

CONSTRUCTIVIST MODEL OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR FORMING STUDENTS' TOLERANCE IN PONDOK MODERN DARUSSALAM GONTOR

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Abstract

The persistence of intolerance in society underscores the critical role of education in shaping tolerant attitudes, particularly within faith-based educational settings. This study aimed to analyze the constructivist approach in inclusive education and its implications for the formation of tolerant attitudes among students at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. A qualitative approach with an ethnographic design was employed, with data collected over the course of one year through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document study. Data were analyzed interactively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that inclusive education at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is implemented through the shared life of students from diverse cultural, regional, and character backgrounds within a unified schooling and boarding system. The constructivist approach is manifested in learning and student development processes that position students as active subjects in constructing their understanding and tolerant attitudes through direct experience, social interaction, collaborative work, and reflection. Tolerance education is carried out through two models, namely direct tolerance and indirect tolerance, which operate integratively within the framework of inclusive education, thereby making tolerance not merely a norm but a consciously internalized character within the students. The study concludes that a constructivist approach within inclusive education is effective in fostering students' tolerant attitudes in an active, reflective, and sustainable manner, and affirms that Islamic boarding

schools hold strategic potential as character education spaces capable of preparing students to live harmoniously in a plural society.

Keywords: Constructivist Learning; Inclusive Education; Development of Tolerance; Islamic Boarding Schools; Character Education

INTRODUCTION

As a multicultural country, Indonesia has significant hurdles in the form of growing intolerance, which shows up as a variety of social conflicts based on religion, culture, or group identity. This occurrence shows how diversity, which ought to be a strength, may actually cause division if it is not controlled through proper education. As a result, in a pluralistic society, education is crucial to fostering social harmony and tolerance (Banks, 2020).

An method known as inclusive education places a strong emphasis on respecting students' diversity and accepting their differences. In addition to physically learning together, inclusive education exposes children to social processes that promote empathy, collaboration, and respect for one another. These principles serve as a crucial basis for cultivating a tolerant mindset, especially in a heterogeneous culture such as Indonesia. (Ainscow et al., 2020; Hidayat & Syafe'i, 2022)

Constructivism is a pertinent educational strategy for inclusive education. Constructivism maintains that experience, social interaction, and introspection actively generate information and attitudes rather than passively transmitting them (Fosnot, 2020). In the context of fostering tolerance, this approach enables students to understand differences in a calm manner through mutual life experiences, dialogue, and cooperative work, (Schunk, 2020) As a result, tolerance is not only based on norms but also on personal interpretation (Çibukçiu, 2023).

As an Islamic Khas Indonesian educational organization, Pesantren has a great deal of potential to advance inclusive education based on Islamic principles (Azra, 2020). Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, As one of the modern pesantren, Gontor is known for its educational system, which is based on several social, cultural, and religious aspects. This keberagaman creates a social space that facilitates the process of learning tolerance in a healthy way in daily life (Rohman & D. Mulyadi, 2021).

Various studies have already discussed inclusive education and tolerance in schools (Yusuf & Abdullah, 2023), although the majority of them focus on normative, kebijakan, or general Islamic principles (Sahin, 2021). Particularly in the context of the current pesantren, research that specifically examines constructivism in inclusive education as a method of fostering santri sikap toleransi is relatively weak.

Based on the aforementioned latar belakang, the purpose of this study is to analyze the integrative educational model based on constructivism in order to develop a sense of santri tolerance in Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor and to examine its implications for santri social life. It is hoped that this research will provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic education that are inclusive and focused on fostering tolerance.

METHODS

This study uses a kualitatif approach with ethnographic design. The reason for this is that the study aims to understand in a practical way the process of fostering santri tolerance in the context of pesantren culture. The ethnographic method enables researchers to examine customs, traditions, social interactions, and makna that are constructed by parents and students in daily life within the educational environment based on the relevant day-to-day (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2020). Etnografi is considered relevant in the context of Islamic education to support students who do not always follow the prescribed curriculum (Sahin, 2021).

For one year, from November 2023 to November 2024, the study was conducted at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, Desa Gontor, Kecamatan Mlarak, Kabupaten Ponorogo, Jawa Timur. This panjang time allows researchers to conduct a thorough analysis of the educational process, social interactions, and internalization of tolerance in the pesantren's way of life (Flick, 2022). In qualitative research, the researcher's primary tool for gathering and interpreting data is an intense interaction with the research subject (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The research subjects were selected purposively, including Islamic boarding school leaders, teachers (ustadz), student caregivers, and students from various regional and cultural backgrounds. Purposive sampling was used to select informants deemed to have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the implementation of inclusive

education and constructivist-based learning in Islamic boarding schools (Palinkas et al., 2020). The diversity of informants allowed researchers to gain a comprehensive perspective on the process of developing attitudes of tolerance among students.

Data collection techniques were conducted through participant observation, unstructured in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Participatory observation focused on students' social interactions, collaborative learning practices, and Islamic boarding school activities that reflected the application of inclusiveness and tolerance values (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2021). According to the tenets of constructivism, which emphasizes socially constructed meaning, in-depth interviews were utilized to investigate the subjective experiences, meanings, and reflections of educators and students regarding the process of cultivating attitudes of tolerance (Schunk, 2020).

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process began with open coding to identify key themes, such as inclusive education, constructivism, and tolerance. Thematic coding was then conducted to identify patterns and relationships between themes (Miles et al., 2020). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as extended researcher involvement in the field to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2021).

Tabel 1. Research Participants

<i>No</i>	Participant Category	Number of Participants	Role in Inclusive Education
1	Boarding School Leaders	2	Policy formulation and inclusive education management
2	Teachers (Ustadz)	6	Implementation of constructivist learning and value education
3	Student Caregivers	4	Daily supervision and character development
4	Students (Santri)	12	Active participants experiencing inclusive education and tolerance formation
<i>Total</i>		24 Participants	

RESULTS

The results of this study were obtained through one year of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies at the Pondok Modern

Darussalam Gontor. The findings indicate that the constructivist approach to inclusive education plays a significant role in shaping the tolerance of students. In general, the research findings can be classified into the following key findings:

Implementation of Inclusive Education in Islamic Boarding School Life

Observations indicate that inclusive education at the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is effectively implemented through a system of communal living among students from diverse regional, cultural, linguistic, and character backgrounds. All students live in the same dormitory environment and participate in the same educational system without any segregation based on social or cultural background.

Table 2. Implementation of Inclusive Education in Islamic Boarding Schools

<i>No</i>	<i>Aspect of Inclusive Education</i>	<i>Form of Implementation</i>	<i>Key Findings</i>
1	Student Diversity	Students come from various regions, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds	Diversity becomes a medium for learning tolerance
2	Boarding System	All students live together without segregation	Intensive and continuous social interaction
3	Learning Process	Collaborative learning and group discussions	Students learn to appreciate differing perspectives
4	Non-Academic Activities	Student organizations and scouting activities	Strengthens cooperation across diverse backgrounds
5	Boarding School Culture	Role modeling and value habituation	Tolerance is internalized naturally

Students engage in frequent and intense social contacts as a result of these circumstances in their daily lives, groups, and academic pursuits. Instead of being viewed as a barrier, this variety is purposefully handled to promote respect for one another and awareness of one another's differences as part of the educational process.

Using the Constructivist Method in the Teaching Process

The results of studies show that kids' learning and development are influenced by the constructivist approach. Both within and outside of the classroom, students are positioned as active participants in the educational process. Through discussion, group projects, hands-on experience, and cooperative problem-solving, educators and caregivers serve as facilitators, assisting children in developing their knowledge and attitudes.

In reality, the value of tolerance is created via social interaction and contemplation of common life experiences rather than being taught doctrinally. The practices of discussion, debate, and group dispute resolution that actively engage students are clear examples of this process.

Models of Tolerance Education Discovered

This study's observations and interviews revealed that Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor uses two primary strategies for implementing tolerance education: (1) Direct tolerance education. Direct social interactions between students from various backgrounds—such as group study sessions, student clubs, scouting, and dorm life—make this paradigm a reality. Students are encouraged to cooperate, get to know one another, and gain a tangible understanding of diversity through this contact. (2) Education on tolerance through indirect means. A pesantren culture that prioritizes the virtues of empathy, discipline, accountability, and respect for one another, as well as teacher role models and student personality development, make this model a reality. Rather of being taught verbally, tolerance principles are developed implicitly via social customs and experiences. Within the framework of inclusive education based on constructivism, both models function concurrently and enhance one another.

Table 3. Constructivist Learning Practices in Fostering Students' Tolerance

<i>N o</i>	Constructivist Aspect	Learning Strategy	Impact on Students' Tolerance
1	Active Learning	Student-centered discussions and reflections	Encourages openness to different viewpoints
2	Collaborative Learning	Group work with diverse members	Builds mutual understanding and empathy
3	Experiential Learning	Real-life interaction in dormitory life	Strengthens tolerance through lived experience
4	Reflective Practice	Personal reflection and dialogue	Helps internalize values of respect and coexistence
5	Teacher Facilitation	Teachers as facilitators rather than lecturers	Supports independent meaning-making and critical thinking

Categories of Students' Tolerance Attitudes

The findings of the study also demonstrate that students' attitudes about tolerance fall into two categories: (1) Passive tolerance, which is characterized by an attitude of acceptance of differences and allowing people to freely express their individual identities, beliefs, and behaviors. (2) Active tolerance, exemplified by the disposition to assist, uphold,

and encourage the development of social peace in spite of disparities in upbringing and viewpoints.

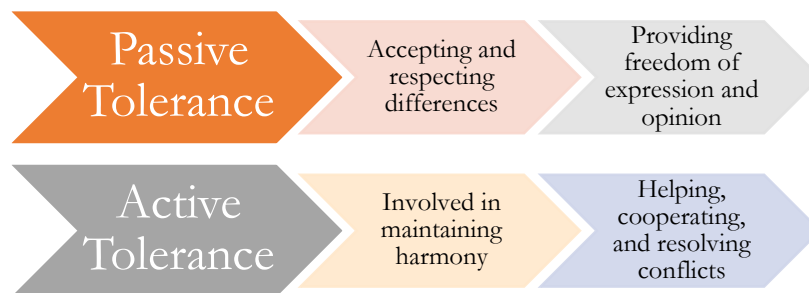


Figure 1. Category of Student Tolerance Attitudes

These two forms of tolerance emerged as a result of shared life experiences and the ongoing process of constructing meaning in the Islamic boarding school environment.

The Effect of the Constructivist Method on Students' Tolerance Attitudes

Students have developed engaged and thoughtful attitudes of tolerance as a result of the constructivist approach to inclusive education. In addition to understanding tolerance as a social norm, students often see it as a pragmatic requirement for preserving peace in society. As a student's character is blended with their own understanding, tolerance grows.

Overall, the study's findings show that the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor's constructivist inclusive education approach makes a substantial contribution to the development of students' attitudes toward tolerance in a sustainable, contextual way that is focused on a peaceful social life.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that using a constructivist approach to teaching religious tolerance might boost students' active participation, especially when it comes to experiential learning and thoughtful conversations. These results show that pupils build comprehension through social engagement and introspection rather than passively absorbing information. By emphasizing the process of creating meaning via conversation and experience, the constructivist method facilitates the internalization of tolerance ideals in everyday situations.

Because constructivist learning stresses the relationship between existing knowledge and new learning experiences, these findings are consistent with recent research that

suggests it promotes students' cognitive engagement and reflective thinking skills (Tan et al., 2023; Smith, 2025). Furthermore, collaborative learning within a constructivist framework has also been found to promote students' ability to grasp other perspectives, which is the essence of tolerance (Azizah et al., 2025).

These study results are consistent with Enung's (2025) research, which discovered that the constructivist method works well for Religious Education instruction because it gives students the opportunity to create religious meaning in a contextualized way. According to other studies, constructivist education fosters the growth of social empathy and critical thinking, particularly when it incorporates group projects and introspection (Martyniuk et al., 2025).

This is in contrast to certain research, though, that point to drawbacks in applying constructivist methods, like teacher readiness and the constraints of systematic learning design (Tan et al., 2023). This implies that a constructivist approach's effectiveness depends on the institutional setting and the teacher's pedagogical proficiency in addition to the learning model.

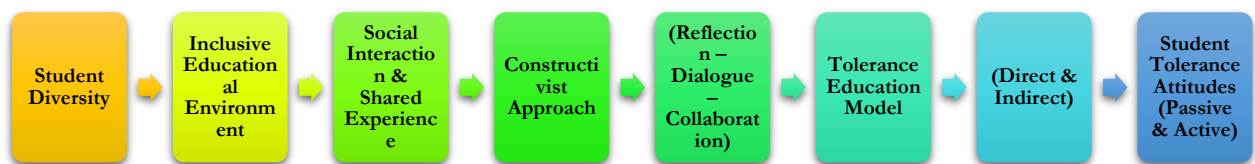


Figure 2. Inclusive Education Framework Based on Constructivism

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor uses constructivism as a main framework for conducting inclusive education. Instead of only recognizing the idea of tolerance doctrinally, this approach views students as active subjects who create understanding and attitudes via social interactions and learning experiences. This is consistent with the constructivist perspective, which holds that experience-based meaning construction actively shapes attitudes and knowledge (Fosnot, 2020; Schunk, 2020).

While children are urged to learn about tolerance through tangible experiences, observations show that teachers and student caregivers serve more as facilitators, directing the learning process. Students can consider differences in perspective and character through group discussions, cooperative activities, and cooperative problem-solving techniques. A constructivist learning environment that fosters inclusive education and the growth of healthy social attitudes is reflected in these practices (Çibukçiu, 2023). As a

result, constructivism at Gontor functions as a tactic for promoting the virtue of tolerance in addition to being a teaching method.

According to a KMI employee, students are not only taught the value of tolerance, but are also used to encountering it firsthand. Teachers encourage pupils to have conversations and come up with solutions on their own when small disputes emerge amongst them rather than offering answers right away. Constructivism's tenets—that knowledge and attitudes are formed via reflection on social experiences—are reflected in this process. As a result, Gontor's constructivist method has a significant impact on students' attitudes and social values in addition to its cognitive effects.

According to research, students' tolerance grows gradually via contemplation, shared experiences, and social contact. Students who live in dorms encounter cultural, linguistic, and cognitive challenges. Students must learn to adjust and value differences as a necessary aspect of coexisting in this setting.



Figure 3. The Process of Students' Tolerance Construction through Constructivist Learning

These social experiences are the main source of meaning and attitude formation, according to constructivist theory. Students create tolerance as a practical requirement for preserving peaceful communal life in addition to understanding it as a normative concept. This result is consistent with studies showing that exposure to variety in authentic social settings helps pupils acquire tolerance (Yusuf & Abdullah, 2023).

Students can understand tolerance as a real necessity in daily life rather than as an abstract notion thanks to the constructivist approach. Students develop an awareness that tolerance is a vital attitude for fostering harmony and social order through shared life experiences (Schunk, 2020).

The constructivist perspective, which emphasizes that knowledge and attitudes are developed via experience and interaction rather than a one-way transfer of values, is

consistent with this approach. As a result, tolerance at Gontor grows among the pupils as an internal knowledge rather than just following the regulations of the Islamic boarding school.

Direct and indirect tolerance education are the two techniques used at the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor to implement tolerance education, according to field studies. Within the framework of constructivist inclusive education, these two approaches function in tandem and enhance one another.

Students from different backgrounds interact socially in group projects, organizing events, and scouting activities, all of which demonstrate the direct tolerance approach. Students can engage in intense engagement, discuss opinions, and develop a common awareness of differences thanks to these exchanges.

In the meantime, the indirect tolerance approach is implemented by helping kids grow as individuals and by teaching them values like empathy, accountability, and self-control. These values are not only imparted orally; they are also developed through shared life experiences, the pesantren culture, and the example of teachers (Nucci et al., 2021). According to constructivism, these two models give pupils a way to intentionally and thoughtfully cultivate tolerant attitudes (Sahin, 2021).

Implications of the Constructivist Approach to the Formation of Tolerant Attitudes

Students' development of a tolerant mindset is significantly impacted by the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor's constructivist approach to inclusive education. Students embrace tolerance as a component of their own personality and character in addition to understanding it as a social standard (Azra, 2020). In a pluralistic culture, this procedure enhances the educational role of Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, as a setting for cultivating students' moral and social character (Dhofier, 2022). Students can experience diversity personally in the inclusive Islamic boarding school setting, and they can reflect on these experiences with the aid of the constructivist method. Through this approach, children develop an active attitude of tolerance in which they contribute to preserving harmony in their common lives in addition to accepting diversity (Nucci et al., 2021).

The research findings theoretically support the constructivist approach's applicability in character education, especially in fostering religious tolerance. It has been demonstrated that learning that prioritizes discussion and introspection promotes deeper,

cross-perspective comprehension. In practical terms, the research findings advise teachers to incorporate problem-based learning, reflective discussion techniques, and student cooperation while teaching the ideals of tolerance. Students that use this method can improve their critical thinking abilities and social empathy while interacting with variety (Smith, 2025; Azizah et al., 2025). The constructivist approach, on the other hand, can be a different, more participative, and contextual learning strategy for religious moderation in the context of educational policy, especially in multicultural educational settings.

When evaluating the results, it is important to take into account the many limitations of this study. To begin with, the study was limited in scope and subject count, thus extra care should be taken when extrapolating the findings, particularly to other educational situations. Second, the long-term effects of applying the constructivist method on the growth of students' attitudes of tolerance were not measured in this study; therefore, more research is necessary to determine the approach's sustainable efficacy. Third, this study did not thoroughly examine instructors' preparedness and involvement in consistently and sustainably using a constructivist approach because it concentrated more on the viewpoint of the students. In order to have a more complete view of how a constructivist method is being used to promote tolerance, future study is advised to expand the research environment, use a longitudinal design, and include educator perspectives.

These restrictions provide room for future studies to create longitudinal designs, increase the number of research participants, and look at how constructivist methods might be combined with religious moderation or values-based learning frameworks. As a result, the constructivist approach to inclusive education has been successful in helping students develop a tolerant mindset in a contextualized and sustainable way, meeting the demands of a pluralistic society.

CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor's constructivist inclusive education strategy has a big impact on how tolerant the kids become. At Gontor, inclusive education is not only reflected in institutional regulations but also in the cooperative lives of students from various areas, cultural backgrounds, and personalities living in the same dorm and educational system. A social space that facilitates

intense engagement, adaptation, and ongoing social learning is created by this inclusive setting.

The educational process is a clear example of the constructivist method, which views students as active participants in developing tolerance and understanding by firsthand experience, discussion, group projects, and introspection on the dynamics of community life. Instead of being taught doctrinally, the value of tolerance is built via the students' everyday learning, organizational, and pesantren activities. Through this process, tolerance becomes more than just following the rules; it becomes an internal knowledge.

Additionally, the findings show that the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor uses both direct and indirect tolerance as teaching paradigms. Social encounters between people from different origins create direct tolerance, whereas personality development, the culture of the pesantren, and role models in education provide indirect tolerance. Within an inclusive education paradigm based on constructivism, both models function in an integrative manner. Therefore, students' engaged, thoughtful, and long-lasting tolerant attitudes have been successfully fostered by the constructivist approach to inclusive education. These results demonstrate the great potential of Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, as character education facilities that can equip students for peaceful coexistence in.

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