

**ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND THE PROBLEMS OF  
COSMOPOLIS SOCIETY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN LEARNING**Satri Handayani<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup> Pekanbaru Institute of Islamic Studies, Pekanbaru, Indonesia**Corresponding Author:**

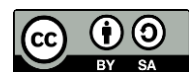
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Received: October 24, 2025

Revised: November 06,  
2025Accepted: November 26,  
2025Online Version: December  
22, 2025**Abstract**

This article examines the relevance of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in addressing the challenges of cosmopolitan society, which is characterized by cultural diversity, ideological plurality, and often conflicting values with religious teachings. A cosmopolitan society demands an adaptive, contextual, and inclusive approach to religious instruction. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach through literature review to analyze how the current PAI curriculum responds to these complexities and how it is implemented in classroom learning. The findings reveal that the curriculum remains largely normative and insufficiently responsive to contemporary issues such as tolerance, radicalism, multiculturalism, and digital identity. Therefore, it is essential to develop a transformative curriculum and dialogical learning strategies grounded in the social realities of cosmopolitan communities. The article recommends the integration of Islamic humanistic values into the PAI curriculum and pedagogy as an effort to shape a moderate, critical, and inclusive Muslim generation.

**Keywords:** Cosmopolitan Society, Islamic Religious Education Curriculum, Learning Transformation

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Journal Homepage

<https://journal.zmsadra.or.id/index.php/jiren>

How to cite:

Handayani, S. (2025). Islamic Religious Education Curriculum and the Problems of Cosmopolis Society and its Implementation in Learning. *JIRE: Journal of Islamic Religious Education*, 1(2), 90–97.  
<https://doi.org/XX.XXXXX/jiren.v1i2.1420>

Published by:

Yayasan Zia Mulla Sadra

## INTRODUCTION

Rapid social developments resulting from globalization, modernization, and advances in information technology have created an increasingly complex and diverse social order. One form of society born from this dynamic is the cosmopolitan society, a society that lives in a diverse and open environment, where people from various cultural, religious, racial, and national backgrounds live together with mutual respect. (Epafras, 2021) In this society, a person's identity is not a barrier to respect or fair treatment. Instead, diversity is seen as a wealth that enriches the way of life together. Characteristics of a cosmopolitan society include being open to differences, upholding universal values such as justice, equality, and human rights, and not viewing one group as superior to another. Furthermore, cosmopolitan societies also possess a global consciousness—they care not only about local affairs but also feel a sense of responsibility for broader humanitarian issues, such as peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability. (Ulum & Jannah, 2017) This situation undoubtedly has a significant impact on the world of education, particularly Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which plays a crucial role in shaping the character, ethics, and religious identity of students.

Cosmopolitan societies emerged as a response to the currents of globalization that connect diverse nations and cultures worldwide. This idea aligns with the views of humanist figures such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, who saw cosmopolitanism as a path to world peace. He emphasized that humanity should not be divided by national borders or narrow identities, as humans are naturally destined to live together in harmony and socialize. In cosmopolitan societies, values such as openness, solidarity, and unity in diversity become the foundation of living together. Individual identity is no longer limited by local boundaries, but rather enriched by global interactions that foster a sense of universal humanity. (Yulianti, 2015) However, the presence of a cosmopolitan society also brings its own challenges, particularly in terms of the fading of spiritual values, a crisis of religious identity, and the emergence of intolerance due to unwisely managed value clashes.

In a cosmopolitan society characterized by diversity and openness, Islamic religious education should be grounded in the core principles of the true nature of education: humanization, civilization, and liberation.

Humanization means instilling universal human values through the educational process. In the Islamic context, this aligns with teachings on human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*), respect for human rights, and the importance of morals in social relations. Civilization directs education to appreciate diversity, art, and world civilization, without losing its Islamic identity. Islam, as a blessing for all creation, teaches its followers to live side by side, create harmony, and respect culture as long as it does not conflict with the principles of monotheism. Liberation in Islamic education means freeing humanity from ignorance and narrow-mindedness. Islam encourages its followers to think critically, seek knowledge, and escape all forms of backwardness, whether economic, social, or intellectual. (Wattimena, 2016)

With these three principles, Islamic religious education in a cosmopolitan society focuses not only on religious rituals but also on developing individuals with morals, openness, and forward-thinking, ready to face global challenges without losing their identity.

Islamic Religious Education, in this context, plays a crucial role as an instrument for instilling moderate, tolerant, and contextual Islamic values. However, implementing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in a cosmopolitan society is challenging. Many Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching practices are still textual and normative, lacking a focus on the social realities faced by students. This creates a gap between the teaching materials and the needs of students living amidst social diversity and the challenges of the times. The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, which should serve as a guideline for conveying Islamic values, is often not implemented optimally due to the limitations of a contextual pedagogical approach.

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is a set of plans and regulations regarding the objectives, content, materials, and learning methods that serve as a guideline for organizing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning activities to achieve its objectives. The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is a collection of Islamic studies encompassing the Qur'an, Hadith, creed, morals, jurisprudence, theology, and Islamic culture. (Widodo, 2023) The ideal PAI curriculum should not only convey the cognitive aspects of religious teachings but also foster an applicable and dialogical understanding. Therefore, the curriculum must be designed to integrate Islamic values with the dynamics of modern society, including within a cosmopolitan context. Both the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum have directed PAI toward a 21st-century competency-based curriculum, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. However, at the implementation level, obstacles remain, both from the perspective of teachers, resources, and learning strategies.

This situation raises a fundamental question: To what extent is the PAI curriculum able to accommodate the problems of a cosmopolitan society, and how can it be applied in learning activities? In this context, it is important to first conceptually understand what a cosmopolitan society is, its characteristics and problems, and its social implications for the learning process. By understanding this social context, educators are expected to design more responsive, adaptive, and meaningful Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies.

One of the main problems in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in cosmopolitan societies is the dissonance between normatively taught religious values and the pluralistic and open daily lives of students. Values such as tolerance, social justice, and openness often receive insufficient space for exploration in learning. Furthermore, the still-dominant one-way approach prevents students from actively engaging in reflecting on the meaning of religious teachings within their social context. As Freire (1970) argued, education should be dialogic and liberating, with students becoming active subjects in the learning process.

Another problem is that not all teachers possess sufficient pedagogical competence and social insight to contextualize Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material with the realities of cosmopolitan life. As a result, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values become less relevant and do not address students' needs. Religious education that focuses solely on memorization and mastery of cognitive material is insufficient to equip students to face social realities fraught with moral and ethical dilemmas. Therefore, a more reflective, participatory, and contextual learning approach is needed.

To address these challenges, this research was conducted with the primary objective of understanding the concept of a cosmopolitan society, including its social and cultural characteristics and the challenges it poses in the educational context. It also aims to identify the problems faced by cosmopolitan societies in learning, particularly in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in schools. It also analyzes the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in learning, and the extent to which it addresses the needs and challenges of religious education in a cosmopolitan society.

This research aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the position and role of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in addressing the challenges of plurality and complexity in a cosmopolitan society. This research also aims to provide practical recommendations for developing more adaptive, contextual, and transformative Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Thus, the PAI curriculum will not be merely a normative instrument but will truly function as a tool for social change and the development of moderate, tolerant, and competitive student character.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with library research. This approach was chosen because the primary focus of the study is the conceptual and theoretical analysis of various relevant literature sources to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of cosmopolitan society, the problems that arise in education, and the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in response to this phenomenon. (Hendriarto, P., Mursidi, A., Kalbuana, N., Aini, N., & Aslan, 2021)

This library research was conducted by reviewing various primary and secondary literature, including academic books, scientific journal articles, dissertations or theses, education policy documents, and other reliable sources relevant to the research theme. Data was obtained from both physical and digital library collections, including online databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, JSTOR, and university libraries. (Sari, M., & Asmendri, 2020)

The focus of this study covers three main issues: (1) the concept of cosmopolitan society and its socio-cultural characteristics; (2) the problems faced in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning amidst the realities of a cosmopolitan society; and (3) an analysis of the implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum as a response to multicultural challenges and complex social change.

This literature research did not use statistical population and sample sizes; instead, literature sources were selected purposively based on their relevance, academic authority, and relevance to the topic under study. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, identifying themes, main ideas, and relationships between concepts from various sources, which were then synthesized to produce conceptual findings and theoretical understanding. (Rahayu, 2020)

By using this approach, it is hoped that this research will contribute to strengthening the theoretical foundation for developing an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is responsive to the dynamics of a cosmopolitan society and offers a contextual, inclusive, and relevant learning perspective to meet the needs of the times.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in a Cosmopolis Society

A cosmopolitan society is a community of individuals who recognize that they live not only as part of their local environment but also as members of a broader global community. In this society, personal, social, political, or national identities do not become absolute boundaries in establishing relationships between people. (Nussbaum, 1997) Instead, a cosmopolitan society transcends these boundaries by upholding universal human values, openness to differences, and respect for the rights, aspirations, and dignity of every individual regardless of their background. Cosmopolitanism, as the foundation of this society's thinking, affirms that every human being is subject to the same moral standards, and that no culture, race, religion, or nation is superior to another. Therefore, a cosmopolitan society functions as an ethical and social space where all humans are treated equally as global citizens, responsible for creating a more just, inclusive, and interconnected world. In this society, individuals do not only think and act based on narrow group identities such as ethnicity or religion alone, but develop inclusive, tolerant, just, and solidarity attitudes towards fellow human beings. The concept of a cosmopolitan society is very relevant in the context of education, especially in the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Curriculum. The Islamic education curriculum is a systematic plan that includes the content or material of PAI learning, along with the objectives, methods, approaches, and forms of evaluation used in the teaching and learning process. (Nst et al., 2024) Thus, this curriculum is a deliberate and directed effort to guide students to be able to recognize, understand, absorb, believe in, and practice Islamic teachings comprehensively (kaffah) in their lives. The PAI curriculum does not only focus on the formation of individuals

who are ritually obedient, but also on the development of characters with noble morals, critical thinking, and the ability to live side by side peacefully in a multicultural and global society. This is evident in the objectives of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, which encourages the development of students who not only believe in and fear Allah SWT, but also possess social awareness, appreciate differences, and uphold justice and peace.

According to Neil Postman in his book, "The End of Education: Redefining the Values of School," current school education has lost its critical power due to an over-focus on technical skills. Schools are racing to adapt to the demands of the job market, rendering students like robots who only see from one perspective. As a result, education places less emphasis on the formation of values and character, especially cosmopolitanism. (Nurkhoiron, 2021) Cosmopolitanism is crucial for fostering a sense of humanity, global solidarity, justice, and democracy—values that should be taught from an early age and applied in daily life.

The connection between a cosmopolitan society and the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is clearly seen in the integration of Islamic values with universal humanitarian values. For example, the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin (blessing for all nature) serves as the basis for teaching students to have empathy and responsibility towards global issues such as the environmental crisis, poverty, and social injustice. Furthermore, the project-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning approach, which encourages students to engage in social activities such as interfaith tolerance campaigns, sharing activities with interfaith communities, or discussions of global issues from an Islamic perspective, serves as a concrete example of strengthening cosmopolitan character through religious education. Teaching materials such as the history of the Medina Charter, which emphasizes the principle of peaceful coexistence between religious communities, also reinforce cosmopolitan values in the curriculum. Thus, the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum has great potential in shaping students as cosmopolitan people who are faithful, moral, intelligent, and able to actively contribute to building a just and peaceful global civilization. In line with this, the Qur'an explicitly emphasizes the importance of diversity and mutual understanding in human life through Allah's words in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (١٣)

"O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is Knowing, All-Aware." (Quran, Al-Hujurat: 13)

This verse forms the theological basis that diversity is the law of Allah (sunnatullah), and Islam teaches values that encourage people to know one another, respect one another, and live side by side in peace. Thus, the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum can be a strategic tool for shaping a cosmopolitan generation that is religious, inclusive, and contributes to global civilization.

### Problems of Cosmopolitan Society in Islamic Religious Education Learning

In the context of a cosmopolitan society characterized by global openness, cultural and religious pluralism, and the rapid flow of digital information, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning faces various complex challenges. One major problem is the growth of value relativism among students, where religious values are often viewed as equivalent or even questioned for their validity in a multicultural society. This can lead to an identity crisis and a weakening of students' religious commitment, as they are confronted with competing worldviews in the public sphere and on social media.



Furthermore, the normative-doctrinal approach to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning often fails to address the realities of social diversity and the global challenges students face. Much of the material taught emphasizes memorization and formal religious rituals, without providing a space for dialogue to understand Islamic values contextually and apply them to global life. Yet, in a cosmopolitan society, students need an inclusive, dynamic understanding of religion that is relevant to contemporary challenges such as human rights, the environment, tolerance, and social justice.

Another emerging problem is the minimal integration of technology and digital literacy in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Although cosmopolitan societies are highly technologically savvy, many Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning processes still operate conventionally and do not utilize digital media to their full potential. As a result, students seek religious understanding from unreliable sources online, potentially leading to misunderstandings or even radicalism.

Equally important is the lack of teacher training in fostering a moderate and cosmopolitan attitude towards religion. Some educators still hold exclusive and rigid perspectives, which are inconsistent with the spirit of rahmatan lil 'alamin (blessing for all the universe). This undoubtedly poses a challenge in shaping the character of students who are ready to become part of a diverse global society.

Therefore, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in the era of cosmopolitan societies needs to be reconstructed to be more adaptive, dialogical, contextual, and based on universal Islamic values, capable of wisely responding to the dynamics of the times.

### **Implementation of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Responding to a Cosmopolis Society**

The current Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum has undergone several reformulations to address global challenges, including the integration of character values, a scientific approach, and the strengthening of 21st-century competencies (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity). However, a gap remains between the curriculum concept and its implementation.

The following table shows the documentation of the contents of the junior high school Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks analyzed in this study:

Table 1. Analysis of Multicultural Themes in Islamic Education Textbooks for Grade VIII Middle School

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Chapter Title</b>	<b>Indication of Multicultural Values</b>	<b>Information</b>
2	The Beauty of Togetherness in Islam	There is	Emphasizing tolerance and cooperation
4	Respect and Obey Parents	There isn't any	Focus on personal moral values
6	Emulating the story of the Prophet Muhammad SAW	There is	Contains the story of tolerance in Medina
8	Cultivating Honest Behavior	There isn't any	Personal, non-contextual moral values

The data above demonstrates that multicultural values have not been fully distributed evenly across Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching materials, and remain predominantly oriented toward personal morality. However, the context of a cosmopolitan society demands values education that is social, communal, and transformative.

Teachers are crucial actors in bridging the national curriculum with local realities. Project-based learning innovations, case study approaches, and collaborative learning based on social issues provide relevant and adaptive implementation alternatives within the context of a cosmopolitan society.



The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum serves as the primary foundation for the learning process. Teachers act as curriculum implementers and must adapt learning to the context of a cosmopolitan society—a modern society that is culturally, religiously, and socially diverse. This context then becomes a crucial consideration in formulating relevant and adaptive learning strategies. The strategies chosen will in turn impact how teachers implement the curriculum, forming a dynamic cycle between the curriculum, the teacher, the social context, and teaching methods.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review and analysis of the dynamics of cosmopolitan society, it can be concluded that the concept of cosmopolitan society refers to a form of modern society characterized by a diversity of cultures, values, and lifestyles, as well as a high level of social interaction across diverse backgrounds. This situation presents challenges for education, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching, because students live in a pluralistic environment and tend to freely interpret religious values.

Problems that arise in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching in a cosmopolitan society include shifting values, weakening religious identity, and resistance to conventional learning approaches. This requires teachers to not only teach religious material textually but also to be able to relate it to the social realities students face contextually.

Implementing the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in the context of a cosmopolitan society requires an adaptive, reflective, and communicative approach. Teachers play a strategic role as a bridge between curriculum objectives and student needs by adapting relevant learning strategies, such as dialogue-based learning, case studies, and reinforcing moderate and inclusive Islamic values. Thus, Islamic Religious Education learning is not only a means of spiritual strengthening, but also a means of forming tolerant, critical, and responsible attitudes in a pluralistic society.

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