



Islamic Religious Education in the Construction of a Multicultural Society: Negotiating Theological Exclusivity and Social Inclusivity

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Abstract: The increasing intensity of social interaction in multicultural societies has intensified encounters between theological truth claims and demands for social openness, which, within Islamic religiosity grounded in Islamic creed ('aqidah), is often perceived as a conceptual tension. This study aims to identify the ideal pattern of the relationship between theological exclusivity and social inclusivity from the perspective of Islamic religiosity grounded in Islamic creed ('aqidah) and to examine its implications for Islamic Religious Education (IRE), as well as to explain its relevance to strengthening religious moderation in multicultural societies. This qualitative study takes the form of a literature review using a descriptive analytical approach. Data were obtained through documentation by examining normative Islamic sources as well as various scholarly literature relevant to the subject matter. The findings of this study show that theological exclusivity constitutes the epistemic dimension of Islamic religiosity, affirming commitment to revealed truth and preserving religious identity, while social inclusivity functions as an ethical orientation that enables just, balanced, and harmonious engagement with diversity. The apparent tension between the two does not stem from their substantive nature, but rather from a reductionist understanding that fails to distinguish between theological and social domains. Within a proportional framework, these dimensions are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education serves as a strategic medium for integrating firm theological commitment with inclusive social values, enabling Muslims to engage constructively with multicultural realities without compromising the integrity of faith. The contribution of this study confirms that religious moderation can be strengthened through a clear conceptual distinction between belief and social relations, allowing both to operate within their respective domains without contradiction. In addition, this study contributes to the development of a conceptual framework for Islamic Religious Education that balances theological exclusivity and social inclusivity in multicultural societies.

Keyword : Islamic religious Education; theological exclusivity; social inclusivity; religious moderation.

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Introduction

A multicultural society has become an unavoidable reality in contemporary social life. Globalization, advances in information and communication technologies, and the increasing mobility of people have intensified interactions among individuals with diverse religious affiliations, cultural traditions, ethnic identities, and worldviews (Hidayat, 2022). In Indonesia, this diversity constitutes a fundamental feature of

national and social life, necessitating the ability to cultivate harmonious social relations across differences. Nevertheless, the growing frequency and intensity of interactions among diverse identities do not invariably produce constructive forms of engagement. Persistent manifestations of intolerance, social polarization, and identity-based conflicts demonstrate that the management of diversity remains a critical challenge within multicultural societies (Murtopo & Adib, 2024).

On the other hand, multicultural societies also present theological challenges for religious communities. The demand to remain open toward differences is often perceived as being in tension with commitment to one's religious beliefs (Nendissa et al., 2025). In the Islamic context, *'aqidah* (Islamic creed) serves as the fundamental foundation that shapes a Muslim's orientation of faith. As a system of belief, *'aqidah* encompasses a dimension of theological exclusivity that affirms commitment to the truth of Islamic teachings (Fauzen & Najib, 2025). Nevertheless, theological exclusivity is frequently perceived as an obstacle to the development of inclusive social relations within pluralistic societies. Conversely, an inclusive attitude is often viewed as having the potential to blur the boundaries of religious belief and identity. (Hutahaeen, 2021) Such perceptions give rise to a conceptual tension regarding how Muslims can maintain their theological commitments while simultaneously fostering harmonious social relationships with those who hold different beliefs and identities.

This issue has become increasingly important to examine, as contemporary religious life is often confronted with two opposing extremes. On the one hand, there is a tendency toward exclusivism, which perceives differences as a threat to the purity of religious belief and may consequently foster intolerant attitudes within the social sphere. On the other hand, there is a growing inclination toward inclusivism that is often interpreted excessively, leading to the relativization of religious truth claims (Rahman & Noor, 2020). These two tendencies indicate that the relationship between Islamic creed (*aqidah*) and multicultural life continues to present conceptual challenges that require deeper scholarly exploration. Therefore, a comprehensive framework is needed to position theological commitment and social openness in a balanced and proportional manner, so that they are not understood as mutually negating concepts. The main argument of this study is that theological exclusivity and social inclusivity are not mutually contradictory. From the perspective of Islamic creed (*'aqidah*), both constitute complementary dimensions that operate in different domains while mutually reinforcing one another in sustaining religious commitment and harmonious multicultural coexistence.

This conceptual understanding is also relevant to Islamic Religious Education (IRE), which seeks not only to strengthen students' theological commitment but also to cultivate tolerance, respect for diversity, and inclusive social attitudes within multicultural societies. Therefore, understanding the relationship between theological exclusivity and social inclusivity is essential for developing Islamic Religious

Education that is capable of maintaining a balance between firm religious commitment and constructive engagement with diversity.

Recent scholarly discussions have increasingly questioned the assumption that religious exclusivism necessarily leads to social exclusion. The relationship between theological commitment and social inclusivity remains contested across religious traditions, particularly regarding how believers negotiate firm truth claims while maintaining constructive engagement with diverse communities. This unresolved debate indicates the need for a more integrated conceptual framework that explains the coexistence of theological exclusivity and social inclusivity within multicultural societies (Koryakin, 2025).

A number of studies have examined the strengthening of Islamic creed (aqidah) as a foundation for religious identity and resilience in the face of social change (Syahroni & Rofiq, 2025). Other studies have highlighted the importance of tolerance, multiculturalism, and religious moderation as means of promoting peaceful coexistence within pluralistic societies (Walad et al., 2024). In addition, several studies have explored the inclusivity of Islam in relation to religious and cultural diversity (Purnomo & Solikhah, 2021). These studies have made significant contributions to explaining the role of religion in responding to the challenges of multicultural societies. Nevertheless, most existing studies tend to discuss theological and social dimensions separately. Studies on aqidah primarily focus on strengthening religious belief and identity, whereas studies on multiculturalism and religious moderation place greater emphasis on the social dimensions of religious life.

Based on this review, there remains a significant gap in the literature, particularly concerning the relationship between theological exclusivism and social inclusivity from the perspective of Islamic creed (aqidah). Previous studies have provided limited explanation of how these two concepts can be understood in an integrated manner within multicultural societies. A comprehensive understanding of their relationship is essential for addressing ongoing debates regarding the boundaries between religious commitment and social openness in the context of diversity.

Unlike previous studies, this article offers a conceptual synthesis of the relationship between theological exclusivism and social inclusivity from the perspective of Islamic aqidah. It argues that theological exclusivism and social inclusivity are not mutually contradictory; rather, they constitute two complementary dimensions in the implementation of Islamic creed within multicultural societies. Accordingly, this article seeks to make a conceptual contribution to strengthening religious moderation through the integration of theological commitment and social openness.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the dialectic between theological exclusivism and social inclusivity from the perspective of Islamic aqidah and to examine how these two dimensions can be integrated within Islamic

Religious Education in the construction of a multicultural society. Furthermore, this study seeks to formulate a conceptual framework for Islamic Religious Education that balances firm theological commitment with inclusive social values in order to strengthen religious moderation and promote harmonious multicultural coexistence.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative library research design with a conceptual approach to examine the relationship between theological exclusivity and social inclusivity from the perspective of Islamic creed ('*aqidah*'). The research is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of normative Islamic texts, particularly the Qur'an and Hadith, while secondary sources include academic books and scholarly journal articles related to Islamic creed, multicultural society, theological exclusivity, social inclusivity, and religious moderation.

The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research topic, academic credibility, and contribution to discussions on Islamic creed and multicultural society. Sources were identified through searches in Google Scholar and Scopus-indexed journals using keywords such as *Islamic creed ('aqidah)*, *theological exclusivity*, *social inclusivity*, *multicultural society*, and *religious moderation*. Only sources directly related to the focus of the study were included, while literature lacking relevance or scholarly credibility was excluded.

Data were collected through documentation techniques involving the identification, selection, classification, and critical examination of relevant literature according to the focus and objectives of the study. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis. The analysis process involved organizing the data into several key themes, namely theological exclusivity, social inclusivity, multicultural society, and religious moderation. These themes were then interpreted critically to identify patterns of relationship among the concepts and to formulate a conceptual framework concerning the interaction between theological commitment and social openness.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, this study employed source triangulation by comparing arguments and interpretations derived from various primary and secondary references. In addition, conceptual interpretations were critically cross-checked across different scholarly perspectives to maintain consistency and minimize potential interpretive bias.

Result and Discussion

Theological Exclusivism as a Consequence of Islamic Creed (*Aqidah*).

Amid the growing discourse on multiculturalism, theological exclusivism is often placed in a problematic position. A strong commitment to religious belief is frequently associated with a closed attitude toward difference, leading exclusivism to

be perceived as an obstacle to the realization of an inclusive social life (Baidhaw, 2005). This view is rooted in the assumption that religious truth claims automatically result in the rejection of groups holding different beliefs. Consequently, theological exclusivism is often regarded as one of the primary sources of problems related to intolerance and interreligious relations within multicultural societies (Thoha, 2005).

This view warrants a more critical examination. Within religious traditions, truth claims are not unique to Islam but constitute a characteristic inherent in every system of belief. Without a conviction in the truth of what is believed, religion would lose its normative function as a guide for the lives of its adherents. In the Islamic context, this commitment to truth is rooted in Islamic creed (aqidah) as the primary foundation of religious life. Aqidah not only shapes the relationship between human beings and God but also serves as the basis for constructing a Muslim's identity and life orientation (Fauzen & Najib, 2025). Therefore, theological exclusivism is essentially a logical consequence of the existence of aqidah itself.

However, contemporary developments indicate that the discourse of Islamic creed ('aqidah) is increasingly shaped by digital religious narratives that tend to simplify theological understanding into rigid identity boundaries. In many cases, theological commitment is reduced to exclusivist attitudes emphasizing opposition to others rather than fostering a comprehensive understanding of faith. This tendency risks narrowing the epistemological scope of 'aqidah and transforming theological exclusivity from an affirmation of religious conviction into a social attitude of exclusion. Therefore, theological exclusivity should be understood within the framework of epistemic commitment to faith rather than as a justification for social exclusiveness (Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026).

A number of studies indicate that aqidah plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's religious consciousness and commitment. Belief in the oneness of Allah, the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the truth of the Qur'an constitutes the fundamental principles that distinguish Islam from other belief systems (Marliansih & Muslimin, 2025; Novitasari et al., 2020; E. Setiawan, 2025). From this perspective, theological exclusivism is not intended to negate the existence of other groups but rather to affirm the beliefs embraced by Muslims. In other words, theological exclusivism is more concerned with how individuals understand and uphold their beliefs than with how they treat those who hold different beliefs (Husaini, 2023).

The problem arises when theological exclusivism is no longer understood as a commitment within the sphere of belief but shifts into social exclusivism in social life. This shift blurs the boundary between belief and social relations. Consequently, steadfast adherence to the principles of aqidah is often equated with an inability to accept differences. At this point, the real issue is not theological exclusivism itself but rather the way in which it is translated into social practice. When theological

commitment is used as a basis for limiting interaction, rejecting dialogue, or viewing other groups negatively, theological exclusivism undergoes an expansion of meaning that extends beyond its original domain.

In the context of multicultural societies, it is important to distinguish between the sphere of belief and the social sphere. Firm commitment to *aqidah* does not necessarily lead to the rejection of diversity, just as respect for diversity does not require individuals to diminish their commitment to their religious convictions (Baidhaw, 2005). Thus, theological exclusivism is better understood as a mechanism for preserving religious identity and the consistency of faith rather than as a justification for the emergence of exclusive attitudes in social life.

Based on the foregoing analysis, it can be understood that theological exclusivism in Islam has no direct causal relationship with the emergence of intolerant attitudes in multicultural societies. The issue is more closely related to the transformation of exclusivism from the sphere of belief into social exclusivism in relations with groups holding different beliefs. This finding indicates that theological exclusivism and social openness need not be regarded as mutually contradictory concepts but rather as two dimensions operating within distinct spheres. In this regard, the present study supports previous arguments that religious commitment and social openness are not inherently contradictory. However, it extends earlier discussions by demonstrating that theological exclusivity should be understood as an epistemic commitment rooted in Islamic creed (*'aqidah*) rather than as a social attitude toward those with different beliefs. The implications of this perspective are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it clarifies the distinction between theological and social domains, while practically it provides a conceptual basis for strengthening religious moderation in multicultural societies.

Social Inclusivity in Multicultural Societies

Diversity is an inseparable reality of contemporary society. Differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, language, and worldviews have become integral parts of the social dynamics that shape multicultural societies (Alfindo, 2023). In this context, living together requires not only recognition of these differences but also the ability to build relationships that enable diverse groups to coexist harmoniously. Therefore, social inclusivity has become a crucial prerequisite for maintaining social cohesion amid the growing complexity of modern societies (Nasution & Albina, 2024).

In various studies on multiculturalism, social inclusivity is understood as an attitude of openness that fosters appreciation for diversity without negating the identities of individuals or groups. Inclusivity does not seek uniformity; rather, it recognizes that diversity is an inseparable part of social life (Nugroho, 2016). Thus, the primary goal of inclusivity is not to erase identity boundaries but to create a social

space that enables different identities to interact on an equal and constructive basis (I.W et al., 2023).

The Islamic perspective provides a strong foundation for the development of an inclusive social life. Human diversity is understood as part of the reality ordained by God in human existence (Irmawati & Mardiana, 2024). Therefore, differences are not regarded as threats that must be eliminated but rather as realities that should be managed through the principles of justice, respect, and social responsibility. Relations with those who hold different beliefs or backgrounds are established on the basis of shared humanity and coexistence within the same social sphere. This perspective demonstrates that the recognition of diversity is not contrary to Islamic teachings but rather constitutes an integral part of the effort to foster a more harmonious and just social life (Auny & Arohmatan, 2023). Historical experiences also demonstrate that Islam has developed through dynamic interactions with diverse cultural traditions and social realities. Rather than negating local identities, Islamic teachings possess an adaptive and accommodative character that enables the formation of harmonious multicultural societies while preserving core religious principles. Therefore, social inclusivity in Islam should be understood as an ethical orientation that encourages constructive engagement with diversity without compromising theological commitment (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, social inclusivity is often misunderstood in practice. Many assume that openness toward other groups will weaken commitment to religious beliefs. Consequently, inclusivity is perceived as a threat to religious identity and is considered capable of blurring the boundaries of *aqidah* (Estede et al., 2025). On the other hand, there is also a tendency to interpret inclusivity excessively, leading to the assumption that all beliefs must be placed on an equal footing in order to achieve social harmony (Baidhawry, 2005). Both tendencies indicate that social inclusivity is often understood in a disproportionate manner.

At this point, the issue does not lie in the concept of inclusivity itself but rather in the way it is understood. Social inclusivity does not require individuals to diminish their commitment to their religious beliefs, just as commitment to one's beliefs does not have to be expressed through the rejection of different groups. Social openness and a strong religious identity can coexist as long as each is situated within its proper sphere. Thus, inclusivity is not synonymous with religious relativism but is more closely associated with the ability to foster relationships that are fair, open, and grounded in mutual respect amid diversity.

In multicultural societies, social inclusivity cannot be understood merely as the passive acceptance of others. More than that, inclusivity requires an active commitment to creating spaces of interaction in which all groups receive equal recognition and treatment (Baidhawry, 2005). Therefore, social inclusivity is not merely a matter of tolerance; it also concerns how differences are managed so that they do not

develop into social exclusion, prejudice, or conflict that may disrupt social cohesion and coexistence.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be understood that social inclusivity is not synonymous with the weakening of religious identity or the relativization of religious truth. Rather, social inclusivity reflects a mature approach to engaging with diversity without compromising commitment to one's religious beliefs. This finding indicates that social openness and a strong religious identity need not be positioned as mutually contradictory poles. Instead, at the intersection of these two dimensions, an important dialectical space emerges for explaining the relationship between theological exclusivism and social inclusivity in multicultural societies.

This argument is consistent with previous studies that emphasize social inclusivity as an essential foundation for harmonious multicultural coexistence while maintaining commitment to religious identity. However, the present study extends earlier discussions by demonstrating that social inclusivity should not be understood merely as tolerance or openness, nor should it be associated with theological relativism. Rather, it constitutes an ethical orientation that enables constructive engagement with diversity without compromising religious convictions. The implications of this perspective are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on inclusivity in Islam by clarifying the relationship between social openness and religious commitment. Practically, it provides a conceptual basis for fostering social harmony and strengthening religious moderation in multicultural societies.

The Dialectic of Theological Exclusivism and Social Inclusivity.

The debate over theological exclusivism and social inclusivity remains a prominent issue in contemporary discussions on religion and multiculturalism. The two are often positioned in a dichotomous relationship, as if strengthening one aspect necessarily requires sacrificing the other. Within this perspective, a strong commitment to religious beliefs is considered likely to hinder openness toward differences, while openness to diversity is perceived as potentially weakening adherence to religious principles. Consequently, theological exclusivism and social inclusivity are frequently portrayed as two opposing poles (Baidhaw, 2005).

This perspective reflects a tendency to oversimplify the relationship between religious belief and social life. Theological exclusivism is understood merely as a source of intolerance, whereas social inclusivity is perceived as a form of weakening religious identity. Such a perspective not only obscures the distinct nature of each concept but also creates the impression that social diversity can only be achieved through a reduction in commitment to religious beliefs (Hutahae, 2021). At this point, the issue lies neither in exclusivism nor inclusivity themselves, but rather in the way they are positioned within a mutually negating relationship.

Upon closer examination, theological exclusivism and social inclusivity operate in different domains. Theological exclusivism lies in the realm of belief and concerns commitment to the truth of one's religious doctrines. Meanwhile, social inclusivity lies in the realm of human relations and concerns respect for diversity in communal life. This distinction indicates that the two are not inherently contradictory. Firmness in belief does not automatically lead to the rejection of difference, just as openness to difference does not require individuals to diminish their commitment to their held beliefs.

In the context of multicultural societies, distinguishing between the theological and social spheres is essential to avoid various forms of reductionism in understanding religion. When all social issues are explained solely through a theological perspective, diversity tends to be viewed as a threat to religious identity. Conversely, when all theological issues are subsumed under the demands of social life, religious identity and commitment risk losing their substantive meaning (Said, 2018). Therefore, the relationship between theological exclusivism and social inclusivity cannot be understood through the logic of choosing one over the other, but rather through an effort to position both proportionally within their respective spheres of operation.

From this perspective, theological exclusivism and social inclusivity are no longer understood as conflicting concepts but as two complementary dimensions. Theological exclusivism serves to maintain the consistency of religious identity and commitment, while social inclusivity enables the creation of harmonious relationships within a diverse society. Although they operate in different directions, both ultimately share the same goal: enabling individuals to practice their faith authentically without disregarding the pluralistic nature of social reality (Hutahaeen, 2021).

This complementary relationship is also reflected in empirical studies on Islamic institutions operating within plural societies. Research on pesantren demonstrates that a strong Islamic identity can coexist with multicultural values such as openness, equality, humanism, and respect for local wisdom. These values are institutionalised in educational practices and social interactions, enabling Islamic institutions to maintain theological commitment while simultaneously fostering harmonious coexistence with diverse social groups. This finding confirms that theological exclusivity does not necessarily hinder social inclusivity; rather, both can operate synergistically within different yet interconnected domains (Wafa et al., 2026).

Based on this analysis, this study finds that the tension between theological exclusivism and social inclusivity stems more from a misunderstanding of the boundary between the sphere of belief and the social sphere than from the nature of these two concepts themselves. This finding suggests that strengthening religious conviction does not necessarily require restricting social relations, just as social openness does not necessarily require weakening religious identity. Thus, the dialectic between theological exclusivism and social inclusivity does not result in conflict but

rather gives rise to common ground that allows firm religious conviction and multicultural life to coexist.

While previous studies have often emphasized the tension or dichotomy between religious exclusivism and social openness, this study offers a different perspective by demonstrating that both can be understood as complementary dimensions operating within distinct yet interconnected domains. Therefore, this study contributes to the development of a more balanced conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between Islamic creed ('aqidah) and multicultural society. The implications of these findings are that religious moderation should not be developed by weakening theological commitment, but by establishing a proportional understanding of the distinction between theological belief and social relations. This perspective provides both a theoretical framework and a practical foundation for promoting harmonious coexistence in multicultural societies.

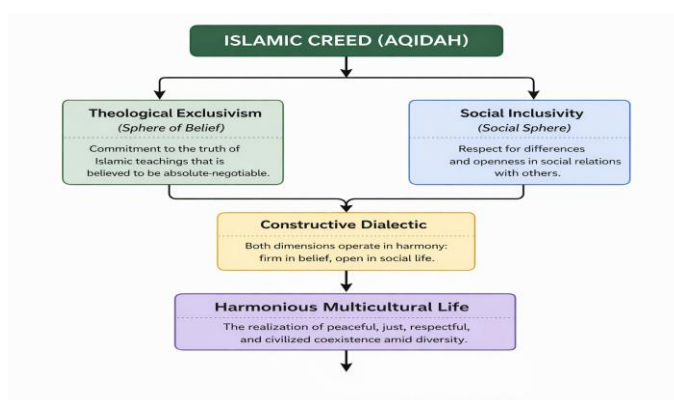
Islamic Religious Education as a Framework for Reconstructing the Relationship Between Islamic Creed ('Aqidah) and Multicultural Society

Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in preparing Muslim learners to live constructively within multicultural societies. In contemporary pluralistic contexts, Islamic Religious Education is challenged not only to strengthen students' commitment to Islamic creed ('aqidah) but also to cultivate attitudes of tolerance, openness, and respect toward social diversity. Multicultural societies present significant challenges to religious life. On the one hand, every believer is expected to remain committed to their faith. On the other hand, social realities necessitate the establishment of harmonious relationships with groups from different religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds (Murtopo & Adib, 2024). In such situations, Islamic Religious Education becomes an important medium for negotiating the relationship between theological commitment and social inclusivity. (Mashuri & Syahid, 2024). Based on the preceding discussion, Islamic Religious Education should not position faith and social diversity as mutually contradictory realities. Rather, it should facilitate a balanced understanding in which Islamic creed ('aqidah) serves as the foundation of religious commitment, while multicultural life provides the social context in which religious values are practiced and actualized.

From this perspective, religious doctrine serves not only as a means of preserving religious identity but also as a source of values that guide how a Muslim engages with social reality. Adherence to the principles of faith does not require the rejection of diversity, just as diversity does not necessitate a blurring of the boundaries of belief. On the contrary, a mature understanding of faith fosters the awareness that difference is part of social reality that must be addressed wisely. Thus, diversity is not viewed as a threat to faith but rather as the social context in which religious values are actualized in lived experience.

Reconstructing the relationship between Islamic faith and multicultural life requires a clear distinction between theological commitment and social relations. (Baidhaw, 2005) In the theological realm, a Muslim has both the right and the duty to uphold what they believe to be true (Amrullah & Jailani, 2022). However, in the social realm, this commitment must be manifested through attitudes that uphold justice, respect, and recognition of human dignity (Harahap et al., 2024). This distinction between faith and social relations has also been highlighted by Muhamad Ali who argues that commitment to theological truth does not necessarily negate inclusive social engagement. Rather, Muslims may maintain firm religious convictions while fostering respectful and constructive relations with people of different faiths within multicultural societies (Ardiansyah & Mahendra, 2026). This distinction is crucial to ensure that faith is not reduced to an instrument of social exclusion, while also preventing social inclusivity from devolving into the relativization of religious belief.

In this regard, contemporary discussions on religious moderation further emphasise that theological commitment should be interpreted contextually in order to respond to contemporary social realities. Religious doctrines, including Islamic creed ('aqidah), are not only intended to preserve faith and religious identity but also to promote public welfare, social harmony, and peaceful coexistence. Such an approach enables Muslims to maintain firm theological convictions while cultivating moderation, inclusiveness, and constructive engagement within multicultural societies. Therefore, religious moderation should not be understood as weakening theological commitment, but rather as a balanced framework that harmonises faithfulness to religious principles with openness toward social diversity (Hermanto et al., 2017). This understanding is supported by recent studies on Indonesian pesantren, which demonstrate that inclusive educational spaces can accommodate both Islamic authenticity and pluralistic engagement, thereby strengthening rather than compromising 'aqidah values (A. I. Setiawan et al., 2026).



Source: Author's Synthesis Results

Figure 1.

Islamic Religious Education Framework for Reconstructing the Relationship Between Islamic Creed ('Aqidah) and Multicultural Society

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Figure 1 shows that Islamic creed serves as the foundation of Islamic Religious Education and gives rise to two distinct yet interrelated orientations. In the theological realm, creed fosters theological exclusivity, which preserves religious identity and commitment. In the social realm, Islamic Religious Education promotes social inclusivity by cultivating attitudes of tolerance, openness, and respect for diversity. These two dimensions are not contradictory but converge in a constructive dialectic that supports harmonious multicultural coexistence.

This model also demonstrates that the primary issue in a multicultural society does not lie in the existence of theological exclusivity or social inclusivity, but rather in the failure to distinguish between their respective domains. When theological exclusivity is transferred to the social realm, a tendency toward exclusivism emerges that has the potential to breed intolerance. Conversely, when social inclusivity is expanded to enter the theological realm, a tendency toward the relativization of beliefs arises that can obscure religious identity. Therefore, a balance between the two is key to building a multicultural life that maintains the integrity of religious belief while respecting social diversity.

This finding confirms that the relationship between Islamic faith and multicultural society need not be understood within the framework of a conflict between religious commitment and social openness. Rather, it should be understood as a complementary and dialogical relationship that operates through a clear and proportional distinction between the domain of belief and the social domain. In this framework, strengthening religious creed does not necessarily lead to social exclusion, just as embracing diversity does not imply the relativization of religious truth. Instead, it reflects a balanced coexistence that upholds both theological integrity and social harmony.

Unlike previous studies that tend to position theological exclusivity and social inclusivity in a dichotomous or tension-filled relationship, this study proposes a dialectical-complementary perspective in which both dimensions are understood as distinct yet mutually reinforcing within the framework of Islamic creed (*‘aqidah*). The implications of this model are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on Islamic creed and multiculturalism by demonstrating that theological commitment and social openness can coexist within distinct yet interconnected domains. Practically, it provides a conceptual foundation for strengthening religious moderation, Islamic Religious Education, and social policies aimed at promoting harmonious coexistence in multicultural societies.

Conclusion

This study finds that the relationship between theological exclusivity and social inclusivity from the perspective of Islamic creed (*‘aqidah*) is characterized by a dialectical-complementary pattern rather than a mutually contradictory one.

Theological exclusivity functions as an epistemic foundation that strengthens commitment to faith and preserves the integrity of religious belief, while social inclusivity serves as an ethical orientation that promotes justice, openness, and harmonious coexistence within multicultural societies. The findings further reveal that the tension frequently associated with these two concepts stems not from their substantive nature, but rather from a misunderstanding of the distinction between the domain of belief and the social domain. Therefore, Islamic creed should be understood not only as a theological foundation but also as a source of values that guides Muslims in engaging constructively with social diversity without compromising the integrity of faith. In this regard, Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in translating these theological and social values into educational practices that foster firm religious commitment alongside inclusive attitudes toward diversity in multicultural societies.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a conceptual framework that positions theological exclusivity and social inclusivity as complementary dimensions operating within different yet interconnected domains, while also enriching the discourse on Islamic Religious Education in multicultural contexts. Practically, the findings provide a conceptual foundation for strengthening religious moderation, developing Islamic Religious Education that balances theological commitment with social inclusivity, and fostering harmonious multicultural relations while maintaining firm religious commitment. Nevertheless, this study is limited to a conceptual and literature-based analysis and does not incorporate empirical evidence concerning the experiences of multicultural Muslim communities in diverse social settings. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ empirical approaches, such as qualitative field studies or comparative analyses, in order to examine how the dialectical relationship between theological exclusivity and social inclusivity is manifested through Islamic Religious Education in contemporary multicultural societies.

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