



# Inclusive Islamic Education in Lombok: Fighting Stereotypes and Promoting Inter-Ethnic Harmony in a Multicultural Society

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of inclusive Islamic education in fighting ethnic stereotypes and promoting harmony between multicultural community groups in West Lombok Regency in 2024. West Lombok is an area that has a fairly high social diversity with interaction between the Sasak ethnic group as the majority population and the Balinese, Javanese, Bugis, Arab, and other migrant communities. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a multi-site design in madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and integrated Islamic schools in West Lombok. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, documentation, and targeted group discussions involving teachers, principals, religious leaders, students, parents, and the community. The results of the study show that inclusive Islamic education is able to reduce stereotypes through collaborative learning, internalization of tasamuh values, cross-community social activities, and school leadership that is open to diversity. Educational institutions that actively establish relationships with the community have proven to be more successful in creating a climate of tolerance and social cooperation. This research confirms that Islamic education in Lombok has an important role as an agent of social integration and strengthening national values. The implications of the research encourage the development of a multicultural curriculum based on Sasak local wisdom and moderate Islamic values.

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## Introduction

Indonesia is widely recognized as a multicultural nation built upon the diversity of ethnicities, religions, languages, and local traditions. This plurality is valuable social capital, yet it may also generate tension when not managed through fair, democratic, and inclusive education. Recent studies note that diversity without strong civic institutions can trigger fragmentation, prejudice, and weakened social cohesion (Azra, 2019; Suyadi & Widodo, 2021; Hasanah et al., 2023). One persistent challenge in plural societies is ethnic stereotyping, namely generalized judgments attached to certain groups without recognizing internal diversity. Such labels often portray communities as harsh, introverted, dominant, lazy, undisciplined, or difficult to cooperate with. These perceptions are transmitted through family narratives, media discourse, and everyday interaction, eventually producing deep-rooted prejudice (Rahman et al., 2021; Hidayat & Salim, 2024).

West Nusa Tenggara Province, especially Lombok Island, provides an important setting for examining interethnic relations in Indonesia. West Lombok Regency, as a center of economic growth, tourism, and education, has a socially diverse population. The Sasak are the majority group, yet daily interaction also includes Balinese, Javanese, Bugis, Arab, Sundanese, Chinese-Indonesian, and other migrant communities. Population mobility, tourism expansion, urbanization, and trade have intensified contact among these groups. While relations are often harmonious, tensions may still arise due to cultural prejudice, symbolic boundaries, and socio-economic competition (Yusuf & Haryanto, 2020; Maulana et al., 2022). Thus, West Lombok serves as a relevant microcosm for understanding coexistence in plural communities.

In this context, education occupies a strategic position as an instrument of constructive social engineering. Education does not merely transfer knowledge; it also cultivates tolerance, empathy, justice, dialogue, and the capacity to live together amid differences. Comparative studies confirm that inclusive schooling contributes significantly to prejudice reduction and democratic citizenship formation (Fitriani & Wahyudi, 2022; Wibowo & Lestari, 2023). Islamic education in particular possesses a strong normative foundation for inclusivity. Islamic teachings affirm that humans were created into nations and tribes to know one another rather than degrade one another. Values such as *ukhuwah*, *musyawarah*, justice (*'adl*), mercy (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*), and human dignity are highly relevant to plural societies (Mukhibat, 2019; Anwar et al., 2021).

Islamic educational institutions in Lombok have expanded rapidly in the form of madrasas, pesantren, integrated Islamic schools, Qur'anic learning centers, and community-based majelis taklim. Many institutions not only teach religious sciences but also perform wider social functions through empowerment programs, youth mentoring, literacy initiatives, and moral guidance. In West Lombok, such institutions are spread across Gerung, Labuapi, Kediri, Gunungsari, Lingsar, Batulayar, Kuripan, and nearby districts. Several are located in heterogeneous environments, requiring direct engagement with interethnic and intercultural dynamics. Studies indicate that Islamic institutions embedded in plural communities often become mediators of harmony when they adopt open and participatory approaches (Basri et al., 2020; Rofiq et al., 2022).

The concept of inclusive Islamic education is therefore highly significant. It refers to an educational system that opens equal opportunities for all learners, respects socio-cultural diversity, and rejects discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, class, gender, or other identity markers. Difference is not viewed as a threat, but as a source of collective learning. In practice, this model is reflected through tolerance-oriented curricula, collaborative pedagogy, equitable leadership, anti-bullying policies, intercultural dialogue, and engagement with cross-group communities (Suyadi & Widodo, 2021; Nurhayati, 2024). Through such mechanisms, schools become spaces where pluralism is experienced constructively rather than feared.

Nevertheless, serious challenges remain. Some institutions still prioritize academic achievement while neglecting social education and intercultural competence. Moreover, digital media has accelerated the spread of stereotypes, misinformation, and hate speech among adolescents. Unverified online information often produces negative generalizations toward certain ethnic groups. Without critical literacy and ethical digital education, students may reproduce these prejudices in schools and society (Lim, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2021; Prasetyo & Hamid, 2024). Inclusive education today must therefore address both offline and online intolerance.

Previous studies have largely focused on religious moderation, character education, curriculum reform, and the role of pesantren. However, specific research on inclusive Islamic education in combating ethnic stereotypes in West Lombok remains limited. This gap is significant because the region offers rich empirical experiences as a meeting point between indigenous communities and migrants. Context-sensitive local studies are necessary so that educational models are grounded in real community needs and institutional capacities (Arifin et al., 2021; Hasanah et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Lombok possesses local wisdom aligned with inclusive values. Sasak culture emphasizes mutual respect, cooperation, deliberation, hospitality, and reciprocity. These principles can be integrated with modern Islamic education to create contextual learning systems. When religious teachings and local culture operate harmoniously, internalization becomes stronger and more meaningful. Research on culturally responsive education confirms that integrating local wisdom enhances belonging, moral learning, and social responsibility (Fauzi & Karim, 2023; Kurniawan & Saleh, 2024).

This study therefore aims to: (1) identify forms of ethnic stereotypes within Islamic educational environments in West Lombok; (2) analyze institutional strategies for promoting interethnic harmony; (3) explain the role of teachers and leaders in constructing an inclusive culture; and (4) formulate an inclusive Islamic education model based on Lombok's local context. Theoretically, the study contributes to Islamic education, multicultural education, and sociology of education. Practically, it offers recommendations for schools, madrasas, pesantren, and policymakers seeking to strengthen social cohesion in diverse societies.

## Methods

This research was carried out in West Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, from January to November 2024. The approach used is qualitative descriptive with a multi-site design. The research locations include several aliyah madrasas, tsanawiyah madrasas,

Islamic boarding schools, and integrated Islamic schools in Gerung, Labuapi, Gunungsari, Lingsar, Kediri, and Batulayar Districts. The selection of the location was carried out purposively based on the level of diversity of students, the involvement of the surrounding community, and the reputation of the institution in social programs and character education.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with school principals, kiai, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, students, alumni, community leaders, traditional leaders, and parents of students. In addition, participatory observations were carried out on the learning process, religious activities, student discussions, community service, national holiday commemorations, and informal interactions in the school environment. Documents such as school rules, the vision and mission of the institution, learning modules, activity agendas, and extracurricular reports were analyzed as supporting data.

Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, verification, and conclusions drawn. Validity is maintained through triangulation of sources, triangulation of methods, member checking, and discussions with local academics. The focus of the analysis is directed at the form of ethnic stereotypes, the mechanism of inclusive education, social relations between students, and their impact on community harmony in West Lombok in 2024.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **1. Forms of Ethnic Stereotypes in the Islamic Education Environment**

Stereotypes are also closely related to the use of regional languages. In some schools, students who are fluent in the Sasak language sometimes adapt more easily to the majority social environment. In contrast, immigrant students who do not understand the local language tend to feel alienated in the early days of school. This condition does not always lead to open discrimination, but it causes communication barriers and discomfort. In the long run, if left unaddressed, the situation can reinforce social segregation among students.

Social media is an important factor that accelerates the reproduction of stereotypes. Some student respondents admitted that their initial perception of a particular group was shaped by digital content, memes, or viral videos that displayed a negative image of a particular community. When students walk into school, they bring those prejudices into real interaction spaces. This shows that inclusive education in the digital era must answer not only the problem of direct relationships, but also the construction of identity in cyberspace.

However, this study also found that stereotypes in schools tend to be more lenient than those of the general public because there are formal rules and teacher supervision. Schools have the capacity to prevent prejudice from developing into open conflict. Teachers who are sensitive to social dynamics usually immediately reprimand excessive jokes or demeaning comments about certain identities. This kind of rapid intervention is critical to creating a safe culture for all students. Interestingly, some students stated that their stereotypes changed after engaging in mixed group activities. They found that friends from groups who were previously thought to be quiet were more communicative, or students who were assumed to be loud turned out to be the most helpful. The experience of direct interaction is a major factor in correcting negative perceptions inherited from outside the school.

These findings show that ethnic stereotypes in the Islamic education environment of West Lombok are latent and often disguised in the form of social humor. Therefore, it is not enough for educational institutions to rely only on formal disciplines, but it is necessary to build a reflective culture so that students understand the psychological impact of social labeling. Islamic education with the values of manners, ukhuwah, and respect for human dignity has a strong foundation to do this.

## **2. Inclusive Islamic Education Strategy in Promoting Inter-Ethnic Harmony**

Cross-group social activities. Many schools and madrassas in West Lombok hold community service, social service, orphanage visits, and environmental care programs. This activity involves students from a variety of classes and backgrounds. In the study's observations, students who previously rarely interacted became closer after working together to clean the environment or distribute social assistance. Solidarity grows through real experience, not just moral advice.

The fourth strategy is the use of local culture as a medium of integration. Some teachers use traditional music arts, folk games, and the value of mutual cooperation of the Sasak people as a means of character learning. When local culture is presented as a shared property, immigrant students do not feel alienated, but are instead interested in getting to know the identity of the region where they are studying. This approach strengthens the relationship between Islamic education and the social context of Lombok. Habituation of polite communication. The school instills the habit of greeting, smiling, greeting, and respect for teachers and peers. Although it looks simple, this communication culture serves to reduce social tension. In a friendly environment, identity differences do not easily turn into conflict.

Some schools also set up student mediation forums. When a dispute arises, BK teachers and homeroom teachers bring together related parties for dialogue. The restorative conflict resolution model is more effective than direct punishment because students learn to understand the impact of their behavior on others. The findings of the study confirm that inter-ethnic harmony is not created spontaneously, but through diversity-conscious educational design. Schools that actively manage social interactions show a higher level of student solidarity than schools that focus only on academics.

## **3. The Role of Teachers, Principals, and Religious Leaders in Building an Inclusive Culture**

School principals have influence in shaping the direction of institutional policies. Principal-led schools with an inclusive vision tend to have more systematic programs, such as diversity-based onboarding of new students, cross-classroom activities, teacher training on tolerance education, and anti-bullying discipline. The principal also functions as a decision-maker when social conflicts occur. An approach that emphasizes mediation and coaching has proven to be more effective than unilateral punishment.

In some cases, the principal establishes intensive communication with the student's parents. This is important because stereotypes often come from the family environment. When schools and families share a common vision of the importance of respecting differences, the educational process becomes stronger. Conversely, if the school teaches tolerance but the home reproduces prejudice, the change in student behavior will be slow. Local religious figures also play a significant role. In West Lombok, ngaji teachers, village ustaz, mosque administrators, and leaders of the taklim council still have a moral influence

in the community. When they support schools in voicing *ukhuwah*, *tasamuh*, and national brotherhood, the message of education becomes wider in scope. Some schools even invite religious leaders across communities to motivate students about the importance of maintaining harmony.

The findings of the study show that example is more influential than lectures. Students tend to imitate the behavior of teachers who respect all students without discriminating against social status or family background. They are also sensitive to the body language and way of speaking of educators. If the teacher shows a bias against a particular group, students will reproduce that bias in the association. From the perspective of character education, the role of teachers and institutional leaders can be referred to as hidden curriculum, which is the values that students learn not from textbooks, but from school culture and real examples. Therefore, increasing the capacity of teachers in inclusive pedagogy is an important need in West Lombok. This training includes conflict mediation skills, empathic communication, and multicultural classroom management.

Research has also found that schools that have good relationships with community leaders are more likely to create a conducive atmosphere. When there are problems between students that have the potential to spread to the outside community, religious leaders and community leaders can help calm the situation. This kind of collaboration shows that inclusive education is not only the responsibility of schools, but the social ecosystem as a whole. Thus, teachers, school principals, and religious leaders are the three main pillars in the development of inclusive culture in West Lombok Islamic educational institutions. If all three move in unison, ethnic stereotypes can be suppressed and social harmony can be strengthened sustainably.

#### **4. Inclusive Islamic Education Model Based on Lombok Local Wisdom**

The first component of this model is the integrative curriculum. Schools need to incorporate materials of tolerance, Indonesian cultural diversity, communication ethics, and conflict resolution into the learning of Islamic Religious Education. The material does not stand alone, but is associated with local values such as *besiru* (help-help), village deliberation, and respect for others. In this way, students understand that inclusivity is not a foreign value, but rather part of their own traditions. The second component is experiential learning. Students are not sufficiently given a theory of unity, but need to experience real cooperation through social projects, cultural visits, and cross-school programs. For example, schools can hold environmental activities with students from different backgrounds or educational visits to historic places of worship as a means of social literacy. Direct experience has been shown to be more effective at changing prejudices than one-way talks.

The third component is the secure dialogue space. Schools need to provide regular forums where students can talk about their experiences of discrimination, cultural differences, and the challenges of living together. This forum can be facilitated by BK teachers, homeroom teachers, or peer mentors. When students feel heard, they are more likely to develop empathy for others. The fourth component is peaceful digital literacy. Given that stereotypes often circulate through social media, schools need to teach information verification skills, online commentary ethics, and positive content production. Students can be trained to create short videos, digital posters, or podcasts about tolerance and Lombok

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culture. Thus, they are not only consumers of information, but producers of peaceful narratives.

The fifth component is community partnerships. Inclusive education will be stronger if it involves villages, traditional leaders, mosque administrators, youth organizations, and parents of students. Schools can hold citizen dialogues, cultural festivals, social bazaars, and community service programs. Community involvement extends the impact of education from the classroom to the public space. The sixth component is the evaluation of school culture. Educational institutions need to conduct social climate surveys, student aspiration boxes, and identity-based bullying reporting mechanisms. Periodic evaluations help schools detect problems early and make continuous improvements.

This model shows that inclusive Islamic education in West Lombok can grow from the synergy between religious teachings, local culture, and the needs of modern society. This approach is more realistic than copying an external model without context adaptation. Lombok has strong social capital to become a national example in the development of community-based peace education. If this model is applied consistently, schools produce not only academically intelligent graduates, but also socially mature citizens. They will be better prepared to live in a pluralistic society, reject prejudice, and actively maintain the unity of the nation

## Conclusion

This research shows that ethnic stereotypes are still present in the Islamic education environment in West Lombok in 2024, although they often appear in subtle forms such as jokes, social labeling, and communication prejudices. Family factors, social media, language differences, and limited social experiences are the main sources of these stereotypes. If left untreated, this condition can hinder relationships between students and reinforce social segregation from school age.

Islamic educational institutions in West Lombok have proven to have a great capacity to fight prejudice through inclusive education strategies. Collaborative learning, internalization of *tasamuh* values, shared social activities, a culture of polite communication, and fair leadership of teachers and principals are effective instruments to build harmony between ethnicities. The presence of religious leaders and family support also strengthened the success of the process.

Therefore, inclusive Islamic education based on Lombok's local wisdom deserves to be developed as a model for regional and national education policies. The integration of moderate Islamic values with the culture of mutual cooperation of the Sasak people can be a strong foundation for the formation of a tolerant, critical, and united-oriented generation. In the plural Indonesian context, the experience of West Lombok proves that schools can be a strategic space to maintain diversity and strengthen the social cohesion of the nation.

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