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Collaborative Learning in Inclusive Education: Constructing Tolerant Attitudes of Students at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor

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Abstract
Learning strategies that are focused not just on academic success but also on the development of social attitudes—particularly tolerance in the setting of a heterogeneous society—are required by inclusive education. The purpose of this study is to examine how collaborative learning in inclusive education helps students at the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontordevelop attitudes of tolerance. This study combined a case study design with a qualitative methodology. Students, instructors, and caregivers at Islamic boarding schools participated in semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation to gather data. Thematic analysis approaches were used to analyze the data. The study's findings show that regular use of collaborative learning techniques fosters an inclusive and engaging environment for social interaction in both the Islamic boarding school's formal and informal learning activities. Through processes of positive interdependence within groups, open discourse, collaborative reflection, and institutional support for the inclusion concept, students develop tolerance attitudes. Students can observe firsthand how to manage conflict, appreciate diversity, and develop empathy in the Islamic boarding school's communal life through collaborative learning. By supporting collaborative learning as an educational approach that contributes to the development of emotive and social values, this study makes a theoretical contribution. The study's practical conclusions suggest that enhancing collaborative learning is essential to creating inclusive Islamic boarding school-based instruction.

Keywords: *collaborative learning, inclusive education, tolerance, Islamic boarding school, modern Islamic boarding school*

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian educational system is inextricably linked to the social, cultural, and background variety of its pupils. In the framework of a pluralistic society, educational institutions must strategically promote tolerance, respect for one another, and the capacity for peaceful coexistence in addition to imparting academic information (Banks, 2021; OECD, 2023). The concept of inclusive education stresses tolerance for differences and the establishment of an equitable, nondiscriminatory learning environment for all pupils (UNESCO, 2023; Ainscow, 2020). Collaborative learning is one pedagogical strategy that is thought to be successful in promoting inclusive education. Through social contact, group projects, candid communication, and shared accountability for accomplishing learning goals, collaborative learning places students as active learners (Gillies, 2023; Johnson & Johnson, 2022). Social constructivism, which emphasizes that knowledge is created through interaction and meaning negotiation within a learning community, is the theoretical foundation of this method (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Students gain social skills, empathy, and an appreciation for diversity—all of which are key pillars of tolerance—as well as cognitive ability through this process (Slavin, 2022; OECD, 2023).

The Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontorhas a long history of fostering the principles of unity, discipline, and multiculturalism in the context of contemporary Islamic boarding school education. Students are from different places, have different social origins, have different customs, and even speak

different languages. Islamic boarding schools have the potential to be social spaces that promote tolerance because of group-based study, scouting, student groups, and communal life in the dorm. In Islamic boarding schools, collaborative learning occurs not just in the classroom but also in the students' everyday lives through extracurricular activities, student organizations, scientific discussions, and regional leadership. Through real-life experiences rather than merely normative knowledge, this pattern of interaction enables students to learn how to handle conflict, confront differences head-on, and develop mutual respect (Sulaiman et al., 2024; Gillies, 2023). The boarding environment's cross-cultural interaction also enhances learning's socio-emotional component, which is necessary for the growth of tolerance and empathy (OECD, 2023).

According to a number of recent research, students in public and higher education benefit from collaborative learning in terms of their development of social skills, self-regulation, and tolerance (Gillies, 2023; Johnson & Johnson, 2022; Slavin, 2022). The efficacy of inclusive education in fostering social cohesion and a culture of respect for one another in multicultural educational settings has also been supported by other studies (UNESCO, 2023; Ainscow, 2020). Nonetheless, there are currently not many empirical studies that explicitly look at collaborative learning as a tool for inclusive education in the setting of contemporary Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren. Without exploring how collaborative learning methods help students acquire tolerance in the context of everyday Islamic boarding school life, the majority of pesantren research concentrates on religious curricula, leadership, or character education in general (Tan, 2021; Azra & Afrianty, 2022). Additionally, studies that combine the emotive (tolerant attitudes), institutional (inclusive education), and pedagogical (collaborative learning) dimensions within a logical analytical framework, especially at the Darussalam. According to the background and research gaps, the study's goals are to: explain how collaborative learning is implemented at the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontorwithin the framework of inclusive education; examine how collaborative learning shapes and constructs students' attitudes of tolerance; identify collaborative values and practices that support the development of an inclusive Islamic boarding school-based education model in fostering tolerance in a multicultural society; and offer theoretical and practical contributions.

METHOD

In order to fully comprehend collaborative learning practices within the framework of inclusive education and how these processes influence students' tolerance at the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School, this study used a qualitative approach combined with a case study methodology. Because it may examine intricate and contextual social phenomena from the viewpoint of direct participants, this method was selected (Yin, 2022). Because of its diverse sociocultural background and rigorous collaborative learning methods, the research was carried out in the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School. Among the participants were four to six teachers/mentors who were directly involved in the collaborative learning process, two to three boarding school administrators who are involved in inclusive education policy, and ten to fifteen students from different grade levels who were chosen by purposive sampling.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Participants

Participant Category	Selection Criteria	Sampling Technique	Role in the Study
Final-grade students	Grade V–VI students actively involved in group activities, student organizations, and collaborative learning	Purposive sampling	Provided direct experiences related to collaborative learning practices and tolerance attitudes
Middle-grade students	Grade III–IV students from diverse regional and cultural backgrounds	Purposive sampling	Provided perspectives on social interaction dynamics and adaptation to differences
Teachers/Ustadz	Teachers implementing collaborative learning and involved in student mentoring	Purposive sampling	Explained pedagogical strategies and the development of tolerance attitudes
Dormitory Caregivers/Boarding Leaders	Caregivers responsible for students' social life in the dormitory	Purposive sampling	Explained policies and non-formal inclusive education practices

Semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation were used to gather data. To discover more about the experiences and significance of collaborative learning as well as the attitudes of tolerance that emerged, semi-structured interviews with students, instructors, and administrators at Islamic boarding schools were carried out (Creswell & Poth, 2023). In order to document social interactions, cooperative behaviors, and displays of tolerance, participatory observation of cooperative learning scenarios in classrooms, dorm activities, and student groups was carried out (Angrosino, 2021). Learning curricula, dorm regulations, notes from group activities, and student-produced collaborative goods were all included in the documentation for data triangulation.

Thematic analysis techniques were used to analyze the data. These included data interpretation based on the theoretical framework of inclusive education and collaborative learning (Braun & Clarke, 2022), transcription of interview data and field notes, initial coding to identify pertinent themes surrounding collaborative practices and tolerance, and categorization of themes into key dimensions (e.g., forms of cooperation, experiences of conflict, resolution strategies, and attitudes of respect for differences). Member checking (reconfirmation with participants), audit trails to guarantee transparency of the data analysis process, and source triangulation approaches (data from students, instructors, and documents) were employed to improve the validity and reliability of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collaborative learning methods at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontoroccur not only in official classrooms but also in informal activities including book discussions, district meetings, and inter-dormitory social service activities, according to observation and interview analysis. Because students frequently work in diverse groups according to their social experiences, language proficiency, and geographic backgrounds, collaborative learning serves as a platform for knowledge and skill exchange.

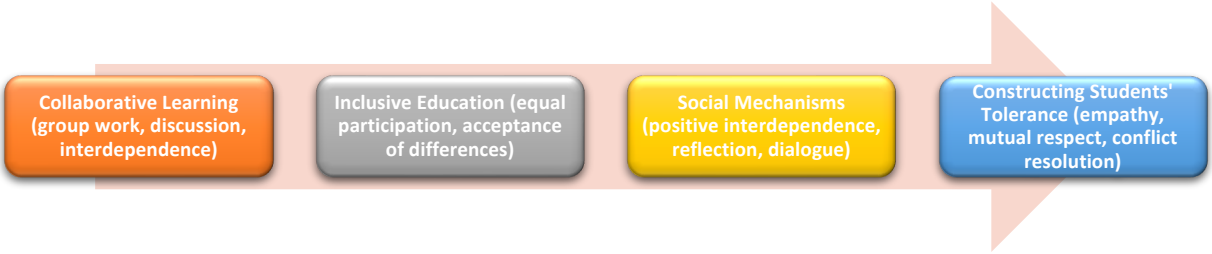


Figure 1. Collaborative Learning Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Education

This echoes the findings of Gillies (2023), who found that collaborative learning works well for fostering an environment in which all students actively participate, particularly when they are assigned interdependent responsibilities. Additionally, it seems that this cooperative process satisfies the inclusive education tenets, which include allowing all pupils to participate fully without distinction on the basis of cultural or intellectual background (UNESCO, 2023).

> *"We usually break into small groups to discuss the material. This activity allows me to learn from friends who have different learning styles... so we can help each other.. "* (Santri, class 6).

According to research findings, Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School's collaborative learning techniques take place in both formal classroom settings and students' everyday lives in a dynamic and contextualized manner. In keeping with the tenets of inclusive education—the active participation of all learners without discrimination—this learning approach groups students in diverse groups (UNESCO, 2023). This research supports the idea that, in inclusive educational settings, collaborative learning is a valuable social tool in addition to being an effective way to raise academic achievement (Gillies, 2023; Johnson & Johnson, 2022). When learning facilitators (teachers or mentors) provide each student the opportunity to contribute in accordance with their own skills, they are also supporting inclusion. This illustrates that collaborative learning should be seen as a pedagogical approach that enhances students' social and emotional engagement rather than just a teaching method (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Thus, this strategy becomes pertinent when included into transformational pedagogies that link learning practices with social justice (Banks, 2021). According to interview data, students expressed a greater awareness of distinctions, especially when it came to

religious knowledge, learning cycles, and linguistic habits. Working in groups is known to have increased students' appreciation for different viewpoints, which is a sign of greater tolerance. This is in line with study by Sulaiman et al. (2024), which discovered that students attending Islamic boarding schools who participate in inclusive learning processes have higher tolerance values. Additionally, observations revealed that minor disputes among students—such as disagreements during class discussions—were frequently settled through mentor-facilitated dialogue, turning conflict situations into chances for social learning. This procedure is consistent with research demonstrating that group learning is superior to solo learning in fostering the development of social skills like empathy, conflict resolution, and respect for the perspectives of others (Johnson & Johnson, 2022).

Three key mechanisms for the development of tolerance among students in Islamic boarding schools are revealed by thematic analysis: (a) Positive Interdependence within Groups, where students understand that each member's contribution is essential to the success of group tasks, promoting a sense of mutual respect for each other's skills (Gillies, 2023). (b) Structured Group Reflection, in which students assess their conduct and reactions to contrasting viewpoints in mentor-led discussion forums after group projects. This improves affective introspection and social competence (Creswell & Poth, 2023). (c) Institutional Support for Inclusivity: Islamic boarding school rules that promote group activities for all students help to create a sense of appreciation and acceptance, which is an important component of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2023). This helps to build tolerance through shared experiences rather than just a comprehension of impersonal ideals.

Table 2. Summary of Research Findings

Main Theme	Subtheme	Empirical Indicators
Collaborative Learning Practices	Heterogeneous grouping	Cross-cultural collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds
Social Interaction	Discussion and dialogue	Exchange of perspectives without destructive conflict
Mechanism of Tolerance Development	Group reflection	Awareness of respecting differences and diverse viewpoints
Institutional Support	Inclusive policies	Equal participation of all students in academic and non-academic activities

These empirical results show how inclusively planned and facilitated collaborative learning may be a powerful tool for promoting tolerant attitudes. Information from the Islamic boarding school in Gontor shows that cooperative experiences are not only effective teaching methods but also social structures that teach students how to deal with differences in a direct and thoughtful way (Banks, 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2024). In general, the research findings are consistent with the suggested conceptual framework: inclusive education combined with collaborative learning techniques helps students acquire tolerant attitudes. This is in line with current research on the connection between social skills, democratic ideals, and active learning in multicultural education (Gillies, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

Understanding how social values are taught and demonstrated in Islamic boarding school life requires talking about the processes by which tolerance is developed among pupils. Three primary factors are identified by research findings: institutional support for diversity, structured group reflection, and positive interdependence. Positive interdependence within groups, where members' cooperation is essential to task performance, strengthens respect for individual contributions. This supports the findings of Gillies (2023), who found that a key element of collaborative learning is positive interdependence, which improves social connection and empathy. Students share information and assess their behavior and interaction methods as part of the group reflection process, which also helps them develop their metacognitive and affective skills (Creswell & Poth, 2023). To become more self-aware and receptive to the opinions of others, this kind of introspection is essential. Additional research shows that inclusive practices at Islamic boarding schools, like the ability to join groups and activities in the dorm without facing prejudice, enhance inclusive social engagement experiences. This is in line with international research on inclusive education, which demonstrates that inclusive practices are strengthened in classrooms and communities by robust institutional policies (UNESCO, 2023).

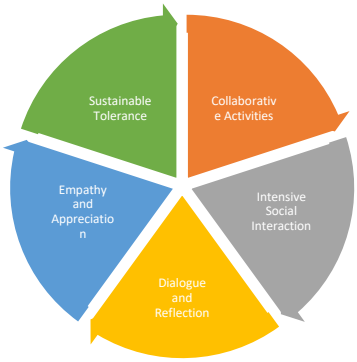


Figure 2. Process of Developing Students' Tolerance Attitudes

In order to help them learn to appreciate the contributions of each group member, students are encouraged to work together in groups on projects or tasks. Every activity incorporates an open conversation, which allows students to exchange viewpoints and personal stories, enhancing their comprehension of diversity and the value of tolerance. Direct interaction helps students build empathy, which is the cornerstone of a tolerant mindset, by teaching them to comprehend and feel the experiences of others. According to Fathurrohman (2015), the cooperative learning model emphasizes the development of democratic attitudes and behaviors, the growth of student productivity in learning activities, and the utilization of the phenomenon of cooperation or mutual assistance in learning. As a result, cooperative learning can be used to develop social, attitudinal, and sensitivity skills toward others as well as teamwork. Students at Gontor frequently participate in group activities that require collaboration between people from different backgrounds, according to the researcher's interviews with student care professionals. They acquire the fundamentals of tolerance—respect for one another, listening to others' viewpoints, and cooperating to accomplish shared objectives—through this cooperative learning (Syarifah, et.al. 2025).

Students have more opportunity to engage and get to know one another's personalities through cooperative learning. Opportunities to cultivate a far more tolerant and open character are therefore created. The idea of respect in social interactions with teachers, the revitalization of the still-siloed concept of religious studies, and support for digital literacy are some of the active learning themes that still require work. Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has effectively promoted tolerance among its students by using inclusive education and collaborative learning. In addition to educating kids academically, Gontor also gives them the human qualities necessary for social life by fostering an environment in the classroom that appreciates variety and respect for one another (Syarifah, et.al. 2025). At Gontor, collaborative learning is essential to the execution of inclusive education. This approach promotes connection and communication between people from different backgrounds by enabling students to collaborate in groups. Scouting, Haris Nahar (Nahar), Haris Lail (Lail), Bawwab (Gate Guard), Tabbakhoh (Food Distribution in the Public Kitchen), Happy Stage, Drama Arena, and Pioneering Competitions between frontline troops are some of the activities that use this tactic. According to observations, kids cooperate and work in groups to finish tasks and projects, which teaches them to value the efforts of all group members. Every activity incorporates an open conversation, which allows students to exchange viewpoints and personal stories, enhancing their comprehension of variety and the value of tolerance. Direct interaction helps students build empathy, which is the cornerstone of a tolerant mindset, by teaching them to comprehend and feel the experiences of others (Syarifah, et.al. 2025).

By focusing on the creation of relationships between students, the expansion of democratic attitudes and behaviors, and the increase in student productivity in learning activities, the cooperative learning model aims to capitalize on the phenomenon of cooperation or mutual aid in learning. Therefore, attitudinal, social, and sensitivity competences, as well as teamwork, can be developed through cooperative learning. Researchers found that students at Gontor regularly engage in group activities that require cooperation between people from different backgrounds, based on interviews with student care workers. They acquire the fundamentals of tolerance—respect for one another, listening to others' viewpoints, and cooperating to accomplish shared objectives—through this cooperative learning (Syarifah, et.al. 2025). Students have more opportunity to engage and get to know one another's personalities through cooperative learning. This makes it much easier to cultivate a

tolerant personality. The idea of respect in social relationships with teachers, modernizing the concept of religious lessons, which are still divided into different sections, and promoting digital literacy are some of the aspects of active learning that still require improvement (Anastasia Widya Paramita & Suryanto, 2021).

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has effectively promoted tolerance among its pupils by using inclusive education and collaborative learning. In addition to providing academic instruction, Gontor also instills in its students the humanitarian ideals necessary for social interaction by fostering an environment that cherishes variety and respect for one another (Syarifah, et.al. 2025). At Gontor, collaborative learning is essential to the execution of inclusive education. Students can collaborate in groups using this approach, which promotes engagement and communication between people from different backgrounds (Syarifah, et.al. 2025). Scouting, *Haris Nahar* (Nahar), *Haris Lail* (Lail), Bawwab (Gate Guard), *Tabbakhoh* (Food Distribution in the Public Kitchen), Panggung Gembira, Drama Arena, and Pioneering Competitions between Scout Groups are just a few of the activities that use this tactic.

Particularly in contemporary Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, which are hubs of multicultural Islamic education, these findings have significant contextual relevance. According to empirical research, collaborative learning teaches students how to work together, manage differences, and settle disputes amicably (Syarifah, et.al. 2025). It is a microcosm of a larger plural society. By providing an empirical perspective on how social learning practices might foster tangible attitudes of tolerance, this viewpoint enhances earlier research that tended to emphasize Islamic boarding schools as normative character education institutions (Azra & Afrianty, 2022). These results also corroborate those of Sulaiman et al. (2024), who found that meaningful social interactions rather than just direct education can be used to establish principles of tolerance. Students who collaborate with one another are more likely to show respect for one another and an openness to diversity, two qualities that are crucial in a pluralistic society.

Theoretically, this study advances knowledge on the connection between inclusive education, cooperative learning, and tolerance growth. According to their research, in the setting of religious education, collaborative learning not only facilitates the development of academic competences but also acts as a social mechanism for the building of deep affective values. This supports the body of research that views collaborative learning as a multifaceted teaching approach (Banks, 2021; Gillies, 2023). From a practical standpoint, these results offer suggestions for creating a more inclusive curriculum for Islamic boarding schools that prioritizes organized and thoughtful group projects. Group activities in Islamic book study, for instance, should be viewed as social learning environments purposefully created to enhance social life skills like empathy, conflict resoluteion, and tolerance for diversity, in addition to being academic instruments. For other educational institutions looking to improve inclusive education in a multicultural setting, it is equally pertinent as a model.

These findings are not meant to be widely generalized because the research was qualitative and based on case studies. The particulars of the Gontor Islamic boarding school's setting could not accurately represent procedures at other Islamic boarding schools. Furthermore, rather than concentrating on quantitative indicators of tolerance, this study examined social beliefs and actions. Additional research might broaden the sample to include other Islamic boarding schools with distinct features or use a mixed-methods approach with quantitative tools to quantitatively quantify tolerance levels. To investigate the dynamics of shifting attitudes about tolerance over time, a longitudinal method might also be taken into consideration.

CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontorpupils can develop tolerant attitudes through collaborative learning, which is an important pedagogical approach in inclusive education. Students from a variety of backgrounds can engage in deep and meaningful social interaction in the Islamic boarding school setting when collaborative learning approaches are consistently used, both in official classroom instruction and in extracurricular activities. The findings show that the development of tolerant attitudes takes time and involves a variety of social mechanisms, such as constructive interdependence among groups, candid communication, mutual introspection, and institutional backing for the inclusion principle. As part of the Islamic boarding school's collective life, students gain empathy, constructive conflict management skills, and an appreciation for diversity through these cooperative activities. Theoretically, this study supports the idea that, in a multicultural

educational setting, collaborative learning serves as an affective and social mechanism in the establishment of values of tolerance in addition to aiding in cognitive development. By presenting the Islamic boarding school context as a pertinent and contextual social learning space, our findings advance the field of inclusive education research. By highlighting collaborative learning as a key tactic for fostering tolerance, the study's practical findings have implications for the creation of a more inclusive Islamic boarding school (pesantren) education paradigm. It is recommended that Islamic boarding schools and other comparable educational establishments create planned, introspective group projects to ensure that the virtues of tolerance are not only taught normatively but also personally experienced.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing process of this manuscript.

CONFLICTING INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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