
THE ROLE OF THE TRADITION OF ALMSGIVING IN STRENGTHENING MULTICULTURAL ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL VALUES

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana peran tradisi sedekah dalam memperkuat nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam multicultural. Pendekatan yang diterapkan merupakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis etnografi, sementara data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data melibatkan reduksi data, display data, serta penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa tradisi sedekah berkaitan erat dengan nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam multikultural sebab mampu memperkuat tali silaturahmi, membangun toleransi, menciptakan harmoni, menegakkan keadilan, dan menumbuhkan semangat kebersamaan. Hubungan tersebut terlihat dalam berbagai praktik sedekah, seperti kegiatan ngaturi pada hajatan, kenduri kematian, nyadran, dan qurban. Dampak dari hubungan tradisi sedekah ini meliputi peran tokoh agama dalam menjaga kelestarian tradisi, fungsi sebagai sarana pendidikan bagi anak-anak untuk belajar bersedekah sejak usia dini, penanaman nilai kedermawanan dan kepedulian, penguatan kesetaraan sosial, penghormatan atas jasa leluhur, serta potensi untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan masyarakat. Penelitian ini berkontribusi untuk mengintegrasikan nilai pendidikan Islam dengan tradisi sedekah, terutama dalam konteks masyarakat multikultural, sehingga mampu memperkuat harmoni sosial sekaligus memperkaya praktik pendidikan Islam di masyarakat plural.

Kata Kunci: Tradisi Sedekah; Pendidikan Islam Multikultural; Masyarakat Plural.

Abstract

This study aims to determine the role of the tradition of almsgiving in strengthening the values of multicultural Islamic education. The approach used was a qualitative ethnographic approach, while data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques involved data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The research findings revealed that the tradition of almsgiving is closely related to the values of multicultural Islamic education because it can strengthen ties, build tolerance, create harmony, uphold justice, and foster a spirit of togetherness. This relationship is evident in various almsgiving practices, such as ngaturi activities at celebrations, funeral feasts, nyadran, and qurban. The impacts of this relationship between the tradition of almsgiving include the role of religious leaders in preserving traditions, its function as an educational tool for children to learn to give alms from an early age, instilling the values of generosity and caring, strengthening social equality, respect for the services of ancestors, and its potential to improve community welfare. This research contributes to integrating Islamic educational values with the tradition of almsgiving, especially in the context of

multicultural societies, thereby strengthening social harmony and enriching the practice of Islamic education in plural societies.

Keywords: Almsgiving Tradition; Multicultural Islamic Education; Plural Society.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of inter-religious violence has become a global issue that has raised concerns in various countries (Haluti et al., 2025). Various international reports, such as the Pew Research Centre, show that more than 40% of countries in the world have experienced serious tensions between religious groups, in the form of discrimination, hate speech, or physical conflict (Haluti et al., 2025). This condition illustrates that religious plurality, if poorly managed, can trigger conflict that damages social order. Violence against a religious background is often triggered by misunderstandings, narrow interpretations of teachings, as well as political and economic interests that instrumentalize religious identity (Fahmi et al., 2025).

Cases of religious-based violence in Indonesia cannot be generalized from a single incident but must be understood as a phenomenon that occurs in various contexts and regions. The incident of the destruction of a villa used as a resting place for Christians in Tangkil Village, Cidahu District, Sukabumi Regency on June 27, 2025, is a concrete example of intolerance that occurred in West Java (Syukron, 2017). Furthermore, reports of bans on the construction of houses of worship in several areas of Central Java (Fakhrurraji, 2025), the rejection of minority religious activities in West Sumatra (Taufik, 2024), and religiously motivated social conflicts in South Sulawesi (Aragon, 2013) show that intolerance has diverse patterns and is not isolated. These various cases emphasize that interreligious conflict is a structural and cultural issue that still requires strengthening education for tolerance and multiculturalism so that differences can be managed peacefully without leading to violence.

One of the fundamental factors behind the rise of conflict between religious communities is the emergence of a narrow and exclusive religious understanding (As'ad et al., 2019). Religious attitudes that are not accompanied by openness to differences often give rise to prejudice, negative stereotypes, and even intolerant attitudes towards other groups. Apart from that, political factors and economic interests often complicate the situation, where religious identity is used as a tool for mass mobilization for certain goals (Kelesoglu et al., 2024). This condition is exacerbated by the spread of inaccurate information via social media, which quickly fuels hate sentiment and widens the distance between groups. In fact, if religion is understood in depth according to the essence of its teachings, then these conflicts can be avoided because all religions basically teach peace, justice and compassion for fellow humans (Hikmawati et al., 2024).

Previous research has discussed the tradition of almsgiving in terms of Islamic education, social values, and cultural preservation. Saimun, (2023) highlighted the importance of moderate Islamic religious education based on local culture, Khorinnisa, (2021) found the values of faith, brotherhood and togetherness in the earth alms tradition, while NL, Olivia et al., (2025) emphasized the preservation of the Bedusun Alms tradition. However, there has been no research that specifically highlights the function of the alms tradition as a balancer for diversity, especially in the context of interreligious relations through multicultural Islamic Education.

Multicultural Islamic Education theoretically stems from the concept of multicultural Education, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity as an integral part of the educational process (Mariyono et al., 2025). From this perspective, Education functions not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a medium for fostering attitudes of justice, equality, and respect for differences (Espihani et al., 2025). These principles align with the fundamental values of Islamic teachings, which emphasize human brotherhood, social justice, and respect for plurality as the law of nature in social life (Musyarrofi et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, Haqpana, (2024) strengthens the concept of multicultural Islamic Education through an integrative epistemological approach that combines spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions. According to him, Islamic Education must foster critical and empathetic awareness of diversity by grounding intercultural and interfaith dialogue in Islamic values (Paisun et al., 2025). Within this framework, multicultural Islamic Education is understood as a learning process that fosters inclusive, tolerant, and civilized attitudes, so that students are able to live harmoniously in a multicultural society without losing their Islamic identity (Solikah et al., 2025).

Although the concept of multicultural Islamic education has been extensively developed by international scholars such as Darifah et al., (2025) and Haqpana, (2024), these studies are still dominated by formal conceptual and pedagogical approaches focused on curriculum, epistemology, and classroom learning. Relatively little research links the concept of multicultural Islamic Education to socio-religious practices rooted in local wisdom within communities (Sirojuddin et al., 2025). In particular, the tradition of almsgiving has not been widely studied as an educational medium that has the potential to internalize the values of justice, equality, empathy, and respect for diversity through contextual and direct experience (Afiyah et al., 2024). This gap highlights the need for research exploring how the tradition of almsgiving can function as a social learning space in multicultural Islamic Education, so that the values of tolerance are not only understood theoretically but also practiced in the daily lives of multicultural communities.

The originality of this research stems from its effort to merge the principles of multicultural Islamic education with the alms tradition as a tangible socio-educational arena for cultivating tolerant behaviors in communities. In contrast to prior studies, which typically situate multicultural education at a theoretical level or detached from indigenous cultural practices, this investigation treats the alms tradition as a vehicle for embedding values like peace, appreciation for diversity, and equity through direct experiences in daily routines. Consequently, the study seeks to examine the connection between multicultural Islamic education values and the alms tradition, pinpoint the embedded tolerance principles, and elucidate its function in bolstering inclusive mindsets and societal cohesion within diverse populations.

METHODS

The study took place in Balun Village, Turi District, Lamongan Regency, employing a qualitative ethnographic approach. This method focuses on depicting and interpreting the community's culture and social structures via firsthand observation and immersion in the everyday experiences of the inhabitants (Herdiansyah, 2010). The research included 10–15 participants chosen through purposive sampling, based on their expertise and active participation in the almsgiving tradition. Participants hailed from varied religious affiliations, including Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism, spanning ages from 25 to 70 years. In terms of social roles, they encompassed religious figures, customary leaders, village administrators, and ordinary community members who are directly engaged in carrying out the almsgiving practices. The objective of this investigation was to gain a profound and comprehensive insight into the almsgiving tradition phenomenon and to investigate its ties to multicultural Islamic education principles within the diverse societal context of Balun Village.

This study employed data collection methods including observation, interviews, and documentation. (Ghony & Almanshur, 2012). Observations were conducted in a participatory manner for approximately 2–3 months to directly observe the implementation of the alms tradition in Balun Village, including interactions between religious leaders and the community, forms of social relations, and the level of community participation in various religious and social activities. Interviews were conducted in-depth and semi-structured with religious leaders, village government officials, and community elements actively involved in the alms tradition, allowing researchers to obtain rich, flexible, and in-depth data related to the meaning, values, and practices of the tradition. Meanwhile, documentation was obtained from village archives, activity photos, program records, and documents related to the implementation of alms as supporting data that provide an overview of the active involvement of the government and

community in maintaining harmony and preventing potential socio-religious conflicts.

In qualitative research, data analysis is a crucial aspect that determines the quality and credibility of research results (Achjar et al., 2023). Data analysis was carried out in three stages: data reduction to organize and simplify field data, systematic data display through narrative descriptions and thematic matrices, and conclusion drawing accompanied by verification through critical and reflective interpretation of emerging data patterns and relationships (Wijaya, 2018). Data validity was established through the triangulation of sources, methods, and time, and further reinforced by member checking, peer discussions, and iterative data review. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent, safeguarding the confidentiality of participants' identities, and ensuring voluntary participation throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Almsgiving Traditions in Transmitting Multicultural Islamic Educational Values within Society

The tradition of giving alms in Balun Village, Turi District, Lamongan, appears to be alive and well, serving as a social glue amid religious and cultural diversity. Observations show that the celebration of "Earth almsgiving, combined with the commemoration of Independence Day, is a significant moment that strengthens brotherhood among residents. The entire community, Muslim, Christian, and Hindu, is actively involved, from preparation to execution. They decorate the environment, prepare dishes, and join in communal prayers as a form of gratitude and togetherness. As the local village head stated,

"The night of August 17th is a night of thanksgiving, also combined with the commemoration of giving alms for the earth for the Balun community. It is a moment for residents to gather, pray, and give thanks for independence, as well as strengthen bonds between religious communities."

This was further reinforced by interviews with local residents, who noted that the event demonstrated the strengthening of the tradition's inherent values of tolerance. They said,

"As a local, I see that the tradition of giving alms not only teaches us about sharing, but also the importance of solidarity amidst diversity, strengthening bonds of brotherhood. Through collective almsgiving, we learn to respect and appreciate differences."

The residents' enthusiasm was also evident during the event, as described in Figure 1. Another resident described the atmosphere, stating:

"From early morning, people from all walks of life took to the streets, taking part in various activities with enthusiasm and joy. Children and adults participated in competitions, while others worked together to prepare for the event."



Figure 1. Atmosphere of the Earth Alms Event for the Balun Community, Turi, Lamongan

Based on field findings, the earth alms tradition in Balun Village has been proven to function as a shared social space capable of strengthening harmonious relations between religious communities. The active involvement of Muslim, Christian, and Hindu communities in all series of activities demonstrates that local traditions can be an effective medium for building solidarity across religious identities. This finding aligns with Geertz's view that culture serves as a system of meaning that provides a framework for humans to build cohesive social relationships (Geertz, 1973). In this context, earth alms is not merely a cultural ritual, but a collective symbol that fosters a sense of togetherness and belonging amidst diversity.

Furthermore, the practice of mutual cooperation and interfaith participation found in the field reflects a concrete form of active tolerance, not merely passive tolerance. This reinforces Banks's argument that true multicultural education and practice are characterized by equal interaction, mutual respect, and cooperation between groups of diverse backgrounds (Banks, 2008). Local wisdom has strategic potential in building contextual multicultural values rooted in the community's social experiences (Tilaar, 2014). Thus, these findings confirm that the earth alms tradition significantly contributes to maintaining social integration and reducing the potential for religious-based conflict through an inclusive cultural approach.

The Relational Process between Almsgiving Traditions and Multicultural Islamic Educational Values in Society

The relationship between almsgiving traditions and the values of multicultural Islamic education in society is shaped through a process of value internalization that unfolds within social and cultural contexts. Forms of local wisdom such as earth almsgiving, death commemorations, Nyadran, and sacrificial alms function as practical mediums that integrate Islamic teachings with the realities of social diversity. Through collective participation across different backgrounds, community members not only engage in cultural rituals but also undergo a multicultural learning process that cultivates togetherness, tolerance, solidarity, and respect for differences. This process develops organically through social interaction, exemplary conduct, and communal involvement, positioning almsgiving traditions as educational instruments that foster social harmony and reinforce inclusive Islamic values in everyday community life.

One of the activities involved in the process of internalizing the values of multicultural Islamic education is the Ngaturi tradition practiced during wedding ceremonies in the Balun Village community, which reflects a strong sense of togetherness. As expressed by one of the village mothers, Ngaturi activities typically begin one day prior to the wedding, during which the families of the bride and groom invite village officials and religious leaders to attend. This occasion serves as an important moment for families and community members to come together, assist one another in the preparations, and strengthen social bonds ahead of the main event. This account indicates that Ngaturi is not merely a component of the traditional ceremonial sequence but also functions as a space for interfaith social interaction that fosters harmony within the community.

In the Kenduri wedding tradition, interfaith involvement is also very visible. A Christian religious figure explained that, "When the Kenduri takes place, Christians attend not to offer prayers to the deceased, but to provide support and comfort to the bereaved family." A Hindu religious figure echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that Hindu participation in the Kenduri aims to preserve local culture while maintaining harmony among the community. In this way, the Kenduri becomes a forum for solidarity rather than just a religious ritual. The local community's Nyadran tradition is also steeped in multicultural educational values. The head of Balun Village stated,

"Nyadran has existed since Balun Village was founded. This tradition teaches the philosophy that every activity must begin with good intentions and prayer so that life's journey becomes easier."

Meanwhile, a Hindu religious figure emphasized,

"Nyadran is a form of devotion to ancestors, as a tribute to the founder of the village."

A Christian community leader also acknowledged that most Christians continue to participate in the Nyadran tradition, even though it is not rooted in their religious teachings, as an expression of respect for local customs. The Thanksgiving tradition observed during Eid al-Adha highlights the value of togetherness through the practice of sacrificial alms. As one resident said, "By sharing sacrificial meat with our brothers and sisters of different religions, we hope to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and create a harmonious atmosphere amidst diversity." This was reinforced by another resident who said, "When we eat delicious sacrificial meat, and they know about it, why shouldn't we have the heart to share with them... after all, every day we usually feed each other." This statement shows how the values of compassion and solidarity have transcended religious boundaries.

Based on interviews and observations, the series of traditions of ngaturi, kenduri, nyadran, and qurban in Balun Village demonstrates a multicultural educational process that is culturally embedded and participatory through the practice of almsgiving. This tradition serves as a space for social interaction that allows for the internalization of values of togetherness and interfaith solidarity through direct experience and collective involvement. This aligns with Geertz's view that cultural practices are symbolic systems that shape people's thought patterns and social actions (Geertz, 2005). Through the repeated interaction process within the almsgiving tradition, people learn to understand differences as social realities that must be accepted and appreciated together.

This view is reinforced by Banks, who states that multicultural education is effective when the values of tolerance and equality are learned through contextual social experiences, not just through formal instruction (Banks, 2008). Furthermore, Tilaar emphasizes that local wisdom has a strategic role as a vehicle for social education that fosters multicultural awareness and social cohesion in a pluralistic society (Tilaar, 2014). Thus, the traditions of ngaturi, kenduri, nyadran, and qurban not only function as cultural preservation but also as a social learning process that continuously builds harmony and mutual cooperation in everyday life.

Implications of Almsgiving Traditions for Multicultural Islamic Educational Values in Society

The implications of the relationship between almsgiving traditions and the values of multicultural Islamic education in society are evident in the sustainability of cultural practices that extend beyond ritual functions to encompass educational and transformative dimensions. Almsgiving traditions operate as strategic mediums for conveying Islamic teachings that emphasize social responsibility,

togetherness, and respect for diversity through culturally grounded approaches that are readily embraced by the community. In this context, the role of religious leaders is crucial as moral and cultural agents who bridge normative religious values with social practices. The involvement of religious leaders in Balun Village not only sustains the continuity of almsgiving traditions but also reinforces their role as a vehicle for multicultural Islamic education that cultivates values of tolerance, solidarity, and harmony within community life.

The presence of religious leaders in Balun Village is a crucial pillar in keeping the tradition of almsgiving alive and relevant. One religious leader stated,

"As religious leaders, we have a responsibility to maintain the tradition of almsgiving so that it continues and does not fade over time. Through sermons and poetry readings, we continually remind people of the importance of almsgiving as a form of worship and social concern."

This statement demonstrates that religious leaders not only lead prayers during the almsgiving procession but also act as a bridge between religious values and local cultural practices. Moreover, almsgiving traditions play an important role in fostering character development in younger generations. A local youth said,

"In our village, giving alms is not just about giving money. It's about instilling a sense of caring in children. From a young age, they are encouraged to participate in giving alms, so they know what it feels like to share."

This demonstrates that giving alms in Balun Village is not just a ritual practice, but also an informal education that fosters empathy, social awareness, and solidarity from an early age. Regarding social justice, the Village Head emphasized,

"This tradition of almsgiving teaches that all citizens, regardless of social or economic status, have an equal right to share and receive. This activity builds a sense of togetherness and ensures that no one feels marginalized in social life."

This statement demonstrates that the tradition of almsgiving has become an instrument for reducing social disparities while strengthening a sense of equality among diverse communities. The tradition of giving alms also has historical and spiritual dimensions, serving as a form of respect for ancestors. The village head reiterated,

"This tradition of giving alms is not only about sharing with others, but also as a form of respect for ancestors who have passed down values of kindness and togetherness."

In this way, giving alms not only strengthens social ties between residents but also maintains community ties to local cultural and historical roots. From an economic perspective, this tradition also serves as an instrument for community empowerment. The village head added,

"Through the tradition of almsgiving, not only are the basic needs of the underprivileged met, but it also fosters a culture of mutual economic assistance. This activity encourages those who are able to share, so that prosperity can be felt by all levels of society."

This demonstrates that almsgiving in Balun Village can serve as a social safety net that protects the community from hardship while simultaneously encouraging the creation of shared prosperity. The implications of the relationship between almsgiving traditions and the values of multicultural Islamic education in Balun Village demonstrate that local cultural practices can serve as transformative educational mediums. The tradition of almsgiving is not only understood as a religious ritual, but also as a process of internalizing Islamic values that emphasize social concern, togetherness, justice, and respect for diversity. The role of religious leaders is very central as moral and cultural agents who bridge the normative teachings of Islam with social practices of society through sermons, poetry, and role models. This finding aligns with Abdurrahman Wahid's perspective, which emphasizes that cultural Islam is capable of presenting an inclusive and contextual expression of Islam within a pluralistic society (Setiawan, 2017), and is reinforced by Tilaar who stated that community leaders have a strategic role in transmitting multicultural values through social practices that are alive in the community (Tilaar, 2014).

In addition to its implications for strengthening the values of tolerance and social harmony, the tradition of giving alms also serves as a means of character education and social justice across generations. The involvement of children and youth in almsgiving activities reflects a social learning process that fosters empathy, solidarity, and concern from an early age (Bandura, 1983). Furthermore, the practice of sharing regardless of social and economic status demonstrates the embodiment of the principle of social justice in Islam, which aims to maintain social balance and cohesion (Shihab, 2019). Thus, the tradition of giving alms in Balun Village not only preserves local wisdom and the community's historical-spiritual values (Geertz, 2005), but also serves as an instrument of socio-economic empowerment that strengthens equality and the common good (Sumarni et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the almsgiving tradition in Balun Village serves not only as a religious ritual and a form of

preserving local wisdom, but also as an effective medium for multicultural Islamic education. Through the practice of almsgiving involving all levels of society across religions, a natural and sustainable process of internalizing the values of togetherness, tolerance, social justice, and solidarity occurs. Furthermore, the tradition of almsgiving serves as a means of character education that instills empathy, social awareness, and moral responsibility from an early age, while also serving as a medium for respecting ancestors and cultural values passed down through generations. The involvement of religious leaders and local stakeholders has proven to be a crucial factor in sustaining almsgiving traditions and positioning them as a medium for transmitting inclusive, contextual Islamic values that resonate with the realities of a pluralistic society. Moreover, almsgiving traditions also function as instruments of community empowerment by fostering economic solidarity, strengthening social networks, and enhancing shared prosperity within community life.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the alms-giving tradition in Balun Village be preserved and developed as a model for multicultural Islamic education based on local wisdom. Religious leaders, the village government, and educational institutions need to work together to document and integrate the values contained in the alms-giving tradition into formal and non-formal educational activities. Furthermore, further research is expected to more deeply examine the impact of the alms-giving tradition on fostering intergenerational tolerance and strengthening social cohesion in other multicultural communities.

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