

Construction of Openness in the Context of Muhammadiyah Education: A Cultural Study Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This research uses a cultural studies approach to describe the construction of openness in the context of Muhammadiyah education. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis through qualitative methods. The results show that openness in the Muhammadiyah educational environment involves accepting students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and practicing open dialogue and cooperation among all relevant parties. Additionally, this openness also includes acceptance of new ideas and values, recognition of differing perspectives, and the implementation of inclusive policies. This research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the development of openness in Muhammadiyah education from a cultural studies perspective and its impact in shaping an inclusive and responsive educational environment to cultural diversity.

Keywords:

Muhammadiyah Education, Cultural Studies, Openness, Inclusivity

INTRODUCTION

Multicultural-based learning integrates multicultural education into the learning process, instilling tolerant characters and appreciation for individual differences. To address cultural pluralism, a new paradigm of greater tolerance, namely the multicultural education paradigm, is needed. Multicultural societies are heterogeneous, not homogenous, where individuals within them have socially tolerant relationships and willingly accept the reality of living together peacefully (Kulyawan, 2023).

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the values, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals and society. Amidst the increasingly multicultural and pluralistic reality of Indonesian society, Islamic educational organizations such as Muhammadiyah have a strategic role in shaping the character and values of students through Islamic teachings. However, in facing the complexity of intercultural interactions and the challenges of globalization, it is essential to understand how the concept of openness in the context of Muhammadiyah education is interpreted and practiced, considering various cultural aspects.

From a cultural studies perspective, a profound understanding of how the values of openness are implemented in the Muhammadiyah educational environment is needed. In cultural studies, the term "character" is more commonly known as "personality" (Pandapotan, 2019). This involves careful analysis of the norms, policies, and practices in Muhammadiyah schools and understanding the attitudes and behaviors of students, teachers, and school staff related to the concept of openness.

By understanding the construction of openness in Muhammadiyah education, more effective educational strategies can be developed to shape an inclusive, responsive, and harmonious educational environment. These strategies will strengthen the Islamic values underpinning Muhammadiyah education and enhance students' educational experiences in facing cultural diversity in an increasingly global society. Thus, education in Muhammadiyah schools has the potential to be a positive agent of change in building a harmonious and inclusive Indonesian society that values diversity as a source of strength and richness.

In educational openness, cultural research plays a significant role in uncovering the impact of specific cultural values, norms, and customs on forming openness in the educational

context. It plays a crucial role in shaping understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and the role of language in shaping self-identity (Arifin et al., 2023). The cultural approach allows for an in-depth analysis of how cultural heritage ingrained within a community, as seen in Muhammadiyah, interacts with the concept of openness in the teaching-learning process.

By applying a cultural studies framework, we can explore how various cultural elements, including traditions, religious values, social norms, and cultural identity, influence the construction of openness in education. *Culture* is the behavior embedded through social learning (Liliweri, 2003). The cultural approach enables us to understand how the values of openness are interpreted and understood in specific cultural contexts and how these values are reflected in daily educational practices within the Muhammadiyah environment.

Furthermore, cultural analysis allows for an understanding of how intercultural interactions shape openness in education. In an increasingly diverse and pluralistic society, cultural research provides insights into how cultural exchanges, intercultural dialogue, and cross-cultural experiences influence perceptions and attitudes toward openness in the context of Muhammadiyah education.

Thus, cultural studies help us look beyond formal educational processes and understand the construction of openness in education through a broader cultural lens, encompassing values, norms, and cultural identities that shape education in Muhammadiyah.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive-qualitative method. The locations were chosen based on several considerations: (1) both research sites are areas with a minority Muslim population, where high school students are particularly vulnerable to exposure to radicalism, and (2) both cities represent multicultural communities in Indonesia, thus serving as a small indicator of the implementation of Islamic moderation in educational institutions in Indonesia. Informants in this research were purposefully selected and directly involved in activities within and had roles in the educational institution at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh in Makassar. Therefore, key informants in this research included: the principal, vice-principal, teachers, and student organizations.

Data collection techniques in this research included observation, interviews, and document studies. Observation was conducted through direct observation of the activities of the principal, teachers, and students in both schools. Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and student organizations. Document studies were collected through school regulation documents and photographs of teacher and student activities. Data analysis was conducted through classification, analysis, and interpretation. Subsequently, the results of the analysis were presented in the form of narratives or words that could be understood using scientific language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Construction of Leadership in Muhammadiyah Schools

In the development of leadership in Muhammadiyah educational institutions, religious and cultural institutional elements play a central role in shaping leadership behavior. The religious foundation influenced by Islamic principles, such as commitment, justice, and mutual cooperation, serves as the main basis for shaping leadership identities and actions. The exemplary conduct of leaders lies in the harmony between words and deeds (Walid, 2018).

Leaders in Muhammadiyah educational institutions often apply these religious values in decision-making, interactions with community members, and facilitating the learning process and student development. Additionally, external factors such as social needs and pressures

from the educational environment also influence the manifestation of leadership, prompting the need for adaptation and innovation in addressing various emerging challenges. Leadership is an inherent characteristic of an individual and becomes a character. Islam views that every human is born as a leader (Widayat, 2017). Therefore, the construction of leadership in Muhammadiyah educational institutions is the result of a complex interaction between religious values, organizational culture, and environmental dynamics, which together shape a unique leadership pattern oriented towards achieving Islamic educational goals and the overall welfare of the school community.

"...we proceed according to the programs set by the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, for example, in Al-Islam kemuhammadiyah, there is already a curriculum, and teachers simply implement that curriculum without any doctrines that would make our children intolerant towards others, especially towards other religions" (interview with AMR, June 9, 2021).

Through the leadership at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar, the school aims to educate teachers about Islamic moderation. The term "headmaster" is not extreme left or extreme right, but in Muhammadiyah, it is known as "wasathiyah Islam," which means being in the middle. So far, there has been no radical understanding among both teachers and students at this school. Additionally, SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar implements the curriculum set by the central leadership of Muhammadiyah. In the subjects of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah, there is already a curriculum, and the school follows it. This curriculum directs students towards tolerance from a young age (Rahmawati & Fatmawati, 2016; Pitaloka et al., 2021).

2. The Construction of Instilling Islamic Values

The process of instilling Islamic values in Muhammadiyah schools is an effort that involves strategies and initiatives to develop students' noble values in accordance with Islamic teachings (Sutarjo, 2023). In this construction process, schools aim not only to convey religious knowledge but also to guide students in practicing Islamic values in their daily lives. One crucial element in instilling Islamic values in Muhammadiyah schools is integrating these values into the educational curriculum, both in religious subjects and other subjects. The cultivation of students' personal character growth is determined by the instillation of Islamic value (Sari, 2023).

Furthermore, schools also utilize various additional activities, social events, and religious activities to strengthen students' understanding of Islamic values (Sitika et al., 2023). Through these steps, Muhammadiyah schools strive to create a learning atmosphere that instills stable Islamic character and firm moral values in students, enabling them to become morally upright individuals who have a positive impact on society (Wiliandani et al., 2016). Islamic character is manifested through the implementation of religious activities in Muhammadiyah schools.

"... Here we implement Baitul Arqam to equip teachers with knowledge of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah. If there are teachers who propagate harsh doctrines, it will reach there, and Alhamdulillah, until now, there have been none, and in our selection of teachers, we really assess whether they are willing to join us in fighting for Muhammadiyah's goals, if not, we will certainly not accept them.... Living in a diverse society, especially in Indonesia, means living in a diverse society" (Interview with AMR, June 9, 2021).

Enhancing the moderate and tolerant attitudes of teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar ensures that educators' ideologies remain within the Muhammadiyah ideological framework, avoiding extremism and excessive tolerance. At SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar, to enhance understanding of Islamic values, Baitul Arqam sessions are specifically held for teachers. Intolerance among Muslim teachers must be avoided by promoting a culture of non-tolerance (Aryani et al., 2022). Furthermore, to anticipate the infiltration of radical and intolerant ideologies, strict selection processes are conducted for new teachers working at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar. One consideration is that recruited teachers should not be influenced by radical ideologies (Gist, 2022). Therefore, efforts are needed to mitigate extremist behaviors in all sectors of life (Davies et al., 2016). Additionally, the reason is to

prevent the dissemination of the belief that one's ideology is the sole truth while others are not. Such ideologies are dangerous to communal life, especially in a multicultural society.

"...Reminders are usually delivered by one of the teachers. It does not have to be me, the Kemuhammadiyah teacher. Other teachers are given the opportunity in turns to deliver a tausyah. Giving warnings, and most often it is indeed the principal who does it. Providing messages of goodness in educating children, interactions among teachers, and so on. The principal is the one who usually does it. Usually, the tausyah or advice is given before the meeting" (Interview I, June 10, 2021).

The reinforcement of Islamic moderation among teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar is carried out in the form of tazkira (mutual reminders) before the teacher council meeting. Teachers must remind each other of messages of goodness within the school environment (Bondy & Ross, 2008). This mutual reminder behavior is done by teachers in turns, although it is most often done by the Principal of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar. The content delivered is related to messages of being a good teacher in educating students in school, mutual care and respect among teachers in school interactions, and so on. Teachers must exemplify respectful behavior towards each other (Palunga & Marzuki, 2017; Hadirman, 2022)).

"It is always conveyed in meetings, especially regarding the vision and mission of Muhammadiyah. We always ensure it is implemented well and applied in daily life. So, especially in meetings with the teacher council, we often involve students in meetings, especially the IPM board... our communication with students' parents is now via WhatsApp and group chats, where we remind each other and deliver messages through the group. This makes it easier for us, and we are fortunate to have communication tools in the form of school regulations and announcements" (Interview NA, June 9, 2021).

Teacher development at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar is conveyed in the teacher council meeting. In these meetings, the principal emphasizes the implementation of the vision and mission of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar in every activity at school and in daily life. The teacher council meetings sometimes involve students represented by IPM. This is done because IPM serves as an extension of information related to school policies. Teachers also utilize the moments of report card distribution and WhatsApp groups to convey Islamic moderation values. The student guardian group serves as a medium to convey school policy information and announcements related to teaching and learning, committee fee payments, and so on.

3. Constructing Islamic Moderation in Education

For the successful development of character values in students, schools need to develop and cultivate them by involving all existing components, including integrating them into every subject (Astuti et al., 2022). In an ideal context, religious moderation is intended to ensure that religious teachings are not exclusively trapped (Rahmat, 2023; Liando & Hadirman, 2022).

Analysis regarding the implementation of customs and exemplars in the Muhammadiyah education environment aims to explore the important role of both aspects in shaping students' characters in line with Islamic teachings. Customs refer to routine activities aimed at forming positive daily habits for students. To develop disciplined personalities, this can be done through good and beneficial habits (Sormin et al., 2023). In Muhammadiyah schools, the habituation of Islamic values is realized through activities such as congregational prayers, the use of polite language, and social norms that encourage care and cooperation.

Meanwhile, exemplarity highlights the role of teachers and staff as models that inspire students to apply Islamic values in their lives. By providing positive examples, teachers and school staff become role models that motivate students to develop attitudes and behaviors in accordance with Islamic teachings. By uniting these two elements, Muhammadiyah schools strive to create a learning atmosphere that supports the spiritual and moral growth of students, enabling them to become obedient and morally upright individuals.

"...Examples can be given, perhaps by teachers or principals, teachers and principals, teachers with fellow teachers, between teachers and students, or between students themselves. Yes, of course, we start with the principal first, alhamdulillah the principal whom we do not doubt, what he says is also what he does (the conformity of words and

actions). So, his integrity in leading until now. We can see the results, there is synergy in his leadership. Between teachers, it is clear that it becomes an example on one side, he always reminds all of us not only to speak but also to set an example through preaching by word of mouth but do not forget it must be in harmony with action..." (Interview I, June 10, 2021).

Based on the expression above, it shows that exemplarity at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar begins with leadership, namely the principal who provides exemplary behavior to teachers and students, emphasizing the importance of the harmony between words and actions. Additionally, there is good synergy between the principal and teachers in realizing the school's vision and mission. The harmony between words and actions is a manifestation of exemplarity demonstrated by a leader (Briando & Purnomo, 2019).

"...We should provide an example as a basis for us to hold onto, that let us give da'wah through words but also through actions, not with violence, not with coercion, I think with da'wah, with the model that was presented earlier. Hopefully, Muhammadiyah with the concept of moderate Islam, progressive Islam, with various methods of da'wah for community and cultural da'wah in Muhammadiyah. I think that can be our main weapon" (Interview I, June 10, 2021).

As Muslims, we should not engage in acts of vandalism against places of worship in the name of anything. As Muslims, we should set an example in practicing tolerance and preaching with politeness without hurting the feelings of others who share the same religion or have different beliefs. Certainly, teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar always prioritize moderate Islam both in its culture and community preaching. This is the main weapon in preaching within Muhammadiyah. The exemplarity provided by the principal and teachers is crucial in realizing a moderate school.

In the realm of education, the approach to building Islamic moderation requires balanced strategies and is appropriate to the context in presenting the principles of Islamic teachings to students. This includes delivering fundamental Islamic values such as tolerance, peace, and simplicity, as well as strengthening inclusive and responsive understandings of diversity. In an academic environment, the development of Islamic moderation also emphasizes the integration of religious concepts with relevant knowledge and social situations, enabling students to relate religious teachings to relevant contexts in their lives.

Additionally, the approach to Islamic moderation in education also encourages students to apply critical thinking, appreciate diverse perspectives, and strengthen inclusive attitudes in interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Through efforts to build Islamic moderation in education, educational institutions aim to create an environment that promotes deep understanding, tolerance, and balance in practicing Islamic values in complex and diverse societies. As expressed by the following informant:

"...For classroom learning through daily practice, teachers, when students arrive in the morning, we smile, greet, and talk. It is part of our effort to interact well with each other. Good habits here. So, that is one form of how we, it means the children do not see. They are not silent by themselves. We all mingle. We all know each other. That is the form of showing that we know each other among each other" (Interview NA, June 9, 2021).

They are maximizing the implementation of moderate Islamic values at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar through the exemplarity of teachers by cultivating smiles, greetings, and conversations to students who arrive early in the morning at school. This is done by duty teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar in the morning before the bell rings. Through such actions, students observe and emulate what they see. Such interactions are part of building closeness between teachers and students. So, there are no students left behind; everyone greets each other. Teachers mingle with students in school interactions. This is done as a form of mutual acquaintance

4. The Construction of Openness in Muhammadiyah Schools

In the Muhammadiyah educational environment, the development of openness plays a crucial role in creating an inclusive and responsive atmosphere towards diversity. This openness involves various aspects, including the acceptance of students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, as well as open dialogue practices and collaboration among school

community members. In Muhammadiyah schools, the construction of openness is reflected in the acceptance of new ideas and values, recognition of differing opinions, and implementation of inclusive policies to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals to grow and develop. Additionally, openness is realized through transparent decision-making policies, open communication among all stakeholders, and close cooperation between schools and communities. By fostering strong openness, Muhammadiyah schools strive to create an environment that supports the personal and academic development of students, while promoting harmonious and inclusive relationships within the educational community.

Openness towards students who are converts to Islam and come from non-Muslim families also occurs at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar. This is evident in the following informant's statement:

"In our Muhammadiyah school, we have the Muhammadiyah Student Association, which has been very helpful in teaching the presence of moderate Islam. Here, although the majority of students are Muslims, there are also converts. There are also students who are Muslims, but their parents are Christians, or their grandparents are Christians. We give examples in teaching to always respect them as non-Muslims. When they worship, give them space, do not disturb them, do not make it difficult for them—especially those who live together. In one case, in class XI, the student's grandmother is a Christian and the student is a Muslim. I said, regardless, treat them as parents. They said, when it comes to prayer, there is no issue from the grandmother's side, so if the grandmother wants to worship, give her space, do not make it difficult for her" (Interview I, June 8, 2021).

The majority of students at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar are Muslims, but there are also converts. Even a recent convert to Islam is accepted, even if their parents are still Christians and live together. This shows that SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar is quite open in accepting convert students whose families (parents, grandparents) have a non-Muslim background. Such nuances of religious education are always exemplified. Even though their parents or grandparents are Christians, they are still treated well. Moreover, in worship, they tolerate each other even though they still live in the same household or complex.

"Then, as a mentor, how do you see the characteristics of students, because earlier it was mentioned that students have different religions, besides that there is diversity, for example, in terms of ethnicity, there are different ethnicities. It is from a cultural aspect, bringing it differently. How to position learning with these different characteristics of students..." (Interview I, June 8, 2021).

Although the students' characteristics at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar come from families with different religions, there is ethnic diversity. What is done is to teach students that diversity is inevitable in life. However, in the eyes of the Creator, what distinguishes each person is their piety, not their skin color, religion, culture, or ethnicity. In this way, students at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar are very harmonious and not primordial in nature.

Discussion Analysis

The above research provides a comprehensive overview of leadership development, Islamic values, Islamic moderation, and openness in Muhammadiyah education. Various aspects of leadership development, including the influence of religious values, organizational culture, and environmental dynamics, are clearly outlined. Leaders in Muhammadiyah educational institutions are required to apply Islamic values in decision-making, community interactions, and facilitating student learning and development. Moreover, adaptation and innovation are necessary to address emerging challenges in the educational environment.

The importance of Islamic values is also reflected in the process of instilling Islamic values in Muhammadiyah schools. In addition to teaching religious subjects, Islamic values are integrated into other educational curricula and reinforced through various extracurricular and religious activities. The ultimate goal is to create a learning atmosphere that fosters stable Islamic character and strong moral values in students. In the context of Islamic moderation development, a balanced and context-appropriate approach is key. Emphasis on critical thinking, appreciation of diverse perspectives, and inclusive attitudes in interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds and beliefs is also highlighted. Education that

integrates religious concepts with relevant knowledge and social situations enables students to relate religious teachings to their lives.

Openness is also a crucial aspect of Muhammadiyah education, with acceptance of students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, open dialogue practices, and collaboration among school community members. This fosters an environment that supports both personal and academic development while promoting harmonious and inclusive relationships within the educational community. Overall, a holistic and integrated approach to leadership development, Islamic values, Islamic moderation, and openness in Muhammadiyah education helps create an educational environment oriented toward Islamic educational goals and the overall welfare of the school community.

CONCLUSION

As Muslims, it is incumbent upon us to exemplify moderate Islamic practices and engage in preaching with courtesy without hurting the feelings of others, regardless of their religion. Certainly, teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Unismuh Makassar always prioritize moderate Islam both in their teachings and community outreach. This serves as the primary tool for preaching within Muhammadiyah. Overall, the efforts to foster openness in the Muhammadiyah educational environment play a crucial role in creating an inclusive and responsive atmosphere towards diversity. The principle of openness includes accepting students from various cultural and religious backgrounds, promoting open dialogue and collaboration involving all stakeholders. Moreover, openness entails embracing new ideas and values, acknowledging differing opinions, and implementing inclusive policies to ensure fair opportunities for all individuals to develop. By applying transparency in decision-making processes, clear communication, and close collaboration between the school and the community, the endeavor to build strong openness aims to create an educational environment that supports the personal and academic growth of students while strengthening harmonious and inclusive relationships within the Muhammadiyah educational community.

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