

# **Sufism-inspired multicultural education: pedagogical strategies for fostering social harmony in borderland schools**

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## Abstract

This study highlights the importance of Sufism-based multicultural education in promoting social harmony in schools located in border areas, especially between West Sumatra and North Sumatra. This aspect has been overlooked in many previous studies on multicultural education. Using a qualitative descriptive approach within the framework of the sociology of education, this research shows that integrating Sufism values into the curriculum can improve tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity. In addition to delivering the curriculum, teachers act as vital role models, instilling spiritual values in students' daily lives and the school environment. Sufism-based multicultural education also encourages collaboration among schools, communities, and religious institutions to foster an inclusive and harmonious social atmosphere. The findings highlight the importance of the spiritual dimension as a crucial strategy in implementing multicultural education that promotes social cohesion in border regions.

Studi ini bertujuan menjelaskan signifikansi pendidikan multikultural berbasis tasawuf dalam membentuk harmoni sosial di sekolah-sekolah yang berada di wilayah perbatasan, khususnya antara Sumatera Barat dan Sumatera Utara. Konteks tersebut selama ini masih terabaikan dalam berbagai studi-studi pendidikan multikultural sebelumnya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dalam kerangka sosiologi pendidikan, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa integrasi nilai-nilai tasawuf ke dalam kurikulum mampu memperkuat nilai-nilai toleransi, empati, dan penghargaan terhadap keberagaman. Selain kurikulum, peran guru sangat penting sebagai teladan dalam menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai spiritual ke dalam kehidupan sehari-hari siswa dan lingkungan sekolah. Pendidikan multikultural berbasis tasawuf juga membangun sinergi antara sekolah, masyarakat, dan lembaga keagamaan dalam menciptakan iklim sosial yang inklusif dan harmonis. Signifikansi studi ini menegaskan pentingnya dimensi spiritual sebagai strategi utama dalam merealisasikan pendidikan multikultural yang mampu memperkuat kohesi sosial di wilayah perbatasan.

**Keywords:** *Multicultural education, Sufism learning, social harmony, schools, border areas.*

## Introduction

Tasawwuf-based multicultural education plays a crucial role in promoting social harmony in schools situated in border areas. Spiritual values in Sufism, such as tolerance, empathy, and compassion<sup>1</sup>, can help reduce potential conflicts often caused by cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity.<sup>2</sup> Muhammad et al. also pointed out that integrating Sufi values into the education system could be a strategic way to address social problems in a multicultural society.<sup>3</sup> This shows that Sufism's values not only enhance personal spirituality but also socially shape students' character in border schools. Multicultural education rooted in Sufism is critical to explain in depth as a relevant and promising approach, especially for promoting social cohesion in vulnerable border areas.

Sufism education is a learning process that aims to deepen the spiritual dimension of Islam, cultivate noble morals, and draw closer to Allah.<sup>4</sup> Rooted in Sufism, this education emphasizes purifying the heart, controlling desires, and pursuing *makrifat* through spiritual practices such as *dhikr*, *muraqabah*, and meditation.<sup>5</sup> By studying Sufism, individuals

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<sup>1</sup>Suadi Sa'ad et al., "The Repercussions of Sufi Thoughts in the Contemporary Qur'anic Interpretation to Sustainable Development in Indonesia", *Pharos Journal of Theology*, Vol. 106, no. 2 (2025), 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.2018>.

<sup>2</sup>M. S. Hasan and M. Mujahidin, "Sufism and Religious Moderation: The Internalization Process in Thoriqoh Syadzilyah Al Masudiyah Jombang", *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 6, no. 3 (2023), 491–511, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v6i3.4841>.

<sup>3</sup>Muhammad Farhad, Amir Maliki Abitolkha, and Limas Dodi, "Dimensions of Sufism within the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Higher Education", *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (2024), 40–58, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4525>.

<sup>4</sup>Muhamad Rudi Wijaya, "Islamic Education in the View of Sufism: Critical Study of the Role of Sufism in Islamic Education", *Ri'ayah: Jurnal Sosial Dan Keagamaan*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (2022), 127–39, [doi:https://doi.org/10.32332/riayah.v7i2.5656](https://doi.org/10.32332/riayah.v7i2.5656).

<sup>5</sup>J. Hill, "Sufism Between Past and Modernity," in *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives*, Springer International Publishing, 2021, 55–80, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32626-5\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32626-5_9); Muhammad Farhad, Amir Maliki Abitolkha, and Limas Dodi, "Dimensions of Sufism within the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Higher Education", *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (2024), 40–58, [doi:https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4525](https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4525).

learn to balance their worldly and spiritual lives, making this education relevant for facing modern challenges that often overlook spiritual and humanitarian values.<sup>6</sup>

The Sufism education curriculum typically guides students in understanding the concepts of *maqamat* and *ahwal* while practicing self-discipline through fasting, meditation, and inner reflection.<sup>7</sup> In this context, Bakri et al. state that Sufism education is crucial because it helps individuals find inner peace and purpose amidst a materialistic world.<sup>8</sup> Sufism teaches values such as patience, gratitude, and love, which enhance social relationships and reduce conflict. In today's world, Sufism education provides solutions to moral and spiritual crises, such as stress and loss of meaning in life, by emphasizing inner sensitivity and a deep connection with Allah.<sup>9</sup> In *pesantren* or gatherings, the guidance of a *mursyid* ensures focused learning, making Sufism education a key foundation for a balanced and meaningful life.<sup>10</sup>

Multicultural education is the process of nurturing all human potential by valuing the diversity and heterogeneity resulting from cultural, ethnic,

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<sup>6</sup>Qais Abu Yunis, M. F. Asha'ari, and M. Z. A. Ghani, "Contemporary Islamic Sufism from The Perspective of The Kasanzaniyyah Order", *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 26, no. 1 (2024), 549–80, doi:<https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol26no1.16>.

<sup>7</sup>Shahrizal Mahpol, Mohd Ibrahim Mayidin, and Mohd Zuhdi Ismail, "Integrating the Concept of Maqām in Arabic Grammar According to Al-Qushayri", in *'Nahw Al-Qulūb Al-Kabīr'*, Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024.

<sup>8</sup>Syamsul Bakri, M. Agus Wahyudi, and Isanita Noviya Andriyani, "Sufism and Mental Health: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Experiences of Followers of Sufi Quantum Therapy in Indonesia", *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, Vol. 8, no. 7 (2025), 2025219, doi:<https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2025219>.

<sup>9</sup>A. M. Abitolkha, "Sufism-Based Moral Education of KH. Saleh Darat and KH. Nawawi al-Bantani and the Digitalization Flow in the Society 5.0 Era", *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, Vol. 46, no. 1 (2022), 70–84, doi:<https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v46i1.873>.

<sup>10</sup>Munawar Rahmat and M. Wildan Yahya, "How to Improve the Honesty of Students in Indonesia? Sufism-Based Islamic Education Model as An Alternative", *International Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol. 9, no. 1 (2021), 80–92, doi:<https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.61.2021.91.80.92>.

and religious differences.<sup>11</sup> Multicultural education has four core values that work together in addressing multicultural issues: equality, tolerance, democracy, and pluralism.<sup>12</sup> In this field, teachers are the most essential element in promoting multiculturalism, so they need to create an ideal learning and teaching environment.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the learning environment should be designed to center on cultural diversity, where students learn the importance of expressing themselves and accepting differences in their surroundings.<sup>14</sup> This aligns with Crawford and Kirby's view that multicultural education can strengthen students' ability to collaborate with individuals from diverse backgrounds, enhance understanding, and find solutions to multicultural challenges.<sup>15</sup>

So far, studies on multicultural education's efforts to promote social harmony in schools have mainly focused on three areas. First, they examine how integrating local values into the curriculum can enhance the education system.<sup>16</sup> Second, they explore the challenges of implementing

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<sup>11</sup>Armin Nurhartanto, Sholihul Anwar, and Sukisno Sukisno, "Development of Pluralist and Multicultural Approaches In PAI Learning: A Conceptual Model For Strengthening Students' Inclusivity Competencies", *Multicultural Islamic Education Review*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (2024), 154-63, doi:<https://doi.org/10.23917/mier.v2i2.7307>.

<sup>12</sup>Abd. Amri Siregar, "Pengembangan Pendidikan Agama Islam Berwawasan Multikultural Di Sekolah", *Ghaita Islamic Education Journal*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (2024), 272-77, doi:<https://doi.org/10.62159/ghaita.v6i1.1612>.

<sup>13</sup>A. Aktoprak, P. Yiğit, and A. Güneyli, "Attitudes of Primary School Teachers toward Multicultural Education", *Qual Quant*, Vol. 52, no. (2018), 181-94, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0600-x>.

<sup>14</sup>Melehat Gezer, "An Analysis of Correlations between Prospective Teachers' Philosophy of Education and Their Attitudes towards Multicultural Education", *Cogent Education*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (2018), 1475094, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1475094>.

<sup>15</sup>Khaled F. Alazzi, "Teachers' Perceptions of Multicultural Education: A Study of Middle and High School Social Studies Teachers in Jordan", *Curriculum Perspectives*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (2017), 3-10.

<sup>16</sup>Moh. Ferdi Hasan, Diana Monita, and Sukiman, "Revitalisation of Rejang Tribal Local Wisdom: Integration of Cultural Values in the Operational Curriculum Innovation of Elementary Schools in Rejang Lebong, Indonesia", *Education*, Vol. 3, no. 13 (2024), 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2024.2318246>; Desy Nazula, Darla Dyah Ayu Anggraeni, and Ayu Zahroh Nafiah, "Strategic Leadership in Developing a Culture of Literacy: A Case

multicultural education in schools with complex cultural diversity.<sup>17</sup> Third, they analyze how multicultural education affects students' character development toward greater inclusivity and tolerance of differences.<sup>18</sup> However, these approaches do not fully address the strategic aspects of multicultural education in specific settings. Therefore, more thorough research is necessary to understand its role in fostering social harmony in border schools.

Schools in border areas face the complexity of diverse cultural and religious values, ethnic differences, customs, and proximity to neighboring countries with different social systems.<sup>19</sup> These intense cross-cultural

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Study at SDIT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo", *IAS Journal of Localities*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (2024), 82–95, <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v2i1.46>; N. N. Padmadewi et al., "Inclusive Education Practices with Balinese Local Values of 'Menyama Braya' in a Primary Bilingual School in North Bali", *Jurnal Kajian Bali (Journal of Bali Studies)*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2025), 258–84, <https://doi.org/10.24843/JKB.2025.v15.i01.p10>.

<sup>17</sup>Pfufurai Chimbunde and Boitumelo Benjamin Moreeng, "Beyond One-Size-Fits-All Approach: Teaching Multicultural Classrooms in South African Schools", *IAFOR Journal of Education*, Vol. 12, no. 3 (2024), 41–57, doi:<https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.12.3.02>; Ali E. Muhammad and Yamin Liu, "Enhancing Inclusivity in Primary Schools: The Role of Constructivist Teacher Education in Addressing Cultural Diversity", *Education*, Vol. 3, no. 13 (2025), 1–20, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2025.2475969>; Grace Sava Verisa et al., "Improving the Creativity of Children with Disabilities Based on Local Culture: An Exploration of the 'Karya.Ku' Program", *IAS Journal of Localities*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (2024), 172–83, <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v2i2.75>.

<sup>18</sup>Mardhiah Mardhiah et al., "Internalization of Multicultural Education in Improving Students' Multicultural Competence", *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, Vol. 13, no. 1 (2024), 204, doi:10.4103/jehp.jehp\_1206\_23; Abdelkarim Oubkkou, "Building Global Bridges and Fostering Global Competence: The Role of Multicultural Education in Higher Education Institutions", in *Internationalization of Higher Education and Digital Transformation: Insights from Morocco and Beyond.*, Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025, 69–87, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-76444-8\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-76444-8_5); K. Sholeh et al., "The Character Education Revolution: The Impact of Multiple Intelligence-Based Reading Learning on Student Development", *Educational Process International Journal*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2025), 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.15.186>.

<sup>19</sup>Putri Lili et al., "Enhancing Security, Economy, and Education: A Policy Analysis of the Indonesia-Malaysia Border Region", *Lex Scientia Law Review*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (2024), 743–76, <https://doi.org/10.15294/lslr.v8i2.11039>; Sany Nur Ikfal Raharjo and Hanizah Idris, "Indonesia-Malaysia Cross-Border Cooperation in Managing Mobility of People at Disputed Border Area", *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (2025), 108–12, <https://doi.org/10.24843/APSSR.2025.v25.n1.p10>.

interactions create distinctive social dynamics within border school environments, making it challenging to foster social cohesion and unity.<sup>20</sup> Variations in language, religious practices, and social norms can influence the teaching and learning process, both in terms of curriculum content and instructional methods. Alanay & Aydın also noted that schools in border regions need to develop a multicultural educational approach that is inclusive and sensitive to the lives of diverse communities.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, a highly contextual curriculum and learning system tailored to border schools is necessary, even more so than in urban schools.

Strengthening efforts to achieve social harmony in schools in border areas requires educational strategies that are contextually relevant and tailored to local socio-cultural dynamics. Multicultural education based on Sufism is seen as a strategy for promoting tolerance, empathy, and compassion<sup>22</sup>, which can serve as the foundation for developing the character of inclusive students who can coexist peacefully. This perspective aligns with Hasyim's view that multicultural education, which respects cultural and religious values, plays a significant role in creating a harmonious school environment.<sup>23</sup> However, previous studies tend to

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org/10.59588/2350-8329.1561; Setiabudi Sumadinata Widya and Ananda Ramadhan Rizki, "Indonesia Politics in Eradicating Inequalities in The Border Area", *E3S Web of Conferences*, Vol. 73 (2018), 09007, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/20187309007.no.1> (2025)

<sup>20</sup>U. Rahman et al., "A Portrait of Religious Education in the Indonesia-Malaysia Boder Area (Case of Sungai Limau Village, Central Sebatik District, Nunukan Regency, North Kalimantan)", *Elementary Education Online*, Vol. 19, no. 2 (2020), 1-10, <https://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2020.02.101>.

<sup>21</sup>H. Alanay and H. Aydın, "Multicultural Education: The Challenges and Attitudes of Undergraduate Students in Turkey", *TED EĞİTİM VE BİLİM*, Vol. 41, no. 184 (2016), 161-91, <https://doi.org/10.15390/EB.2016.6146>.

<sup>22</sup>M. N. Ichwan et al., "Sufism And Quranic Interpretation: Bridging Spirituality, Culture, and Political Discourse in Muslim Societies", *Ulumuna*, Vol. 28, no. 2 (2024), 655-89, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v28i2.1082>.

<sup>23</sup>Farid Hasyim, "Islamic Education With Multicultural Insight An Attempt of Learning Unity in Diversity", *Global Journal AlThaqafah*, Vol. 6, no. 2 (2016), 47-58, <https://doi.org/10.7187/GJAT11320160602>.

be descriptive and normative rather than exploring strategic approaches in depth. This study not only addresses gaps in prior research but also thoroughly analyzes the importance of Sufism-based multicultural education in fostering social harmony in border schools.

Multicultural education rooted in Sufism values holds significant potential for fostering social harmony in schools located in border areas. This potential becomes a vital and relevant context for reflective analysis. The study addresses three primary questions that underpin the analysis. First, how is the Sufism-based multicultural education curriculum integrated into learning activities in border schools? Second, what role do teachers play in applying this approach to promote social harmony in border schools? Third, what kinds of collaboration can be established through a Sufism-based multicultural education approach to cultivate a harmonious social environment? The study also argues that Sufism-based multicultural education not only contributes to social harmony but also helps shape tolerant students with strong spiritual awareness within diverse cultural and religious contexts in border regions.

This qualitative descriptive study employs a sociological education approach to explore how multicultural education grounded in tasawuf (Sufism) contributes to social harmony in border schools in West and North Sumatra. The research sites were deliberately chosen because they exemplify multicultural settings, characterized by students from diverse cultural backgrounds and a socio-religious environment shaped by Sufi traditions. The research spanned eight months. Data collection involved in-depth observations and semi-structured interviews, using snowball sampling with six key informants—school principals, curriculum coordinators, and religious teachers—selected for their strategic roles and direct involvement in implementing tasawuf-based multicultural education. The focus was on three main areas: curriculum integration in learning,

teachers' roles in fostering social harmony, and collaboration among school stakeholders to create an inclusive educational environment.

**Integration of the multicultural Sufism curriculum into teaching and learning activities**

The integration of the multicultural-Sufism curriculum is a strategic approach in instilling the values of tolerance and social harmony in students at border schools. This approach combines spiritual and cultural values in the learning process, aiming to build students' character while strengthening social harmony. Through this method, students not only learn academically but are also encouraged to understand the importance of tolerance and empathy. The context is clearly illustrated in the view presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Integration of the multicultural-Sufism curriculum into teaching and learning activities

<b>Coding</b>	<b>Interview statement</b>	<b>Informants</b>
Introducing the value of Sufism through history	"I intentionally provided material about Walisongo by emphasizing the guardians' attitude, which is humble, non-coercive, and always sincere in preaching. The aim is for students to understand and practice the principles of <i>ukhuwah</i> . Harmony in daily life".	Informant 1 (A, Teacher)
Getting used to reflection before studying	"The school has a program that helps students get used to meditating for 10 minutes before studying. For example, we invite students to understand how their body's organs work naturally. From there, students can better learn to be grateful and <i>tawakal</i> in life."	Informant 2 (B, Teacher)

Inviting students to create murals	“Last week, I invited students to create murals. However, unlike others, I asked them to be creative by combining Sufism symbols with typical West Sumatran motifs, such as <i>rumah gadang</i> and <i>pucuak rabuang</i> . Through this project, students can learn about harmony.”	Informant 3 (C, Principal)
Organize groups with different backgrounds	“During our social service activities in the next village, we intentionally assembled a group with members from different tribes and religions. Initially, there were some awkward moments, but I told them that this is not just social work; it’s a lesson to understand each other and work together harmoniously.”	Informant 4 (D, Teacher)
Assigning the duties and roles of <i>ishlah</i>	“During the learning process, I assigned role-playing tasks. One scenario involved students from outside the area who were mocked but remained unangered. I want to show them how to be patient, express feelings calmly without anger, and promote peace. This helps reinforce the value of <i>ishlah</i> .”	Informant 5 (E, Teacher)
Teaching the national anthem and Sufism	“That’s right, I often teach songs like <i>Satu Nusa Satu Bangsa</i> and some Sufism poems. Through singing, I believe students can learn about love and live in harmony despite differences.”	Informant 6 (F, Teacher)

Table 1 presents various ways to incorporate Sufism values into teaching and learning activities in border schools. Teachers intentionally present materials that highlight the importance of moderation and unity, such as through an introduction to Walisongo’s history and reflection exercises before lessons. Additionally, creative activities such as murals that blend Sufi symbols with local culture are held to enhance understanding of

harmony. In social activities, teachers form diverse groups of students so they learn to appreciate differences firsthand. The role-playing method is also used to teach patience and peace. Songs that convey the values of affection and unity further reinforce learning. All of these activities are designed to foster an attitude of tolerance and harmony among students from diverse backgrounds and to establish Sufism as a moral foundation guiding their social interactions.

This study demonstrates three key aspects to consider when integrating the multicultural-Sufism curriculum into teaching and learning activities. First, the incorporation of Sufism values is achieved through teaching history and encouraging deep reflection, such as using Walisongo materials and contemplative moments before studying, which promote spiritual awareness and gratitude. Second, learning is enhanced through creative methods and hands-on experiences, such as mural creation and cross-cultural group activities, which help students gain a tangible understanding of harmony and diversity. Third, the approach to Sufism is reinforced through activities that foster patience, peace, and compassion, like role-playing and singing together. Overall, the data indicate that the multicultural curriculum based on Sufism is delivered not only theoretically but also manifested through various activities that effectively internalize social and spiritual values in students.

### **Enhancing the role of teachers as models**

The role of teachers as models in education within border schools is crucial for fostering sustainable social harmony. Teachers not only transmit knowledge but also embody the values of Sufism, which stress tolerance and empathy. This example serves as a fundamental basis in shaping students' characters so they can appreciate differences and coexist peacefully. The context can be understood through the perspective as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Enhancing the role of teachers as models

<b>Coding</b>	<b>Interview statement</b>	<b>Informants</b>
Getting used to cross-cultural greetings	“Before starting class, I always make it a habit to say cross-cultural greetings like <i>assalamualaikum</i> , prosperous greetings, <i>om swastiastu</i> , and greetings of virtue. In my opinion, this is a simple way to instill the value of Sufism in students.”	Informant 1 (A, Teacher)
Getting used to cross-cultural greetings	“There was a conflict between students, but I didn’t scold them right away. I invite them to discuss first so they can identify each other’s mistakes and understand each other. I use the <i>tasamuh</i> and <i>isyraf</i> approach, so they learn to solve problems during a free day.”	Informant 2 (B, Teacher)
Appreciate cooperation	“I always value when students work together, such as in a group project or an art performance. It’s a true form of harmony. I praise them so they feel proud and continue to foster the spirit of togetherness.”	Informant 4 (D, Teacher)
Conduct a venting session	“Every week I always have a joint venting session where students are free to express their complaints about life at school. I listen impartially because I think this is a simple way to build empathy, honesty, and exemplary in attitudes.”	Informant 3 (C, Principal)
Encourage students’ concern for the environment	“Almost in every class, I always invite students to maintain cleanliness and care for the environment. Through this simple act, I aim to instill concern and gratitude because Sufism teaches that loving nature is also part of worship.”	Informant 5 (E, Teacher)
Integrating moral values with spiritual values	“Yes, I have an assignment to teach <i>PKN</i> (Indonesian Civic Education) and Cultural Arts. In these two lessons, I incorporated moral values related to love, tolerance, and unity. I want students to be not only intelligent but also kind-hearted.”	Informant 6 (F, Teacher)

Table 2 highlights various efforts teachers make to strengthen their roles as models in border schools. Teachers actively familiarize themselves with greetings from different cultures to appreciate diversity and the values of Sufism. They also encourage students to discuss conflicts openly to resolve issues peacefully with mutual respect. Teachers consistently appreciate students' cooperation across diverse backgrounds, fostering pride and unity. The principal provides a space for students to 'vent together,' promoting empathy and fairness within the school environment.

Additionally, teachers encourage students to keep their surroundings clean and take care of the environment as acts of care and gratitude. Finally, moral values such as love, tolerance, and togetherness are consistently integrated across various subjects. All these efforts help build students' character and promote Sufism-based social harmony in schools.

Based on the data in Table 2, three key aspects are essential in strengthening teachers' role as models. First, teachers actively habituate students to cross-cultural greetings and teach conflict management using a Sufi approach that emphasizes understanding and respect, as evidenced by initiatives such as peaceful discussions and familiarizing students with multicultural greetings. Second, teachers serve as motivators by appreciating students' cooperation and providing a platform for expressing emotions that foster empathy and justice, thereby demonstrating a commitment to cultivating positive social attitudes. Third, teachers incorporate and practice moral values in daily activities and lessons, such as encouraging environmental protection and teaching love and tolerance. These three aspects constitute a comprehensive strategy that not only imparts knowledge but also fosters holistic character development and social harmony within the border school environment.

### Establishing cross-cultural collaboration forums in schools

Cross-cultural collaboration forums in border schools have emerged as a response to complex diversity challenges. Through these school forums, students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds can actively engage and foster mutual understanding. This initiative serves as a vital foundation for cultivating Sufism values, such as patience, tolerance, and *ukhuwah*. The context is illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Establishing cross-cultural collaboration forums in schools

Coding	Interview statement	Informants
Forming a joint discussion	“We support official forums involving students, teachers, and community leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These forums regularly host discussions, especially on diversity issues and the development of programs that promote unity. We encourage teachers to actively serve as role models in fostering harmony.”	Informant 3 (C, Principal)
Holding a cultural bazaar	“We hold a bazaar event at least twice a year, allowing teachers, students, and parents to work together. This event serves as a platform to showcase traditional arts, cuisine, and games from different cultures.”	Informant 1 (A, Teacher)
Holding cross-cultural talk shows	“Oh yes, that’s right. We regularly invite local leaders and alumni to share their experiences, especially regarding social harmony. This activity is organized as a lively and engaging talk show for students.”	Informant 2 (B, Teacher)
Forming a tolerance agreement in the classroom	“I always encourage students to build collaborations with each other because they are diverse and come from different regions. I usually agree in class to tolerate one another, avoid discrimination, and reconcile when needed so that the classroom environment stays harmonious.”	Informant 4 (D, Teacher)

Holding a cultural day	“Yes, we teachers agree to wear traditional clothes on a special day, such as during school anniversaries, education days, and <i>Kartini</i> days. We also invite children to wear traditional attire from their respective regions. I believe this is important to promote a sense of pride in our culture.”	Informant 5 (E, Teacher)
Provide creative space	“Indeed, we have a designated area to display students’ work from various cultures, such as the making in the corner of the teacher’s room. Usually, the content includes rhymes, poems, photos, and articles created by students in class, especially about unity and the spirit of togetherness.”	Informant 6 (F, Teacher)

Table 3 illustrates systematic efforts to establish cross-cultural collaboration forums within border school settings. This forum was created to promote dialogue and interaction among students, teachers, and community leaders from various cultural backgrounds. By organizing routine activities such as cultural celebrations, diversity discussions, and art and literature exhibitions, the forum functions as an active social learning platform. This initiative is a vital tool for increasing awareness and appreciation of differences, while fostering solidarity and harmony. Consequently, establishing this forum is an effective strategy for creating an inclusive and peaceful social environment, as it encourages active participation from all members of the school community and promotes Sufism values such as compassion, tolerance, and patience.

Based on the data in Table 3, three main aspects characterize the formation of cross-cultural collaboration forums. First, this forum emphasizes the inclusion of elements from multiple schools, including students, teachers, and community leaders, to serve as a common space that unites cultural differences. Second, the forum adopts a practical approach

through routine activities such as cultural days and art exhibitions, which promote the direct application of multicultural values and Sufism. Third, it functions as a space for social dialogue and learning, raising collective awareness of the importance of harmony and tolerance. These points demonstrate that establishing the forum is not merely ceremonial but also a strategic tool that enhances social cohesion and fosters a school environment conducive to diversity and peace.

Multicultural education based on Sufism significantly contributes to fostering social harmony in schools in the border areas of West and North Sumatra. The study identified three primary strategies in its implementation. First, curriculum integration involves incorporating Sufism values into learning materials that emphasize tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity. Second, the role of teachers is crucial in implementing this approach; they serve not only as educators but also as role models in demonstrating spiritual and social values in everyday life. Third, fostering collaboration among schools, communities, and religious institutions is essential to strengthening synergy and creating an inclusive, harmonious environment. These findings show that Sufism-based multicultural education can be an effective method for improving social cohesion in border regions characterized by cultural and religious diversity.

Multicultural education rooted in Sufism plays a significant role in fostering social harmony, especially in border schools within societies that uphold cultural and religious values. In this context, the social construction of a spiritual and cultured society creates a fertile ground for developing multicultural education models that respect local values.<sup>24</sup> Fernando et al.

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<sup>24</sup>Tuti Budirahayu and Muhammad Saud, "Proposing an Integrated Multiculturalism Learning System: A Study from Indonesian Schools", *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, Vol. 30, no. 2 (2021), 141-52, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-020-00521-1>.

noted that societies that preserve cultural and religious values tend to find it easier to build social cohesion.<sup>25</sup> This idea is reinforced by the findings of Younis et al., which indicate that integrating cultural and spiritual values into the educational curriculum not only shapes students' character but also strengthens social solidarity in multicultural societies.<sup>26</sup> In essence, implementing multicultural education based on Sufism is most effective when applied in a social environment that continues to use cultural and religious values as guiding principles for daily life.

Multicultural education based on Sufism not only helps create an inclusive character in students but also plays a key role in fostering social harmony in a society with high cultural and religious diversity. Gani stated that education rooted in spiritual values, such as Sufism, can develop students who are tolerant, empathetic, and open to differences, while also strengthening social solidarity.<sup>27</sup> Wirianto et al. emphasized that incorporating local cultural and religious values into the education system has a significant social impact, especially in enhancing social cohesion and reducing potential conflicts between groups.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Sufism-based multicultural education is not only relevant for shaping students' character in border schools but also holds great potential for building an inclusive and harmonious social foundation in a multicultural and culturally complex society.

The findings of this study reveal notable differences compared to previous studies on multicultural education. Most earlier research has

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<sup>25</sup>H. Fernando et al., "The Deconstruction of Women's Values in #MeToo on Instagram", *Italian Sociological Review*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2025), 27-46, <https://doi.org/10.13136/isr.v15i1.821>.

<sup>26</sup>Younis, Asha'ari, and Ghani, "Contemporary Islamic Sufism from The Perspective of The Kasanzaniyyah Order"...

<sup>27</sup>A. Gani, "Urgency Education Morals of Sufism in Millennial Era", *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (2019), 499-513, <https://doi.org/10.17478/jegys.603574>.

<sup>28</sup>Dicky Wirianto et al., "Unveiling Spiritual Guidance: Sheikh Muhammad Waly al-Khalidy's Role in Naqshbandiyah Sufi Order in Aceh", *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (2023), 181-203, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2023.13.2.181-203>.

been descriptive and normative, mainly emphasizing cultural values without considering the role of spiritual values in fostering social harmony, especially in border regions. This study shows that multicultural education incorporating spiritual values, such as Sufism, is not only effective in developing students who are tolerant, empathetic, and inclusive but also in promoting an open, harmonious, and respectful society of differences. These findings confirm that a Sufism-based approach to multicultural education is highly relevant to border schools characterized by cultural and religious diversity. Consequently, this approach can serve as an alternative model for fostering social cohesion within a multicultural educational setting.

This study has significant global implications for the development of multicultural education, particularly in regions with high ethnic and religious diversity. Including spiritual values such as Sufism in multicultural education offers a more comprehensive approach, as it emphasizes not only cognitive and cultural aspects but also fosters students' moral and spiritual growth. Around the world, this approach can be adapted in countries with rich cultural and religious backgrounds, such as South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. It can strengthen social cohesion amid increasing social fragmentation driven by identity polarization and intergroup conflict. By promoting universal values such as compassion, tolerance, and empathy, spirituality-based multicultural education can serve as a global strategy for advancing peace, social justice, and the sustainable integration of diverse societies within the education system.<sup>29</sup>

The significance of this study's findings lies in providing a foundation for recommending education policies, particularly in border areas, by integrating spiritual values, such as Sufism, into the multicultural education curriculum. Governments and education stakeholders should

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<sup>29</sup>Rahmat and Yahya, "How to Improve the Honesty of Students in Indonesia?..."

develop policies that promote spirituality-based learning models that not only teach cultural knowledge but also foster students' inclusive character. Additionally, training teachers to implement the Sufism approach in their teaching should be part of educators' professional development, encouraging collaboration among schools, communities, and religious institutions to build an educational ecosystem aligned with local values. Therefore, Sufism-based multicultural education is not only a pedagogical method but also a relevant policy strategy for enhancing social cohesion in diverse cultural and religious societies.

## **Conclusion**

Multicultural education rooted in Sufism has significantly contributed to fostering social harmony in schools located in the border areas of West and North Sumatra. This study reveals that the success of this approach depends on the synergy of integrating Sufism values into the curriculum, the strategic role of teachers as agents of value transformation, and active collaboration among schools, communities, and religious organizations. Values from Sufism that are internalized during the learning process—such as tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity—serve as crucial foundations for developing inclusive student characters and social personalities. Conversely, support from a positive social environment enhances this transformative educational process. These findings demonstrate that multicultural education that incorporates spiritual values can establish a harmonious educational ecosystem and serve as a contextual solution to address social challenges in regions with rich cultural and religious diversity.

This study makes a significant scientific contribution to the development of multicultural education studies, especially by incorporating a spiritual perspective through the Sufism approach. Traditionally, multicultural education research focuses mainly on cognitive and sociocultural aspects,

paying less attention to the affective and spiritual dimensions that underpin character development. By integrating Sufism values into educational practice, this study broadens the scope of multicultural education theory, demonstrating that learning rooted in spiritual values can enhance social cohesion, foster students' inclusive character, and create a harmonious educational environment. This contribution is not only relevant to the local context in border regions but also enriches the scientific literature on value-based education. Consequently, this study opens new pathways for developing more holistic, humanist, and contextually relevant educational theories and practices to address societal diversity challenges.

The main weakness of this study is its limited scope, as it only focuses on communities in the border areas of West Sumatra and North Sumatra. The social, cultural, and religious conditions in these areas have unique characteristics, so the findings may not be fully applicable to other regions with different socio-cultural contexts. Additionally, variables such as urbanization levels, social dynamics, and educational policies in other areas can influence the effectiveness of Sufism-based multicultural education in various ways. A more comprehensive study involving diverse regions with complex cultural and religious differences is urgently needed to improve the validity and reliability of these findings. Future research could also explore other approaches relevant to local contexts to broaden and make more applicable the study of multicultural education.

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