Also, sometimes Muslim students remind their non-Muslim friends if they are praying following the prayer of the Muslims. (Interview with the teachers and the headmaster).

Two things can be seen in these learning activities: how the teacher teaches differences and treats the teacher equally to all students. This pattern of education teaches acceptance of differences, tolerance of different cultural behaviors, and gives equal access to different people or groups. Differences are a necessity, so the pattern of managing differences must

be taught or fostered as early as possible to form an open and tolerant student character. Helmut Essinger (1991) stated the main principles of intercultural education are as follows: (a) Education for empathy. It is about learning to understand others, to put ourselves in their shoes, and to regard their beliefs and problems from their point of view. If this is to become possible, education should encourage the young to show interest in the "difference" or the problems of the "others", whether they are immigrants living next to us as neighbors or other people who live outside our borders. (b) Education for solidarity. It is about the students developing a collective conscience that exceeds the boundaries of groups, countries, and races, based on which all people have the same values and could potentially acquire the same problems. Under these circumstances, it is reasonable to expect support from one another. (c) Education for intercultural respect. Respect can be achieved through us "opening up" to foreign cultures and, at the same time, by inviting others to participate in our own culture. (d) Education against the nationalistic way of thinking, which aims at the openness toward other peoples, mutual communication as well as the elimination of national stereotypes and prejudice". (Veugelers, 2019)

The teacher's treatment of all students regardless of their religious background also shows an attitude of equality and social justice, as Gollnick and Chinn state that equality is a guarantee that all students are given equal access to all the benefits of education regardless of their background. Meanwhile, social justice is giving teachers wider access to help all students (Hourihan, 1976). Salgur and Gursoy (2015) state that students, regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics, should have equal opportunities to study in school (Sherpa, 2019).

The teacher's role in teaching diversity is so important. Sometimes, an event occurs in the classroom unexpectedly and unplanned. For example, the Christian student, on time, suddenly asked permission to pray for victims of natural disasters, then he went to the corner of the classroom and clenched his fists while closing his eyes to pray for the safety of the victims. This incident is known and seen by all students in the class (interview with the teacher). The access provided by the teacher to the Christian student teaches that they are not the same but are treated the same, or their friend is different, and that is not a problem. It is a great challenge for every teacher to address the needs and interests of students who are from diverse backgrounds in the classroom. Teachers' ability, knowledge, and skills in diversity management and learning environments affect students' behavior, nature, and interest in learning (Sherpa, 2020).

Childs (2017) states that the multicultural education curriculum should not only provide experiences for students to have feelings or thoughts about diverse people and societies, but more than that, teachers must be able to reflect and understand the students they serve, and students must be aware of not only cultural differences but also customs and social differences that they will eventually carry and encounter in the workplace. Diversity in the classroom teaches students how to live and work in a society. The ability to connect with peers, co-workers, and neighbors with diverse backgrounds and abilities is very worthy and

valuable. It develops critical thinking skills and makes the students think differently. (Sherpa, 2020).

Tolerance, mutual respect, and equal treatment of different people in Kinderglobe Kindergarten can also be found through religious activities such as prayer for Muslim students and church services for non-Muslim students. Likewise, they wish each other happy religious holidays to students of other religions. After major religious holidays such as Eid al-Fitr and Christmas, students will usually talk about their activities during the holiday in front of the class. On this occasion, they will listen to the holiday activities of friends of other religions. After the presentation, they will shake hands and wish each other a happy religious holiday.

The attitude of students to accept and respect religious differences is an attitude that is prepared so that in the future, they will grow up and be active in the midst of society. They will become tolerant individuals and respect minority groups. Puspita (2013) said that studying other cultures together with one's own culture makes it possible to unite similarities and respect differences without emphasizing the weaknesses or strengths of one or the other. Early childhood children are very quick to absorb information from their environment (Kusumaningrum & Wahyono, 2019). Children don't enter early childhood education programs as blank blackboards with nothing to say about differences. On the other hand, children bring their databases containing observations about the characteristics of people, experiences with adults responding to their questions that can reflect varying degrees of discomfort about these issues, exposure to common prejudices about certain groups, and self-constructed theories about the causes and effects of diversity (Puspita, 2013).

Multicultural education at this school is also included in the 'graduation' program. 'Graduation' is a school program that is held every year as a sign of school graduation, followed by all students, parents, and the community. In this activity, the students wear traditional clothes and perform various local dances and songs. There were also students from different religious backgrounds wearing religious clothing and praying according to their religion on the graduation stage.

The reason for the multicultural education at the school is in addition to the fact that competition with similar institutions in which the majority of Muslims will include their children attending Islamic schools is also based on the ideal reason that multiculturalism is part of Islamic values and should be provided at an early age (interview with the headmaster). This reason is very clear because early childhood children are very quick to absorb information from their environment (Kusumaningrum & Wahyono, 2019). The experience of interacting in early childhood with friends of different ethnic, religious, and other backgrounds will provide a provision for inclusivism in the child at a later age. It is expected that the child's perspective and behavior as an adult will be far from being exclusive, selfish, and self-centered. Thus, Muslim children from a young age need to be educated on how to interact well with non-Muslims because they will not always interact

and work with fellow Muslims. Differences in family background, religion, and ethnicity, whether in kindergarten, elementary school, workplace, or community, are inevitable. The experience of feeling different is a good thing; with the hope of feeling better than others, blaming and distrusting others can be minimized.

Other research on multicultural early childhood education is usually not associated with religion as a background, such as development research conducted by Kusumaningrum & Wahyono (2019) to produce storybooks with multicultural content for early childhood students and Puspita's (2013) research, which discusses the role of education in building multicultural characters at an early age.

The inclusive nature and attitude that is fostered towards children are believed by the school to be part of Islamic values. On the other hand, exclusive traits and attitudes are not part of Islamic values and should be avoided. The inclusive attitude that is fostered and practiced by the school will become the attraction of Islam for non-Muslims. This is what is called *da'wa bil hal*. (Interview with the headmaster). *Da'wa* is an invitation to understand and practice Islamic values in real life (Yusuf, 2017). *Da'wa bil hal* is one type of *da'wa* in addition to speech (*bil lisan*) and writing (*bil kitabah*) (Turhamun, 2017). *Da'wa bil hal* is a *da'wa* that is carried out through attitudes and behaviours or real actions (Firdaus et al., 2021; Nasichah et al., 2018; Yusuf, 2017).

Research on *da'wa bil-hal* so far only revolves around *da'wa bil-hal* in the community as research conducted by Kholis et al. (2021) about the empowerment of students at Islamic boarding school in economic aspects, Mukti Ali's research on waste bank management by the *da'wah* faculty of IAIN Salatiga (Ali & Hasan, 2019), and Adnan Firdaus' research on Muhammadiyah's efforts to establish educational institutions, social institutions, economic institutions, and health institutions amid the majority non-Muslim West Papuan community (Firdaus et al., 2021).

A Muslim who shows good behaviour and is tolerant means that he has preached that Islam is peace-loving. On the other hand, a Muslim who behaves rudely and intolerantly means that he has preached that Islam is synonymous with rudeness and violence. Thus, *da'wa* is an invitation to create a peaceful atmosphere and serene peace (Yusuf, 2017) through behaviour. Muslim teachers at Kinderglobe Kindergarten have set an example by accepting students of different religions and ethnicities, even facilitating them when praying, giving holiday greetings, praying, and so on. It can be said that these teachers have preached things through tolerant and peaceful behaviour toward their students. Firdaus et al. (2021) stated that some call *da'wah bil hal* is *da'wah* by example (*bil qudwah*), meaning that teachers of Kinderglobe Kindergarten have done this *da'wah*.

Furthermore, Ali & Hasan (2019) said the community in the process of *da'wa bil hal* is not positioned as a passive object but as an active subject who can change his condition. Therefore, the message of preaching chosen in the process of preaching aims to trigger change because religion is not a passive element in the social process. So, it can be seen in

the process of multicultural education at Kinderglobe Kindergarten, that students are an active community who are educated to become people who have an inclusive nature and attitude. There is a process of communication and interaction between teachers as *da'i* and students as *mad'u*. This process is a process of influencing students to change their behavior as expected. This change in mental attitude is the goal of *da'wa* (Farmawati, 2017; Kholis et al., 2021).

Da'wa with a multiculturalism approach at Kinderglobe Kindergarten can be referred to as multicultural *da'wa*, a term that is developing in the world of *da'wa* in Indonesia today. This *da'wa* is a way of how the message of Islam is conveyed in a pluralistic society, both in terms of culture and beliefs, without involving 'moral monism', which can damage the plurality of cultures and beliefs themselves (Zaprulkhan, 2017). Even a multicultural base in *da'wa* like this can be said to be an effort to convey the Islamic message in the context of global society, which is marked by the increasingly narrow barriers between cultures and ethno-religious community barriers.

Multicultural *da'wa* itself is a *da'wa* that is concerned with delivering an Islamic message in the context of the diversity of society by finding common ground about various things that may be agreed upon and forgiving other parts that are not easy to agree on. Multicultural *da'wa* is not only a process of transforming good Islamic values for people on earth, but it also prioritizes conscientiousness to carry every positive culture critically without being shackled by the formal cultural background of society. Therefore, it is expected to create a friendly, harmonious, peaceful, and respectful society (Ihsani et al., 2021). The application of multicultural values in a pluralistic society can be called the objectification of Islam in Kuntowijoyo's objectification theory (Firdaus et al., 2021).

As a religion that was revealed to manifest goodness in society, Islam was proclaimed and introduced to change bad traditions into good ones and correct deviations towards the right path by the teachings of revelation. These changes in society are obtained through interrelation in people's lives (Huda, 2016). Pluralistic societies are generally characterized by weak national cohesiveness, increasing the risk of political tension and violent conflict; for communities from diverse religious or ethnic backgrounds, peaceful coexistence alone is insufficient to build the social cohesion needed for sustainable development and lasting peace. As an effective environment for advancing intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and positive interaction through active participation in learning activities, schools can form a part of a comprehensive strategy to enhance social cohesion in pluralistic societies (Baytiyeh, 2019).

In this case, the school functions as a place for multicultural *da'wa* because there is diversity and systematic sustainable development. The institutionalization of multicultural *da'wa* into the education system is based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and acceptance, and a moral commitment to social justice (Ibrahim, 2013). It is multicultural education. Even according to Wahyono et al. (2022), the use of educational institutions to

overcome multicultural problems is also a new development in the world of multiculturalism.

5. Conclusion

Multicultural education is essential for early childhood because children quickly absorb information from their surroundings through interaction, imitation, or other experiences. Kinderglobe Kindergarten believes multicultural education in children is necessary because multiculturalism is part of Islamic values, so teaching and educating children is part of teaching Islamic teachings. This school also believes that multicultural education is part of *da'wa bil hal* because tolerant, peaceful, and loving Muslim behavior will be an attraction for non-Muslims. *Da'wa bil hal* in a multicultural society, as implemented in Kinderglobe Kindergarten, is also called multicultural *da'wa*.

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