

The Role of Technology in Pluralism and Multicultural Learning During the Pandemic Era for Islamic Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of pluralism and multicultural learning in the pandemic era for students of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) in Cirebon Regency, West Java. The research method used is qualitative-descriptive with data collection techniques from observations, interviews, and documentation studies that focus on the themes of pluralism education, multicultural education, and online learning for MI students. The findings reveal that the practice of learning pluralism and multiculturalism in the pandemic era is carried out by integrated Islamic and social studies teachers. Learning practices are carried out with special characteristics that are different from elementary schools, namely online learning guided by Islamic values (Al Quran and Hadith). The values taught are not about tolerance (tasamuh), mutual cooperation, and respect for others where the concepts of pluralism and multiculturalism are packaged in such a way that students can understand them from a religious point of view. The conclusion is that pluralism and multicultural education during the pandemic is very dependent on technology such as online learning models and learning applications. The selection of the right learning method refers to the theory of technology-based learning that can support pluralism and multicultural learning. In addition, it is very important to understand the 2022 curriculum so that learning in the new school year can quickly adapt to the pandemic situation and the students themselves. The results of this study serve as input for educational institutions, especially teachers in relevant fields of science to improve learning models in supporting educational goals in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The world of education experienced extraordinary turmoil during the pandemic era. The phenomenon of rampant cases of interpersonal violence, body shaming, bullying, and clashes between students is quite concerning in today's modern era, especially the negative impact since the pandemic because students interact more through technology such as social media. Data and demographics for the year 2020/2021,



educational institutions have received sharp attention from the world community because of student cases that cannot be separated from conflicts between students, cyberbullying, and other less commendable behavior. Such negative social interactions are increasing along with the high number of social media users. Weak parental supervision and limited learning activities in schools exacerbate the situation (Gam et al., 2020; Schlüter, Kraag, & Schmidt, 2021). Studies say that body-shaming arises because society provides certain standards that cannot be achieved by someone so that other people give negative connotations such as insults and ridicule to that person. As a result, students are victims of mental health problems such as stress, inferiority, and other adverse effects (Sugiat, 2019). For some students who do not get a good education, it is quite difficult to protect themselves from body shaming (Gani & Jalal, 2020). According to the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research (2020), in the United States, student crime and bullying statistics increased throughout 2021 during the pandemic. Around 264,000 people and children of Asian descent especially Chinese or around 5.4% have been the unfortunate target of racism from various incidents of cyberbullying. They experienced verbal intimidation, were victims of physical attacks as many as 8% or 24 teenagers and a 72% increase in hate speech.

Recent research recommends the development of violence prevention programs through educational environments aimed at students to prevent violence, bullying, adolescent health, and adverse environmental influences (Bala et al., 2018; Shaikh et al., 2020). Multicultural education and pluralism are allegedly able to prevent and resolve conflicts. This is because multicultural learning and pluralism make students learn to appreciate differences. This learning must be carried out as early as possible, especially for children entering the elementary school level. Unfortunately, changes in the school environment since the pandemic have made the role of the school environment very limited. Therefore, this requires mitigation strategies, violence prevention, and new learning innovations to overcome the challenges and obstacles in front of our eyes.

Conflicts between students and body-shaming will also occur in Indonesia throughout 2021. As a multicultural country due to the diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, and beliefs, as well as pluralism, it is also known as the motto *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* and *Pancasila* Ideology, which are used as guidelines for the cultural life of the community. *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* is also regulated in Article 32 of the Constitution which explains the state's obligation to guarantee freedom in maintaining and developing cultural values. In this case, local governments also have rights and obligations in paying attention to the specificity and diversity of their regions. This is in contrast to the current conditions. Should the values of *Pancasila* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* in the education curriculum be able to minimize conflicts and negative student behavior? It seems that there are other factors that also influence student behavior. Several large districts have handled dozens of cases of student brawls, body shaming, and cyberbullying. For example in the cities of Bogor, Sukabumi, Depok, Kebayoran Lama, Bekasi, to Tambora. Dozens of cases of student brawls due to mutual ridicule occurred and claimed lives. Several cases involved elementary school students who experienced physical bullying from their peers. The worst impact is on victims who are underage, namely declining achievement, dropping out of school, getting sick to experiencing psychological and mental disorders (Trisanti et al., 2020). The literature finds that personal beliefs support acts of violence and are predictors of a person's physical, verbal and psychological abuse (Borualogo et al., 2020). The situation is getting worse because the legal factors applied to violent students do not have a deterrent effect (Sripa, et. al., 2021).

Previous studies expressed concern about the phenomenon that occurred and recommended that the values of pluralist and multicultural education should be strengthened through the education curriculum as early as possible. This is done because elementary school is the first level of school education based on the educational curriculum and has a high possibility of developing attitudes and behavior more quickly to accept learning than the level of education above. Lifestyle behavior and mental health of elementary school children during the pandemic lockdown have become very vulnerable, so it is feared that if they do not receive proper education, it can adversely affect their behavior into adulthood (Maximova et al., 2022).

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) as an educational institution for children at the elementary school level has a strong advantage in minimizing negative student behavior. MI has a more Islamic scope of association, where children are taught as well as possible to have good relationships and morals according to Islamic religious rules (Subandi et al., 2019). Islam teaches about the importance of the values of tolerance, helping, and respecting the rights of others. MI has teachers who are generally also religious leaders/kyai and students, the majority of whom are involved in social and religious organizations. Subjects that support pluralist and multicultural education are also quite capable, such as *aqidah akhlaq* lessons, Islamic cultural history lessons, Islamic jurisprudence and integrated social studies lessons (Mustafida, 2019). The literature explains the importance of the role of a teacher for students. Negative teacher behavior has a negative effect on children in primary schools. Assessment of teacher quality shows the impact on children's growth and development. Therefore, self-regulation, behavior management strategies, and learning methods of a teacher need to be observed in depth (Phillips et al., 2022).

The importance of pluralism and multicultural education is to bridge differences and diversity in society. The values of the two cannot be separated in the diversity of people's lives, especially in areas prone to social conflict. This is the reason why the two notions are very important to be applied in the educational curriculum through integrated social studies subjects and Islamic religious education. This is a novelty in research, where previous studies have not in-depth investigated the role of pluralism and multicultural learning for MI students, especially in West Java as one of the regions of Indonesia with the highest number of MIs reaching 4,107 MIs consisting of 91 State MIs and 4,016 private MIs. This is recorded in data from the Central Statistics Agency on MI under the Indonesian Ministry of Religion. In addition, the number of students reached 28,192 students (Kementerian Agama RI, 2021). This means that West Java Province, precisely Cirebon district, is one of the largest MI centers in Indonesia which is very suitable for research studies related to pluralism and multicultural learning practices for MI students in the pandemic era. Previous studies have focused on studying such learning but at the public school level. For example, recent research conducted by Um & Ch (2022) on the importance of multicultural education in teaching and learning processes in elementary schools for social justice. Pluralism education has a reciprocal relationship that can improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of the existing education system (Jabeen, et. al., 2021). In its development, there have been pros and cons in proving the value of pluralism and multiculturalism because it is feared that it will trigger negative public understanding, namely feeling that culture, race, religion, and political beliefs are the most correct and require others to follow them. Other findings support these two notions because they are considered capable of creating a national spirit, tolerance, helping and having pride in maintaining the plurality of a nation (Erbaş, 2019).

Question Research

Based on the background of the research problem that this study investigates pluralism learning, multicultural learning in the pandemic era conducted by Integrated Social Studies subject teachers for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) students in Cirebon district, as follows: How is pluralism and multicultural learning in the pandemic era for MI students in Cirebon district?

Literature Review

Learning Theory

According to Pritchard (1945), learning theory is the process of changing behavior as a result of experience or trial. This theory obtains knowledge obtained from a learning process. The end result of this learning process is the individual behavior that is formed and controlled. Pavlov revealed that there are several kinds of learning theories. First, the behavioristic learning theory is a learning process based on observable events by focusing on the role of memory, the role of motivation, and the role of students' self-regulation. Second, classical conditioning theory is a set of processes that involve an unconditional stimulus and a neutral stimulus that is able to change the unconditioned response into a conditioned response. Furthermore, B.F Skinner mentions operant conditioning theory, namely the learning process by strengthening the response when a stimulus is raised and has consequences that can increase or decrease the frequency of behavior. According to Bada (2016), constructivism is a learning theory that explains how people can acquire knowledge by learning. This theory suggests that humans construct knowledge from their experiences. In this case, teachers need to reflect on their learning practices by encouraging students to continue to be active in learning activities until they understand the lesson well.

Learning theory contributes to child development and brings significant progress to children's education and health. Learning theory is also related to cognitive processes consisting of problem-solving metacognition, learning to use concepts, instructions and technology, and the application of instructional science (Schlinger, 2021). Skinner (1950) explains that cognitive social learning theory emphasizes that a person learns from the social environment which is influenced by personal factors, behavior, and events in the surrounding environment. More deeply, this theory has a modeling process that includes behavioral, cognitive, and affective changes as a result of observing other people. The main function is to create expectations of success, increase motivation, attention, retention and production. The literature reveals that the cognitive social learning process indirectly increases motivation and self-efficacy. Information processing theory focuses on information processing in attention, perception, encoding, and memory storage in the brain. This theory is also influenced by communication, technology, and neuroscience. Other factors that also influence are; 1) the influence of the family in terms of economic status, education, and parental occupation; 2) the influence of electronic media that can affect children's learning activities (Bereiter, 1990).

Pluralism Education

The concept of pluralism is defined as an understanding that respects the differences and uniqueness of culture in society. While pluralism education is education that is oriented to the reality of the problems faced by society in order to increase the values of tolerance in the midst of diversity. The goal is to make education the front line in realizing a true sense of tolerance (Rizos, 2021). The four main functions of pluralism education are; 1) awaken the nature of mutual respect for fellow human beings; 2) develop the culture and traditions of indigenous peoples; 3) improve the quality of human resources; and 4) form a society that has a tolerance attitude towards diversity. The concept of pluralism education is basically based on three aspects: 1) it is not limited to materials or information obtained in the educational process, including when the learning materials are very different from their beliefs; 2) not limited to sources of information obtained in the world of education, regardless of the understanding and beliefs they have; and 3) not limited to existing texts, in other words, education that encourages students to always be critical of what has been presented, especially in the form of learning texts (Anam, 2019).

The study revealed that pluralism education in Islamic religious education is very important to instill in students so that they become human beings who have character. Pluralism education aims to respect differences in order to create peace and mutual respect between religious communities (Saihu & Aziz, 2020). Peterson & McGoldrick (2009).revealed that preparing students to participate in social and economic life after graduation is one of the goals of education. How that goal is achieved and the interpretation of what constitutes a relevant skill can be done with the support of a pluralism education that includes a range of pedagogical content and practices. In addition, a more pluralistic approach to course content and pedagogy is the basis for better preparing students for economics. That pluralism education from the point of view of learning theory is an integral component of understanding how to design practice to achieve the desired results.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a process of developing all human potentials who are able to appreciate pluralism and heterogeneity as a consequence of cultural, ethnic, ethnic and religious diversity (Sleeter, 2018). With the support of multicultural education, sympathy, respect, appreciation, and empathy for others can be embedded. Students experience various cultural influences in the education system regardless of their social status. Students get the opportunity for multicultural education based on the notion of the values of social justice and equal rights in education. This helps students understand the various value conflicts that are unavoidable in a pluralistic society. This goal is closely related to increasing teachers' understanding of various cultures that are able to shape learning styles, teaching behavior, and decisions to provide education. Therefore, the understanding of pluralism education is often associated with its ability to represent certain societal structures. Such education can avoid racism and help students adapt to the existing education system (Erbaş, 2019).

It should be understood that on the one hand, it is a potential, but on the other hand, it can be a threat to the integrity of the nation and state. Multicultural education is also not confused with certain ethnic studies. The basic difference is if ethnic studies

study the history and social of society, while multicultural education leads to determining the best teaching methods related to culture and improving student achievement. In addition, a positive attitude is needed in building multicultural education. Multicultural education really glorifies humans because it views humans as equals, can work together, help, and respect even though they have different cultures, races, ethnicities, religions, and perspectives (Agustian, 2019). The study reveals how to apply multiculturalism education in schools. First, by generalizing the rights and obligations of all students in schools regardless of the differences between each student. Second, instill an attitude of concern and tolerance among students in the school environment. This is the reason that schools are very important to lay the foundation for changes in society and student behavior (Ibrahim, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The aim is to investigate pluralism learning, multicultural learning in the pandemic era conducted by Integrated Social Studies subject teachers for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) students in Cirebon district. Qualitative-descriptive research uses the theory proposed by Sugiyono (2009) which is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to examine the condition of natural objects. The key instrument lies in data collection techniques by emphasizing participants as informants, triangulation techniques, deductive data analysis, and the meaning of generalization. The focus of the research is the pluralism and multicultural learning structure for MI students in Cirebon Regency, the learning procedures carried out by Integrated Social Studies teachers during the pandemic, and practices in implementing educational curriculum guidelines and government policies related to learning methods during the pandemic.

Participant

Participants take part or involve people by providing support in terms of energy, thoughts and materials as well as their responsibility for every decision that has been taken in order to achieve the research objectives. Participants in this study were MI teachers in Cirebon Regency, West Java. The research participants consisted of 15 Integrated Social Studies teachers from MI Cirebon Regency. The research participants consisted of 10 female teachers and 5 male teachers with an average age of 27-50 years. Participants are integrated social studies teachers who come from grades 4-6, have taught integrated social studies during the Covid 19 pandemic, and have attended learning materials about pluralism and diversity..

Data collection technique

The main data collection is done through observation of the participants. Furthermore, the researchers conducted interviews and documentation studies. Researchers interviewed participants by asking general questions and making direct observations of how the object of research interprets their experiences to others. Researchers made direct observations to observe the organizational structure of MI during the pandemic and several integrated social studies online learning activities. Researchers

conducted interviews with school principals and social studies subject teachers. The interviews focused on identifying teachers' perceptions of the integrated social studies learning process related to pluralism and multiculturalism during the pandemic. The documentation study focuses on documents regarding the integrated social studies education curriculum, lesson plans, and supporting documents in the form of literature studies that are relevant to the research theme. To increase the level of trust and test the validity of the data, an in-depth discussion technique was carried out by the principal, and the relevant Education Office.

Research data analysis

Data analysis used the steps proposed by Miles, et. al., (2014) regarding qualitative-descriptive research steps. Data analysis in qualitative research is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials such as literature studies and related documents so that they are easy to understand, and the findings can be informed to readers. The data analysis technique is inductive in nature where the data that has been obtained is then developed in a certain relationship pattern and the data is searched again repeatedly using triangulation techniques until conclusions can be made that are relevant to the research objectives. This research step begins with field research referring to the results of studies from previous studies or called secondary data that has been used to determine the research focus. While in the field in conducting data collection, the researcher checked the data that had been collected until credible data were obtained. Miles and Huberman mention three stages of data analysis. First, data reduction means summarizing and selecting the main data that is truly credible and relevant to answer the problem formulation. Second, presenting data so that it has clearer and neater visibility so that it is easy for readers to understand. The third is to draw conclusions after the data has been sufficient to answer the problem formulation validly and have strong evidence to support the data collection stage so that the conclusions become credible.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study found that MI in Cirebon district during the pandemic still tried to implement pluralism and multicultural education in a unique way, which was guided by Islamic values (Al Quran and Hadith). The values taught are not only about tolerance, mutual cooperation, and respect for others which are taught through online learning. But also the concepts of pluralism and multiculturalism are packaged in such a way that emphasizes the self-learning method so that students can understand it from a religious point of view independently obtained through videos, audio clips, and quizzes given by the teacher. Teachers are very careful in delivering this education, because they are very vulnerable to pluralism in a negative sense. This is called the internalization of pluralism and multicultural values in Islamic education. Teachers also use educational applications such as teacher rooms and study houses as well as online discussions, such as online tutors via forums, WhatsApp, and Telegram so that students can see and learn examples of commendable attitudes and behaviors in everyday life without having to leave the house for a while to remember the current unfavorable situation. From the results of observations and interviews, it seems that pluralism and multicultural education during the pandemic is very dependent on technology such as online learning models and

learning applications. It's just that some teachers complain about the difficulty of giving an assessment, especially if the condition of the internet network is inadequate and the quota is quite a drain on money. Education quotas are not obtained continuously, so both teachers and students have to spend personal funds which is clearly quite difficult in the midst of a pandemic situation.

The application of pluralism and multicultural education has led to the 2013 curriculum guidelines referring to the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 81A of 2013 concerning curriculum implementation. The results of the interview stated that in 2022, there will be a new curriculum at the SD/MI level. The 2022/2023 Curriculum Plan has been designed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendibud) with the aim of improving the quality of education. At the SD/MI level, the curriculum is designed to fulfill the strengthening of basic competencies and students' holistic understanding. There will be a merger of Natural Sciences (IPA) and Social Sciences (IPS) lessons to form a new lesson called Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS). In addition, there will be integration of computational thinking in Indonesian, Mathematics, and Natural Sciences lessons. Students are educated to have a solutive mindset so that they can have a way of thinking to solve a problem. English will be an elective subject at the elementary level. Students will also receive project-based learning at least 2 times in one academic year which requires teachers to design lessons that strengthen the learning profile of Pancasila (See table 1).

Table 1. MI Curriculum Structure

MI Learning Phase	Class	Explanation
Phase A	Class 1 and Class II	Period of development and improving students' basic literacy and numeracy skills
Phase B	Class III and Class IV	Period builds basic skills to study science, both natural sciences and social sciences
Phase C	Class V and Class VI	Period of environmental observation and observing activities that are able to encourage inquiry skills both concepts and thematics that are more specific in science subjects

Source: Data processed, 2021

Based on table 1, the number of basic subjects is not as much as phase B and phase C. Science has not become a mandatory subject in phase A. The content of science subjects must be taught since entering phase B, namely in class III. The teacher teaches learning activities that are able to encourage inquiry skills and are continued by using a thematic approach and the values of Pancasila. The project burden on Pancasila lessons in that phase is allocated around 20 percent of the learning load per year. (See table 2)

Table 2. Subject Time Allocation

Subjects	Allocation per year (weeks)	Project Allocation per year	Number of JP Per Year
Islamic Religious Education and Character*	108 (3)	36	144

Pancasila and Citizenship Education	144 (4)	36	180
Indonesian	216 (6)	72	288
Mathematics	144 (4)	36	180
Sports physical Education and health	108 (3)	36	144
Choose at least 1 (one) art and culture subject: • Music Art • Art • Theater arts • Dance art	108 (3)	36	144
English	72 (2)**	-	72**
Local content	72 (2)**	-	72**

Source: processed data, 2021

Table 2 is an example of the time allocation for MI subjects for class I-II assuming 1 year = 36 weeks. The sign (*) means that students are required to follow the subject. The sign (**) means a maximum of 2 hours of lessons per week or 72 hours of lessons per year as elective subjects.

Based on the findings that the researchers put forward, basically, the school education environment during the pandemic is not the same as before the pandemic occurred in Indonesia. The difference is clear from the learning model carried out. If in the past face-to-face and lecture learning methods were mostly used by teachers, it's a different matter now. The education system in the pandemic era demands a diverse learning model and the role of the teacher is the key to the success of education. Implementing pluralism and multicultural education in integrated religious education and social studies is not an easy task for a teacher to do. Teachers need to understand the basic concepts of pluralism and multiculturalism itself. The concept of pluralism means that students are taught to appreciate the differences and uniqueness of culture in society, especially their peers. The goal is to make education the front line in realizing a true sense of tolerance (Rizos, 2021). Pluralism education in Islamic religious education subjects is able to instill character because pluralism education aims to respect differences in order to create peace and mutual respect between religious communities (Saihu & Aziz, 2020).

The multicultural concept studies the importance of developing all the potential of students to be able to appreciate pluralism and heterogeneity as a consequence of cultural, ethnic, ethnic, and religious diversity. With the support of multicultural education, sympathy, respect, appreciation, and empathy for others can be embedded. In addition, students have the opportunity to understand the basics of the values of social justice and equal rights in education. This helps students understand the various value conflicts that are unavoidable in a pluralistic society (Sleeter, 2018). Teachers are required to create a learning atmosphere that is able to support the education so that the knowledge taught can be understood by students and applied in everyday life. Sakallı & Kunt (2021) found that the role of teachers in re-conceptualizing aspects of the curriculum, social partners, and policymakers play an important role in pluralism and multicultural education.

The results of the observations found that MI in Cirebon Regency as an educational institution for children at the elementary school level has the advantage of

minimizing negative student behavior because pluralism and multicultural learning in the subjects given contain Islamic values, where children are taught as well as possible in order to have good association and morals according to Islamic religious rules (Subandi et al., 2019). Islam teaches about the importance of the values of tolerance, helping, and respecting the rights of others. MI in Cirebon Regency also has teachers, most of whom are religious leaders/kyai and santri and are members of social and religious organizations. Subjects that support pluralist and multicultural education are also quite capable, such as aqidah akhlaq lessons, Islamic cultural history lessons, Islamic jurisprudence, and integrated social studies lessons (Mustafida, 2019). This is why the role of an MI teacher is very important for their students. According to Phillips et al. (2022), negative teacher behavior has a negative effect on children in primary schools. Assessment of teacher quality shows the impact on children's growth and development. Therefore, self-regulation, behavior management strategies, and learning methods of a teacher need to be observed in depth.

The phenomenon of rampant student interpersonal violence, body shaming, bullying, which is quite concerning in today's modern era demands not only the role of teachers but also parental supervision (Gam et al., 2020; Schlüter, Kraag, & Schmidt, 2021). This is the reason for the importance of developing violence prevention programs through an educational environment aimed at students to prevent violence, bullying, adolescent health, and the negative influence of the environment (Bala et al., 2018; Shaikh et al., 2020). Previous studies analyzed the direction of education during the pandemic and revealed that theoretically there is a need for pluralism and multicultural education perspective in culturally-religious countries and determine the direction of educational policies that may be relevant (Ivenicki, 2021).

There are pros and cons in grounding the values of pluralism and multiculturalism because it is feared that it will trigger negative public understanding, on the other hand, being able to create a national spirit, tolerance, mutual help and pride in maintaining the plurality of a nation (Erbaş, 2019). This means that the educational potential of both is still wide open as long as it is taught properly and correctly. This is explained in constructivism theory about how people can gain knowledge by learning. This theory suggests that humans construct knowledge from their experiences. In this case, teachers need to reflect on their learning practices by encouraging students to continue to be active in learning activities until they understand the lesson well (Bada, 2016). In the end, referring to the design of the 2022/2021 curriculum structure, conflicts between students and body-shaming can be avoided by instilling the importance of education about Bhineka Tunggal Ika and Pancasila ideology in ensuring freedom in maintaining and developing cultural values. In this case, stakeholders have an obligation to realize an educational curriculum that is truly capable of changing negative behavior, lifestyle, and children's health at the SD/MI level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion that has been disclosed by the researcher. This study concludes that the learning model of pluralism and multicultural practice in Islamic religious subjects and integrated social studies at MI Cirebon Regency, West Java teaches about tolerance (*tasamuh*), mutual cooperation, and respect for others. Learning is carried out using a limited online and face-to-face learning model. Pluralism and multicultural education during the pandemic is very dependent on technology such as online learning models and learning applications. The selection of the right learning

method refers to the theory of technology-based learning that can support pluralism and multicultural learning. This research contributes to the theory of learning on child development and is expected to bring significant progress to children's education and mental health. The results of this study serve as input for educational institutions, especially teachers in relevant fields of science to improve pluralism and multicultural learning in supporting educational goals in Indonesia.

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