Multicultural Islamic Education and the Resilience of the Shia Community in Jepara

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Abstract

This study examines the role of multicultural Islamic education in promoting the resilience of the Shia community in Jepara, a minority group residing within a predominantly Sunni cultural and religious context. The central research problem addresses how educational and socio-cultural strategies have enabled this community to maintain its identity and coexist harmoniously. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis at the Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School. The findings reveal four key strategies in instilling multicultural values: (1) integrating multicultural content into the hidden curriculum, (2) promoting moderate religious attitudes among teachers and students, (3) reducing prejudice by accommodating differences, and (4) implementing equity pedagogy through dialogue and cultural engagement. The Shia community demonstrates remarkable resilience by utilizing cultural adaptation, kinship and marital networks, and active involvement in socio-religious activities. Academically, the study contributes to the development of inclusive models of Islamic education for religious minorities. Socially, it highlights the importance of shared religious values in mitigating sectarian tensions and promoting communal harmony. At the policy level, these insights offer valuable guidance for governments and civil society in promoting a more inclusive and dialogic approach to multicultural Islamic education.

*Keywords***:** *Islamic boarding school, multicultural Islamic education, resilience, Shia, Sunni*

Introduction

Studies on multicultural Islamic education in relation to the Shia sect are not new within the academic landscape. Multicultural Islamic education has proven to be an effective instrument in strengthening the resilience of Shiites as a religious minority. Collaborative engagement between Sunni and Shia educational institutions promotes multicultural awareness and fosters social cohesion, laying the groundwork for inclusive, harmonious coexistence across diverse religious contexts. One key strategy involves implementing appreciative educational approaches, such as clarification forums, inclusive social interactions, and the reinforcement of a spirit of nationalism (Saefudin et al., 2021). At the macro level, there has been a growing body of research on the relationship between multicultural education and the Indonesian context, particularly by scholars who emphasize the importance of inclusive approaches from an early age to support religious and cultural diversity (Ahmad Zulkarnain et al., 2025; Pauzian, 2025; Suradi, 2022; Suri & Chandra, 2021). At the policy level, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture permits educational institutions to develop curricula grounded in multicultural principles (Kosasih et al., 2022; Nurman et al., 2022). In the Indonesian context, studies such as those by Dini Sari have highlighted Sunni-Shia tensions, but mainly through sociopolitical or conflict lenses rather than through resilience-building mechanisms rooted in education (Sari et al., 2020). Yet, empirical studies in Muslim-

majority societies applying these concepts, particularly in Islamic boarding schools or pesantren, remain scarce. Some efforts, such as those by Suyato, have explored intercultural sensitivity among Indonesian students. Still, their research does not sufficiently address how Islamic educational institutions themselves navigate multicultural challenges from within (Suyato, 2020).

Studies on multicultural Islamic education in the context of the Shia community have emerged as a response to the challenges faced by minority groups in preserving their identity and existence amid the dominance of the majority. The core research problem is to explore how multicultural Islamic education can be effectively implemented as a strategy to foster the resilience of the Shia community and strengthen inter-sectarian social relations. While previous research has often focused on macro-level policies or institutional dynamics, this study aims to explore the grassroots practices of multicultural education within Shia pesantren, particularly in Jepara. It investigates how inclusive educational approaches, such as hidden curricula, dialogical learning, and intergroup collaboration, empower minority students to maintain their religious identity, promote tolerance, and counter prejudice. Through a qualitative case study, this research contributes to a context-based understanding of minority resilience, offering insights that are both theoretically rich and practically relevant for advancing inclusive Islamic education in pluralistic societies.

Although studies on multicultural Islamic education and the Shia community have been widely conducted, most existing research tends to focus on macro-level aspects, such as curriculum policy or inter-institutional relations, without delving deeply into the concrete and dynamic educational practices at the grassroots community level. Moreover, prior studies often approach Sunni-Shia relations from normative or political perspectives, with limited attention to how multicultural Islamic education directly contributes to the resilience of Shia communities within predominantly Sunni social contexts. This research seeks to offer a novel contribution by revealing how multicultural Islamic education strategies employed by Shia pesantren play a critical role in reinforcing both identity and social resilience under the pressures of majority dominance. Through a qualitative case study approach, this study aims not only to examine inter-sectarian relations but also to uncover the internal mechanisms by which the Shia community responds to stigmatization, particularly through constructive and multicultural educational pathways. This area has remained largely unexplored in previous scholarship.

Shia in Jepara, represented by the Darut Taqrib (DATA) Islamic Boarding School, will be the focus of the researcher's study for several reasons. First, they can freely establish inclusive interactions with Sunni circles. The public widely recognizes their socio-religious activities. Second, the Jepara Shia group has received social recognition, namely the normative conditions required for every citizen to participate in their social world on a fair and equal basis. For example, in Dukuh Candi, Banjaran Village, Bangsri, there is a symbol of two adjacent Sunni-Shia prayer rooms, namely the Al-Arif (Sunni) and Al-Hasanain (Shia) prayer rooms (Saefudin et al., 2021). Third, based on the researcher's initial observations of Shiites' social activities in Jepara, they play an active role as subjects in maintaining their identity and beliefs. The proof is that they established Islamic boarding schools and participated in interfaith dialogue and cooperation. This condition certainly goes beyond the issue of tolerance and non-discrimination (Riaz et al., 2023).

Against this backdrop, the present study addresses a notable research gap: how does a minority Islamic group, specifically the Shia community in Jepara, utilize Islamic education as a tool for cultural resilience within a Sunni-majority context? This study differs from prior works by shifting the focus from normative theories or conflict narratives to a contextualized exploration of educational practice, resilience, and intercultural dialogue within an Islamic framework. It examines how multicultural values are internalized, transmitted, and embodied within the DATA, providing insights into the lived experiences of minority survival and coexistence.

In this study, Shia is categorized as a minority group because the number of Shiites in Indonesia, as well as in Asia in general, such as in Saudi Arabia, India, and Pakistan, is relatively more

minor compared to Sunnis as the mainstream Islamic group. (International Crisis Group, 2022; Mason, 2021; RuffleSource, 2020). Based on Mohammad Fazlhashemi's observations, Shia Muslims globally are estimated to comprise around 15-20% of the total Muslim population. However, in several countries such as Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Yemen, Bahrain, and Lebanon, the Shia are the majority group. (Fazlhashemi, 2021).

As of 2025, no credible survey organization has released a global demographic publication that specifically measures the number of Shia adherents. The researcher conducted a systematic search and consulted authoritative parties, including the leadership of Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI) and a DATA teacher. According to Ustadz MA, no official data are available because the community's fluctuating dynamics complicate enumeration; he added, with a light touch, that the practice of *taqiya* further obscures identification. An anonymous informant also confirmed that no official figures for Indonesia have been published and that data collection is still in progress. Consequently, this study refers to estimates by the Pew Research Center indicating that Shia constitute between 10 and 13 percent of the world's Muslim population. Given that Muslims accounted for 25.6 percent of the global population in 2020 (Pew Research Center), the number of Shia is therefore estimated to fall within approximately 200–260 million people. (Hackett et al., 2025). Meanwhile, in Jepara, based on Ustadz MA's calculation, there are an estimated 1.500–2.000 Shi'i.

DATA can be characterized as a minority Islamic educational institution in Jepara, as it is the only pesantren (Islamic boarding school) among the 151 in the regency that is affiliated with the Shia tradition. Even so, DATA actively cultivates cross-madhhab networks through coordination with the Jepara Regency Forum for Pesantren Communication (Forum Komunikasi Pondok Pesantren, FKPP). Based on an interview with MR, the Chair of FKPP Jepara, 223 pesantren in the regency hold a statistical registration number from Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag RI), 152 of which are members of FKPP; a more detailed breakdown is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Pesantren Affiliations in Jepara Regency

No	Pesantren Affiliation	Amount
1	Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)	198
2	Muhammadiyah	1
3	Syiah	1
4	Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia (LDII)	1
5	Not affiliated	11
6	Other	11
Total		223

Source: FKPP Jepara, 2022

The primary aim of this study is to explore how multicultural Islamic education contributes to the resilience of the Shia community in Jepara amidst the socio-religious dominance of the Sunni majority. By focusing on the lived experiences and educational practices within the Shia pesantren, particularly DATA, this research seeks to uncover the strategies through which multicultural values are internalized and enacted as tools for maintaining identity, fostering inclusion, and building intergroup harmony. The study is not only intended to provide a descriptive account of educational practices but also to offer a critical analysis of how those practices function as a form of resistance and adaptation in a context where minority beliefs are often marginalized. Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on Islamic education, multiculturalism, and minority resilience by integrating insights from political theory, pedagogy,

and religious studies. Through a grounded qualitative case study, this research aspires to generate context-sensitive knowledge that can inform inclusive education policy and foster a deeper understanding of how Islamic educational institutions can promote peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies.

Research Method

This research adopts a qualitative case study approach (Mishra & Dey, 2022) to present a deep, contextualized understanding of the lived experiences, strategies, and perspectives of the Shia community in Jepara, particularly in relation to multicultural Islamic education and their resilience as a minority group. The choice of this method stems from the complexity and richness of the social realities within the Shia community, which cannot be captured through quantitative analysis. This study focuses on Jepara Regency as its primary location, with particular attention given to the DATA, a central institution in the educational and religious life of the Shia community in the region.

The study draws on James A. Banks's framework of multicultural education to map how content integration, knowledge-construction processes, prejudice reduction, and equity pedagogy are operationalized in classroom practice at DATA. Indicators for each dimension are translated into a coding rubric, a review of instructional materials, and semi-structured interviews with teachers and students. In parallel, community resilience theory is employed to examine the collective capacity of Shia adherents to sustain identity, manage external pressures, and restore social functioning through networks, social capital, and adaptive strategies.

The initial stage of the research, conducted in 2021, concentrated on mapping the educational ecosystem of the Shia learning community in Jepara. DATA served as the focal point due to its pivotal role in shaping the religious identity, academic orientation, and community strategies of local Shiites. Over time, the study's scope expanded organically to include other interconnected institutions and communities that share a network of educational and ideological ties with Pesantren DATA. This organic expansion allowed the researcher to gain a broader perspective on the Shia community's social dynamics and their interactions with the wider Sunni-majority society. The research process unfolded over three years and was finalized in 2024, ensuring both longitudinal depth and contextual accuracy.

Throughout the research period, the researcher engaged in sustained observation of the activities and learning practices taking place within the pesantren and the broader Shia community. While continuous physical presence in the field was not always feasible due to logistical constraints, the researcher made repeated field visits and, at key moments, undertook immersive stays. One of the most significant phases of immersion occurred during Ramadan 2023, when the researcher lived at the pesantren for three consecutive weeks. This live-in period was strategically chosen for its intense religious and educational aspects, enabling close observation of both ritual and pedagogical practices. During this time, the researcher documented the rhythms of daily life, including prayer routines, fasting practices, religious study sessions (pengajian), and social interactions within and beyond the pesantren's boundaries. These immersive observations revealed not only the inner workings of multicultural Islamic education but also the subtle, everyday strategies employed by the Shia community to assert their identity while maintaining social harmony in a predominantly Sunni environment.

In parallel with participant observation, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with a range of key informants. The first and primary informant was Ustadz MT, the caretaker of the DATA Islamic Boarding School. His insights were invaluable, given his leadership role and deep involvement in curriculum development, educational philosophy, and community engagement. Additional interviews were conducted with pesantren administrators, including Ustadz MA, Ustadz JM, and Ustadz N, who were instrumental in explaining how multicultural values are

embedded in educational practices and how these relate to broader themes of resilience, identity formation, and interfaith coexistence. Furthermore, students of the pesantren, pseudonymously identified as B, R, I, and M, were also interviewed to provide the perspective of young Shia learners. Their testimonies illuminated the lived experience of being a religious minority in a complex sociocultural setting. They highlighted the adaptive strategies they learn and employed as part of their religious education.

To ensure data triangulation, the researcher complemented field observations and interview transcripts with document analysis. Relevant documents included the pesantren's official profile, educational materials, community declarations, and event reports related to religious and multicultural activities. These documents provided valuable background information, allowing the researcher to cross-verify the consistency of narratives emerging from the field data. The analytical process followed a five-stage model as outlined by Yin, which included compiling the data, disassembling it into thematic units, reassembling these units into interpretive categories, interpreting the findings in light of existing theories, and drawing conclusions that respond to the research questions. (Yin, 2011, p. 177).

This thorough and immersive methodology enables the research to offer a grounded, nuanced portrait of how the Shia community in Jepara uses education to preserve culture and engage constructively with broader society. By situating the educational practices of the Shia pesantren within a framework of multiculturalism, this study contributes novel insights into how minority Muslim communities negotiate identity, resilience, and coexistence in a pluralistic but often sectarian religious landscape.

Results and Discussion
Multiculturalism and Community Resilience

Multiculturalism addresses how a state manages and responds to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity within its society (Lægaard, 2021, p. 617). Critical multiculturalism serves not only as a conceptual framework but also as a praxis-oriented approach, offering concrete strategies for shaping a generation capable of transforming society into a more just, pluralistic, and substantively democratic order (Martinelle et al., 2023, p. 56). In the Islamic context, multicultural education is not merely about teaching tolerance but serves as a means of social transformation that challenges inequality and discrimination. Through ethical and dialogical spaces, it fosters a generation that is not only intellectually inclusive but also socially transformative in advancing justice and equality (Teo, 2021, pp. 184–185). In the context of this review, the community that is considered weak and often marginalized by the majority group is the Shia community. The Shia population is only around 10-15% of all Muslims in the world. They live in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, and Azerbaijan. They are also found in Afghanistan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen. In Islam, the Sunni and Shia are sects with a long history in the historical civilization. Ideological differences between these two schools of thought sometimes trigger religious intolerance, political disputes, and sectarian violence (Afzal, 2023).

The theory of multicultural education in this study is used to see the paradigm of multiculturalism inherent in the ustadzs and students at the DATA Islamic boarding school. There are at least five fundamental dimensions that will be studied, including 1) content integration, 2) knowledge construction process, 3) prejudice reduction, and 4) equality pedagogy. In contrast to the four dimensions analyzed, the fifth, namely pesantren culture and the empowering social structure, is not examined in this study due to methodological constraints. The research design was deliberately bounded to the micro-level of pedagogical practice within the Shi¿i. In contrast, an institutional-level inquiry would have required a more extended period of field immersion. Moreover, access to internal documents and forums, as well as gatekeeper permissions, was limited to classroom observations and structured interviews.

Resilience is a form of adaptability, characterized by the ability to be flexible, bounce back, and stand tall after experiencing adverse life events. (Folke et al., 2021). This definition assumes that actions taken before a detrimental event occurs, such as preventive or anticipatory steps, are not included in the resilience category. However, some experts also consider the prevention aspect, or any activity that demonstrates the dimensions of resistance and anticipation, as part of the resilience domain. With the note, if indeed the action is intended to ward off a bad event that is suspected of befalling a community, by considering this aspect, resilience can be interpreted as the ability of an entity, such as an organization or community, to anticipate, absorb, respond to, adapt to, and recover from disturbances. (Madani & Parast, 2023).

The consensus among experts on the core characteristics of resilience is that a particular entity, such as an individual, community, organizational unit, or larger system, can return to a 'normal' condition or adapt to its environment. Initially, resilience theory was used by psychologists to identify disorders resulting from exposure to stress and other social environmental factors. (Grygorenko & Naydonova, 2023). However, in its development, this theory has expanded to a broader scope. In the context of organizations, for example, community resilience is defined as the ability of a group to face normative or non-normative difficulties or the consequences of problems to build, maintain, or regain lost hope and satisfaction. (Carlos Cañizares-Gaztelu, 2023).

In this research, the community resilience in question is the ability of the Shia group in Jepara to face difficulties as a form of self-defence from the Sunni majority group. DATA is the object of this study, as indications of conflict between the majority Sunni and minority Shia groups, which have occurred in several areas such as Bangil and Sampang, have never been observed in social relations in Jepara. The social structure between Sunni and Shi'i in Jepara is almost stable and non-conflictual. The resilience aspects that the researcher focuses on in their observations are social capital, adaptability, social cohesion, and the role of the Shia community network in Jepara. In more detail, the researcher carefully examines the social bonding capital of the Shia group in establishing individual relationships with friends, family, and specific groups within their internal environment. The researcher also attempts to trace the horizontal social connections (social bridging) of the Shia group to civil society organizations, such as NU, Muhammadiyah, and Gusdurian Jepara, which represent the Sunni community in Jepara—also, looking at the relations of the Shia with other mass organizations, such as the MUI, political parties, Islamic boarding school associations, professional groups, and the like. No less critical, researchers identify structural connections (social links) that constitute the social capital of the Shia group in Jepara, including government institutions (such as the police, the military, the Jepara Regency Government, and others). Experts identify various types of social capital as influencing community resilience (Roberts, 2021).

Cultivation of Multicultural Islamic Education in Shia Islamic Boarding Schools

a) Integration of multicultural content into learning

Following James A. Banks' thinking, in the dimension of content integration, ideally, the ustadzs uses examples, data, and information sourced from various cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and a theory in a particular subject. However, looking at the learning curriculum implemented by the DATA Islamic boarding school, researchers have not found a concrete form of multiculturalism integration in the subject.

The multicultural paradigm is taught to students through a hidden curriculum. As explained by Ustad MA from the following interview results:

> In the pesantren curriculum, no subject explicitly teaches students the values of multiculturalism. However, multiculturalism, according to Shia, is something natural. That is how believers should be assessed. That is why students are taught to interact frequently and visit and present to other groups (interview with MA, Teacher of Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School, September 12, 2021).

This information from Ustadz MA aligns with the researcher's observations on May 23, 2019. At that time, the DATA Islamic boarding school received Christian students from the Wiyata Wacana Christian College (STAKWW) Pati, namely Berkat and Purnomo. The purpose of the two Christian students was to do a three-day "live-in" at the boarding school during the month of Ramadan. They were not only well received but also treated the same as other Shia students, from matters of food and reciting the Quran to placement in dormitory rooms. Both of them mingled with the students.

On another occasion, the DATA Islamic boarding school also received a visit from students from the Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic University of Jepara. This forum was used for open dialogue between Sunni and Shiite groups. Ustad MT said:

> It is not necessary to be Shia to understand Shiaism. Just as it is not required to be Christian to know Christianity. Simple quality meeting spaces are needed (quality of presence). Many people, including students, misunderstand Shiaism. Shiaism is considered a scary spectre. Shiaism is terrorist, violent, and murderous. (Rohman, 2021).

Although multicultural content is not explicitly embedded in the formal curriculum at DATA, the inclusive practices implemented in daily educational activities significantly shape students' perspectives and help them internalize multicultural values. This approach reflects the role of the hidden curriculum, which encompasses informal learning through social interactions, teacher modeling, and an institutional atmosphere that fosters tolerance and respect for diversity. (Przymus & Huddleston, 2021). Through these experiences, students gradually develop a reflective and multicultural construction of knowledge, which will be further discussed in the following section.

b) Avoiding fanaticism as a construction of knowledge for ustadzs and students

Religious fanaticism, understood in this context as an extreme adherence to specific doctrines, is shaped by a combination of influential factors. One of the most significant factors is a person's educational environment, which encompasses the roles of teachers and religious instructors, as well as the curriculum that shapes their worldview. Equally influential is the role of mass media, which, when not critically mediated, can become a vehicle for provocation and the spread of hate speech. Together, these factors create a fertile ground for the development of intolerant attitudes, especially when individuals are exposed to rigid interpretations of religion without space for dialogue or critical reflection (Hemminger, 2021; Sobhani, 2021). However, both of them have been anticipated from the start by Ustadz, who teaches at the DATA Islamic Boarding School. "*Fanaticism by feeling that he is the most correct party to the point of blaming others is a mistake* (interview with MA, via WhatsApp message, September 12, 2021). To avoid the pejorative connotations of the term "fanaticism", Ustadz MA needs to clarify its meaning.

> Fanaticism, in the sense of believing the truth, is a must. However, acknowledging the absoluteness of reality is a mistake. That's why it is necessary to place it correctly (interview with MA, via WhatsApp message, September 12, 2021)

The moderate construction of knowledge is also evident in how students view others. One student named B said:

> While I was studying at DATA, the Ustadz always taught his students not to be prejudiced against other groups or other schools of thought, even if they were non-Muslims, because they had their own arguments and beliefs. The Ustadz discussed this topic during the school of thought material (interview with B, a student at the Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School, September 9, 2021).

A moderate perspective, as the opposite of the fanaticism that underlies the thinking of the ustadzs and students above, plays a vital role in preventing the growth of the seeds of religious fundamentalism. Excessive fanaticism will ultimately lead someone to fundamentalism and extremism (Soueid & Merhej, 2024).

c) Reducing prejudice against other groups

In the prejudice-reduction dimension, the ustadzs focus on students' racial attitudes and on strategies to develop them in a more positive direction. The ustadzs can design learning interventions to help students gain more positive feelings towards other racial groups.

Based on the researcher's interview with one of the informants, the ustadzs at the DATA Islamic Boarding School and the Krapyak Jepara Islamic Boarding School already have a multicultural perspective. This can be seen in how the ustadzs position the status of students from various regions in Indonesia, such as East Java (Sampang, Bondowoso, and Situbondo), Central Java (Jepara), West Java (Cirebon), DKI Jakarta, and West Kalimantan (Ketapang and Pontianak). The ustadz treats all students equally and does not differentiate between them (interview with MA, Ustadz of the DATA Islamic Boarding School, September 12, 2021). This kind of awareness represents the essence of multiculturalism in a straightforward manner, namely, the acceptance of cultural diversity (Wahyono et al., 2022).

Not much different from the Ustadz's opinion above, one of the student informants, named I, also gave a similar explanation of the meaning of multiculturalism. He said:

> Multiculturalism is recognizing and glorifying differences. The differences in question refer to individual differences or cultural differences, such as variations in values, systems, cultures, habits, and politics. Then, how do Islamic boarding schools cultivate it by respecting differences and deepening their understanding? (Interview with I, a student of the Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School, September 9, 2021).

The efforts made by students at Pesantren DATA to reduce prejudice represent a concrete step toward reinforcing a multicultural educational paradigm. Prejudice, which is often rooted in distorted generalizations and emotional antipathy, needs to be addressed through deliberate educational strategies that foster openness and mutual understanding. Recent studies affirm that prejudice is shaped by both individual cognition and broader cultural influences that inform social attitudes. (Tropp et al., 2022). Therefore, the students' perspective and behavior, marked by intercultural tolerance and dialogical openness, can be interpreted as an embodiment of a multicultural worldview that resists stereotypical biases and promotes inclusive values across diverse religious contexts.

d) Equity pedagogy through dialogue and respect for local culture

In the dimension of equality pedagogy, the ustadz uses learning techniques and methods to facilitate academic learning for students from various ethnic and social classes.

The meaning of multiculturalism at the DATA Islamic Boarding School is also expressed through respect for local culture. Ustadz Ali said, " *Local culture cannot be separated from the values of divinity or monotheism with its various forms; many slices of truth are found in it. Maintaining and enriching it is a necessity*" (interview with MA, Ustadz of the Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School, September 12, 2021). I added, "*local culture is part of the culture of society, which cannot be separated from society itself, and local wisdom is a unity of society*," (interview with I, Student of the DATA Islamic Boarding School, September 9, 2021).

Based on the researcher's observations of the deliberation activities at the Islamic boarding school on August 7, 2024, it was seen that every student had the same opportunity to express their opinions. The deliberation is a forum for students to express their views, regardless of age and class level. Each student is free to answer and exchange ideas during deliberation. This process fosters a dynamic discussion and cultivates a culture of constructive dialogue.

Figure 1. Learning Process with Deliberation Method at DATA Islamic Boarding School

In the context of multiculturalism, the value of equality taught by Shia is seen in their belief in the teachings of the prophets, especially the Prophet Muhammad, who rejected all forms of racism based on blood or skin colour. Although the Shi¿a informants in this study affirm human equality as a universal principle of Islam, this normative stance should be situated alongside the historical context of the emergence of Shi¿a identity in the early Islamic period. Recent scholarship underscores that Shi¿a collective memory and political theology are rooted in the post-Prophetic succession crisis, during which segments of the community declined to accept the majority consensus recognizing Abu Bakr, ¿Umar, and ¿Uthmân, and articulated the doctrine of imamate, divinely guided leadership, that positions ¿Alî as the rightful successor. (Asghari, 2023).

This is in line with the principles advocated by multiculturalism figures such as Will Kymlicka, who emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting the diversity of identities in society (Kymlicka, 2025). Kymlicka argues that social justice can be achieved through the recognition of the rights of minority groups, which is also at the heart of Shia teachings. Thus, Shia belief in equality not only reflects religious teachings but is also in line with the values of multiculturalism that encourage society to oppose racism.

Resilience Strategy of the Shia Community in Jepara

a. Cultural Adaptation Strategy

Adjustment of cultural identity, including clothing, is a phenomenon that often occurs in minority communities living alongside the majority. One of the resilience strategies carried out by the Shia group, as exemplified by the Yazidi group in Iraq, is through a cultural approach. The practice of genocide by ISIS in 2014 became a momentum to create new resilience. The Yazidi group, initiated by young people, showed extraordinary resistance by reconstructing traditional heritage sites and re-engaging in various customary practices. (Isakhan & Shahab, 2020).

> Shias have a desire to wear robes similar to those worn by their former scholars. However, the condition of the Shia in Jepara often intersects with NU friends and the surrounding community. So Shi'i tend to adjust to avoid possible harm (interview with MA, Ustadz DATA, January 25, 2022).

Drawing on social identity theory, the adjustment of traditional dress by the Shi¿i community in Jepara can be understood as an identity-management strategy designed to mitigate identity threat posed by out-groups (Phoenix, 2022). Clothing functions as a powerful identity cue in the formation of social impressions; individuals deliberately manage their appearance to signal group membership and to shape others' perceptions (Hester & Hehman, 2023). It should not be overlooked that this practice aligns with the doctrine of *taqiya,* understood as a disciplined restraint of identity expression under conditions of potential harm and as a means of preserving coexistence (Ghobadzadeh, 2022).

Furthermore, the act of adjusting clothing can be understood as a way for Shia followers of Jepara to manage perceptions and reduce stigma from the majority group. Thus, this adjustment is not only a pragmatic strategy but also a symbolic act that shows openness and adaptation in everyday social interactions. From the perspective of symbolic interaction theory (Brejhus et al., 2024). This adjustment can be understood as a means for the Shi'i community to convey its good intentions and willingness to coexist harmoniously with the majority group.

According to informant Ustadz JM, an alumnus of the Quranic Interpretation program who studied for 11 years in Iran, robes have special significance and can be worn only by specific individuals. Robes, especially those called "Kabau" or inner robes, are reserved for those who have attained a certain level of knowledge and are recognized as scholars. A ceremony usually accompanies the wearing of this robe. The person who wears the robe must also be a scholar (interview with JM, Ustadz of the Darut Taqrib Islamic boarding school, August 8, 2024).

This culture is different from that in Indonesia. Although scholars are entitled to wear the Kabau, they often do not do so to conform to local traditions. Ustadz MT, for example, once wore a Kabau worn by an Imam Marja, but now he chooses not to wear it anymore.

Ustadz JM also emphasized that the use of robes in Iran is not just clothing, but a symbol of a person's piety and intellectual status. This suggests that the tradition of dressing in Iran has a profound social and religious dimension, in contrast to the more flexible and adaptable use of robes in Indonesia, which is tailored to the local cultural context.

The research informant from PCNU Jepara, KH. HZ also recognized the pattern of cultural adaptation. In his statement, Shiites in Jepara were able to adapt and coexist with the majority Sunni community through a cultural approach (interview with KH. HZ, Deputy Chairperson of PCNU Jepara, August 27, 2024). Hisyam highlighted that in many other places, friction often arises between the Shiite and Sunni communities due to differences in beliefs. However, in Jepara, this can be minimized thanks to strong cultural assimilation. Shia in Jepara, he said, should not highlight their differences in religious practices but rather emphasize social and cultural unity. For example, the Shia community in Jepara participates in local traditions such as *tahlilan, manaqib,* and other religious events that are commonly carried out by the Sunni community. This pattern, in Aldrich's view, is that strong social relations provide communities with opportunities to survive and even thrive in the face of challenges. Among the Shia in Jepara, cultural assimilation and social interactions rooted in local traditions are concrete forms of social capital that help strengthen their position within Sunni society. Communities with good adaptive capacity will be better able to navigate and respond to changing circumstances, as demonstrated by the Shia in Jepara. They accommodate aspects of the Sunni tradition that are social and cultural without compromising their fundamental beliefs, a strategy that enables them to remain accepted by the surrounding community. (Allis Nurdini et al., 2021).

b. Kinship and Marriage Strategies

An important factor that binds the brotherhood between Sunnis and Shiites in Kepuk Village, Bangsri, is family ties. In one family, according to informant R, the husband adheres to Shiite beliefs. At the same time, his wife is Sunni (interview with R, a Shiite follower in Kepuk Village, Bangsri, Jepara, April 8, 2023). This strategy has been in place for a long time and has been

confirmed by numerous researchers. Research conducted by Asmana and Mubarok confirmed that intermarriage between Shiites and Sunnis has occurred since the 1980s, when Shiites began to develop in Jepara. In the context of resilience theory, marriage and kinship ties can serve as tools to bridge gaps between communities. (Asmana & Mubarok, 2024). Marriage is one of the adaptation patterns of Shi'i who live in a strong Sunni-majority area in Jepara. Through marriage, the Shia group creates a strong kinship network. This strategy not only helps to maintain Shia identity but also facilitates social integration and reduces the potential for conflict. (Faiz et al., 2024).

Family relationships are a crucial element in forming community resilience, including those between religious groups (Clark, 2021). In Kepuk Village, Bangsri, the family bond between Sunni and Shi'i is the main glue that maintains harmony amidst differences in sects. This bond can transcend the doctrinal barriers that often separate the two groups, thereby strengthening social relations and creating an environment more resilient to potential conflict. Social capital consists of networks, trust, and norms that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. In the context of Kepuk Village, family networks involving individuals with different sect backgrounds create stronger relationships at the micro level, such as within the family. Informant R recounted that in one family, a husband who adheres to Shia beliefs can still live in harmony with his Sunni wife. This phenomenon demonstrates that social ties formed through family relationships offer resilience to ideological differences, laying the groundwork for broader societal unity (McKenna et al., 2022; Özel & Sümer, 2025).

c. Social and Religious Activity Integration Strategy

An interesting strategy employed by Shi'i in Jepara to gain acceptance from the Sunni group involves integrating socio-religious practices, for example, in Slagi Village, Jepara. Initially, efforts to unite the Slagi community, comprising Sunni, Shia, and Muhammadiyah groups, were undertaken by holding joint Friday prayers. This activity also refuted previous accusations that there was a view about Shia people who never performed Friday prayers.

> In Slagi, the approach of Joint Friday Prayers is one way to unite Shia and Sunni. In the past, before I performed Friday prayers, I often heard gossip, 'Don't Shia people ever go to Friday prayers?'. Finally, we Shia decided to perform Friday prayers around. In congregation with Sunni people (interview with Mohammad, a Shia follower from Slagi Village, Jepara, March 28, 2023).

This step aims to strengthen unity amid the religious differences in the area. In this case, the integration strategy through socio-religious practices can be seen as an effort to increase understanding and reduce divisive stereotypes.

The effort to preserve a core religious identity while actively participating in shared spiritual practices reflects adaptive resilience, the ability to respond to change without abandoning fundamental beliefs. Minority Muslim communities in Indonesia, including Shia groups, manage this balance by maintaining their theological distinctiveness while engaging in communal rituals and activities with the Sunni majority. This strategic engagement fosters stronger intergroup relations and functions as a form of everyday resistance to marginalization. Such adaptive resilience not only safeguards religious identity but also promotes social cohesion and inclusive coexistence within a pluralistic society. (Suri & Chandra, 2021).

Friday prayers together help reduce tensions stemming from social identity differences by creating a space for all groups to participate in the same religious activities. This activity reduces the sentiment of "us" versus "them". The implementation of Friday prayers together also sends a symbolic message (Brooke et al., 2023) that theological differences do not prevent Muslims from praying together.

The move to hold Friday prayers together reflects collaboration among groups that were previously isolated from one another. This activity not only builds trust but also shows that

differences in schools of thought need not be a barrier to living side by side. In this way, the Shia community in Jepara proactively strengthens social cohesion and creates a more resilient structure in the face of potential ideological conflict. (Özel & Sümer, 2025).

Shi'i also performs Friday prayers at the DATA Islamic Boarding School. However, this Friday prayer was only attended by Shi'i. Coinciding with the month of Ashura, the Friday sermon delivered by Ustadz NA focused on the Karbala incident and the virtue of the Arbain pilgrimage. Material was also inserted about Sayyidah Zainab's patience after the Karbala tragedy. Then the Khatib attempted to draw the relevance of the sermon theme to the current struggle of the Palestinian people.

Figure 2. Friday prayers attended by Shia followers at the DATA Islamic Boarding School in Jepara

> Starting in 2024, the Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School will hold congregational Friday prayers. In Shia jurisprudence, the law is wajib mutakhayyiri, which means it is an optional obligation. The law of Friday prayers becomes mandatory when the Imam Mahdi appears. However, if Imam Mahdi has not appeared, the law of Friday prayers remains compulsory, though optional. If someone does not perform Friday prayers, he must make up the Dhuhur prayer. But there must be an apparent reason. If the reason is solely laziness, it is forbidden to replace Friday prayers with the Dhuhur prayer. However, if there is a valid reason, such as travelling, or being on a toll road so that Friday prayers cannot be performed, then replacing it with the Dhuhur prayer is permitted (interview with M, a student at the Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School, August 8, 2024).

Friday prayers are obligatory (*wajib ikhtiyari*), meaning a person must choose between Friday and Dhuhr prayers, with Friday prayers having priority. The minimum number of worshipers required for the validity of Friday prayers is five, including the imam, although some other scholars require a minimum of seven. Two sermons are also a requirement for the validity of Friday prayers and must be performed while standing (Fikih Syiah, 2024; Wikishia, 2024).

Ustadz MT's statement supports the information above. The requirements for Friday prayers in the Shia tradition stipulate a minimum of 5 people, including the imam, or seven people with the imam. If these seven congregants do not understand Indonesian or a mixed language, then the preacher is advised to use several languages that the congregation can understand. If one of the five congregants goes to the bathroom, the preacher must stop first. In the first sermon, the

preacher should convey a testament to piety toward Allah, while the second sermon should address the community's leadership. This aims to help the congregation better understand developments in the Islamic world, and the sermon can serve as a means to convey this information. Before Pesantren DATA held Friday prayers in congregation, Shi'i usually went to the nearest Shia mosque, such as the one in Banjaran Candi Village. Sometimes, they also perform prayers at Sunni mosques, such as the Jepara Police Mosque, which is the closest mosque to the Islamic boarding school (interview with MT, Islamic Boarding School Caretaker, August 7, 2024).

Back to Slagi Village. Based on observations of social interactions among Slagi residents on March 28, 2023, the Shiite community in Slagi has long been part of this village. Even before the 2000s, they were already present and carried out their religious activities calmly. There are around 25-35 families who adhere to Shiite teachings. The routine activity is Husainiyan, held every Saturday night. This event is a gathering or meeting of Shiites to discuss, worship, and deepen their understanding of religious beliefs. The themes discussed in each Husainiyan study are diverse and determined by requests from the congregation. With this approach, these religious studies become relevant and valuable for the participants because the topics raised are tailored to their needs.

Resilience in this context refers to the Shiite group's ability to adapt to a diverse and ever-changing social environment. Through activities such as Husainiyan, whose themes are determined by the congregation's needs, Shia demonstrate flexibility in adapting their religious discussions to remain relevant to social conditions. In addition to internal adaptability, the Shia community in Slagi Village also demonstrates external resilience through social interaction or *srawung* with the local community.

Slowly but surely, the Slagi community began to find peace and harmony. Villagers started to accept differences and opened their minds to understanding one another. One effective way to create this peaceful atmosphere is through *srawung* or social interaction. Through various joint activities, residents from diverse religious backgrounds can get to know one another better, share stories, and strengthen social ties.

Now, Slagi is an example of a village with high religious diversity that can live in peace and harmony. Intensive interaction and open-mindedness have become the primary keys to building a society that respects and appreciates differences.

> A similar pattern also occurs in Kepuk Village. The schedule for Ramadan studies held before breaking the fast is coordinated by the DATA Islamic boarding school. To facilitate unity among the various religious organizations in Kepuk, the local religious elite took the initiative to invite one another to each other's religious activities on an alternating basis. "Filled by NU, Muhammadiyah, and Syi'i alternately. Muhammadiyah filled 3 times, NU 4 times, Shia 12 times, so the total meeting was 19 times," (interview with Ustadz NA, a Shia follower in Guyangan Village, April 12, 2023).

> Meanwhile, in the Guyangan area, the resource persons who conducted the study were rotated, including scholars from Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the Shia. This pattern demonstrates an effort to integrate and cooperate among various religious groups, aiming to strengthen unity and togetherness in a diverse society. This initiative not only provides a broader understanding of religion but also encourages mutual respect and appreciation between Sunni and Shia groups (interview with R, a Shia follower in Kepuk Village, Bangsri, Jepara, April 8, 2023).

In Dukuh Candi, Banjaran, a similar thing also happened. An event was once held that involved both Sunni and Shia participants, as well as committees from both groups. This event was organized in the name of RW 01, and in the process, their identities experienced a strong unification; Shiite and Sunni identities merged into one (interview with MA, Ustadz, March 28, 2023). Additionally, there is an organization known as Mu'awanah, which has been in existence for several decades.

The administrators of activities in this organization come from both Sunni and Shiite circles. Early figures or previous parents founded *Mu'awanah*. In practice, when a member of the Shiite community dies, the tahlil reading is guided by a Sunni figure or vice versa, according to the wishes of the deceased's family. Mu'awanah is also active in providing equipment, such as tents and chairs, and in giving compensation to families who have lost a family member due to the disaster (interview with Ustadz N, a Shiite figure from Banjaran Village, January 25, 2022). The above facts reflect the pattern of civic engagement of Shia followers of Jepara within the framework of associative relations based on the principles of mutual respect and cooperation (Lemmie et al., 2021). Each resident is actively involved in various community activities, including social, educational, and humanitarian events that affect all levels of society, regardless of sect. The internal association between Sunni and Shia Muslims is becoming increasingly solid, supported by everyday relations. Interaction between residents in daily life has been a long-standing phenomenon and is a natural occurrence. As a result, social cohesion between them can be firmly established amidst differences in sect.

The momentum of the next socio-religious activity utilized by the Shia group in Jepara as a resilience strategy is the Commemoration of Islamic Unity Week. This event is typically held from the 12th of Rabiul Awal, which marks the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad in the Sunni tradition, to the 17th of Rabiul Awal, commemorated as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad in the Shia tradition. Based on the researcher's observations on June 4, 2022, the commemoration of Islamic Unity Week, organized by the Shia group, featured Sunni figures as speakers and participants. Ustadz Al, on that occasion, quoted the opinion of Imam Khomeini, who stated, "Division comes from Satan, while unity comes from Allah."

Ustadz Al explained that the idea of unifying Islam was not an original concept from Imam Khomeini, as many scholars had previously advocated for it. However, it was Imam Khomeini who made it a concrete realization through practical steps. One manifestation is the holding of the Sunni-Shia Unity Week, which focuses on understanding the differences in the accounts of the Prophet Muhammad's birth. According to Sunni tradition, the birth of the Prophet is commemorated on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal, while Shia tradition commemorates it on the 17th of Rabi' al-Awwal.

One of them is through the process of purifying the soul. Maintaining a clean and sincere heart in serving the path of Allah is a difficult task. Most people who become divisive are those whose souls are corrupted by worldly motives, such as greed, ambition, economic gain, and a desire for social status. In Jepara, people from NU and Gusdurian circles who dare to sit side by side with the Shia group are examples of groups who have clean hearts.

Figure 3. Commemoration of Khaul Imam Khomeini and Islamic Unity Week at the DATA Islamic Boarding School

Ustadz Al further explained that building unity also requires broad-mindedness, namely the willingness to accept that differences are a natural and inevitable part of life. In the context of Sunni-Shia relations, both parties need to focus more on finding common ground rather than exacerbating disputes, especially in matters of principle. The resolution of these differences should be carried out in a scientific forum based on knowledge and broad-mindedness. If laypeople try to enter the realm of khilafiyah, the result is often a detrimental dispute.

Both parties, both Sunni and Shia, must also be aware of efforts to divide and conquer that can damage unity. The presence of infiltrators who attempt to divide must be closely monitored. Additionally, it is essential to bring the symbols and manifestations of unity to life in everyday life. The philosophy of Islamic law that contains the value of unity, such as the Hajj as a congress of Muslims that emphasizes equality, as well as congregational prayers that strengthen unity through the submission of the congregation to the imam, must continue to be highlighted (Statement by Ustadz Al in the Lesehan Discussion activity with the theme "Imam Khomeini & Islamic Unity" on Saturday Night Sunday, June 4, 2022).

Ustadz Al emphasized the meaning of "unity" to avoid misunderstanding. For him, achieving unity requires an understanding of its definition. Unity does not mean uniformity, because expecting everyone to have the same worship or fiqh is impossible. True unity is the ability to place two different things in the same frame of understanding. In other words, unity is not about eliminating differences, but about accepting them within a framework of mutual understanding.

Conclusion

This study concludes that multicultural Islamic education plays a central role in cultivating the resilience of the Shia community in Jepara by applying a series of deliberate, context-responsive strategies. The findings highlight four core approaches that characterize the integration of multicultural values within the educational framework of the DATA Islamic Boarding School. First, multicultural content is subtly embedded in the hidden curriculum, influencing students' attitudes and perceptions through everyday interactions and institutional culture. Second, the pesantren fosters a moderate religious understanding by actively discouraging sectarian fanaticism among both educators and students and by emphasizing inclusive interpretations of Islamic teachings. Third, the pesantren reduces intergroup prejudice by promoting recognition and acceptance of religious and cultural diversity through dialogic encounters, both internal and external. Fourth, it employs an equity-based pedagogy that respects and incorporates local culture, fostering mutual appreciation and critical engagement with differences.

The resilience of the Shia community in Jepara, situated in a predominantly Sunni context on the northern coast of Java, is not merely a product of theological steadfastness but rather the outcome of sustained adaptation and negotiation. Cultural resilience is expressed through intermarriage, kinship networks, and involvement in shared socio-religious spaces, which serve as platforms for building trust and mitigating stigma. These efforts reveal a dynamic process of religious coexistence, where identity preservation is intertwined with cultural flexibility and civic participation. From an academic standpoint, this research contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic education by proposing a multicultural educational model tailored to the lived realities of minority Muslim communities. It offers empirical insight into how education can be strategically employed to empower marginalized groups without exacerbating sectarian divides. Socially, the study emphasizes the importance of cultivating shared values, including justice, compassion, and mutual respect, as a foundation for intergroup harmony. On a policy level, the findings underscore the importance of designing inclusive educational frameworks that not only tolerate but also actively accommodate and validate religious differences. In doing so, education becomes a transformative space that upholds the ideals of unity within diversity, as envisioned in Indonesia's multicultural and multi-religious society. The novelty of this study lies in the uncommon

integration of the multicultural education framework with community resilience theory. Empirically, it contributes rare field-based evidence from a Shia community on the northern coast of Java while demonstrating a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship between multicultural practice and resilience.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

We, the researchers, hereby declare that the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and AI-assisted technologies in the development of this research is strictly limited to the writing and language enhancement process. These tools were employed solely to improve the grammar, clarity, structure, and overall readability of the text. No AI tools were used for data collection, processing, or analysis. All research data, findings, and interpretations presented in this study are entirely based on the researchers' own work and critical thinking. The analytical process, conclusions, and discussions are the result of human reasoning and academic judgment. This declaration is made to ensure transparency and uphold academic integrity throughout the research process.

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