

The Transformation of Islamic Education in the Formation of the Cultural Identity of the Archipelago: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract: The transformation of Islamic education in the Nusantara region holds a vital role in preserving the continuity of Malay-Islamic cultural values. This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic education in shaping cultural identity in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam as representations of the heritage of Islamic Civilization in the Malay Archipelago. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach through literature analysis and a comparative study of educational policies, curricula, and Islamic value orientations in both countries. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources, including official documents, scholarly articles, and recent research findings. The analysis reveals that Islamic education in Indonesia is oriented toward religious moderation, cultural adaptation, and multiculturalism, while Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam emphasizes the Malay Islamic Monarchy ideology, which upholds loyalty and moral integrity. These differences have resulted in two distinct models of Islamic education that both preserve the values of Islamic civilization within their respective social contexts. The integration of religion, culture, and educational policy demonstrates that Islamic education plays a strategic role in strengthening the cultural identity of the Nusantara. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the continuity of Islamic Civilization in Southeast Asia and its relevance in addressing the challenges of educational globalization.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Cultural Identity, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam



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Introduction

Islamic education in the archipelago plays an important role in shaping the cultural and religious identity of society. (Al-Misbah, 2021) asserts that the Islamic education system in Indonesia has developed by integrating Islamic values into the national curriculum as a response to the globalization of education. Fitriani, Rusdiyah, Amaliati, (Fattah & Karim, 2023) in the article Innovations of Integrated Islamic Education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam explain that Islamic education in both countries has similar core values but differs in social context and policy. (Jawi, 2020) states that Islamic education in Southeast Asia serves as a means of passing on Malay-Islamic traditions, morals, and identity. (Fitriani et al., 2025) adds that Islam Nusantara is an approach that balances Sharia values and local wisdom. (Oviensy et al., 2025) assess that in Brunei Darussalam, Islamic education policy is within the framework of the Malay Islamic Beraja ideology. These differences in structure and orientation create a distinctive pattern of educational transformation in each country. A comparative study of the two is needed to understand how Islamic education has become an instrument for shaping cultural identity in the context of Tamadun Islam Nusantara.

Islamic education in Indonesia has a strategic position as a medium for strengthening the nation's culture and character. (Sakri et al., 2024) in the Taujih Journal emphasizes that the Islamic education systems in Indonesia and Brunei have historical differences but share the same spirit in preserving Islamic values. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia are centers for the inheritance of local Islamic culture that instill values of tolerance, togetherness, and social balance. The Educompassion Journal (Oviensy et al., 2025) shows that Islamic educational institutions in Brunei serve to maintain loyalty to the values of Malay Islam Beraja. Educational policy in Brunei is more focused on forming a religious society rooted in sultanate traditions. This phenomenon shows that the Islamic education system not only transfers knowledge but also instills national and cultural values. This difference in educational patterns forms the basis for identifying the main issues related to how the transformation of Islamic education contributes to the formation of cultural identity in two countries rooted in the Malay-Nusantara Islamic civilization.

The transformation of Islamic education in the context of cultural identity is influenced by social change and the modernization of the education system. (Nurjanah et al., 2021) write that Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia are trying to integrate the values of moderation and multiculturalism into the curriculum to build a civilized national character. This approach aims to balance spiritual, intellectual, and socio-cultural aspects. (Oviensy et al., 2025) states that Brunei Darussalam has adopted a mosque-based learning system and lifelong education that emphasizes moral and national values. The effort to integrate Islamic values and local culture is central to the development of the religious identity of the Malay-Islamic community. Challenges arise when the globalization of education triggers the homogenization of values that can erode local cultural characteristics. (Nurjanah et al., 2021) assess that Islamic education must become a cultural fortress so that it does not lose its traditional roots. The transformation of Islamic education based on the values of Tamadun Islam Nusantara is capable of producing a religious and cultured generation.

The cultural identity of Islamic communities is shaped through interactions between education, society, and politics. (Zamronedu, 2021) explains that Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia are faced with modernization, which often shifts traditional values. (Zulkarnain, 2022) notes that Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam has undergone a system reform in line with the implementation of national Sharia law. This policy strengthens moral and cultural education through the Malay Islamic Beraja approach. The relationship between political policy and religious values makes Islamic education a tool for legitimization as well as a guardian of national identity. The variation in approaches in both countries shows that Islamic education is not singular, but adapts to the social and governmental contexts of each country. (Oviensy et al., 2025) emphasizes that differences in social contexts give rise to diversification in educational practices that are equally rooted in the Malay Islamic tradition. This diversity is an important part of understanding the dynamics of Tamadun Islam Nusantara.

The integration of local cultural values into Islamic education is a key pillar in preserving community identity. (Susilasari et al., 2022) in the Al-Thariqah Journal explains that Islamic education must be a vehicle for preserving local traditions and wisdom. Instilling cultural values creates historical awareness of ancestral heritage based on Islamic teachings. Globalization and digitalization pose

challenges to the sustainability of cultural values that are beginning to be marginalized from the world of education. Islamic education in Indonesia continues to balance modern innovation with the instillation of spiritual values. The education system in Brunei shows a consistent pattern in strengthening character based on Malay-Islamic morals and culture. The close relationship between education and culture shows the important role of Islamic education in shaping community identity. The sustainability of the Tamadun Islam Nusantara heritage is determined by the extent to which Islamic education is able to adapt without losing its cultural roots.

The social, political, and economic contexts also influence the direction of Islamic education policy in the Malay-Archipelago region. (Rahman & Yusuf, 2024) explain that the education system in Indonesia is oriented towards strengthening character and independence values. (Abdullah, 2023) notes that the Brunei education system emphasizes loyalty to the monarchy through the implementation of a Malay Islamic Beraja-based curriculum. These two approaches show that the orientation of education is always rooted in the value systems and governments of each country. These differences enrich the discourse on the flexibility of Islamic education in facing social and political realities. Policy variations produce unique educational models that remain grounded in universal Islamic values. Comparing these two contexts helps us understand the extent to which Islamic education plays a role in shaping the cultural identity of society. Comparative analysis provides a scientific basis for formulating strategies for the transformation of Islamic education based on Tamadun Islam Nusantara.

Islamic education in the modern era faces demands to maintain a balance between religious values, culture, and global needs. (Halimah et al., 2023) in the Journal of Islamic Education (JIE) emphasize that Islamic education based on local values is more easily accepted by the community because it is relevant to their lives. Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia have developed a curriculum of religious moderation and nationalism in response to social changes. (Fitriani et al., 2025) found that in Brunei Darussalam, the Islamic education approach maintains Malay Islamic values while being adaptive to global challenges. The balance between religious and cultural values is the main foundation for maintaining the cultural identity of the archipelago. An adaptive education system that does not lose traditional values demonstrates the strength of the Islamic Tamadun heritage in this region. The process of transforming Islamic education in Indonesia and Brunei shows the continuity of Malay-Islamic scientific and cultural traditions. This study aims to analyze how Islamic education can function as an instrument for shaping cultural identity from the perspective of the Islamic civilization of the archipelago.

Research Method

This study uses a descriptive-comparative qualitative approach to analyze the comparison of Islamic education transformation in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. This approach was chosen in order to examine socio-religious phenomena contextually and in depth. (Sugiyono, 2019) states that descriptive qualitative methods are effective for understanding the meaning behind complex social realities. The research was conducted by exploring data from literature, education policy documents, and scientific publications related to the Islamic education systems in both countries. (Yin, 2020) emphasizes the importance of triangulating sources in comparative research to ensure valid and objective results. The analysis was conducted to identify patterns, values, and educational practices related to cultural identity formation. The research focused on historical aspects, curriculum, and cultural values integrated into the Islamic education system. This approach enabled researchers to understand the relationship between Islamic education and cultural identity formation from the perspective of Tamadun Islam Nusantara.

The research location covers two countries, Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, which share Malay-Islamic cultural roots but have different systems of government. These two countries were chosen based on their historical relevance and proximity to the traditions of Islam in the archipelago. (Fattah & Karim, 2023) states that cross-country comparative studies can enrich understanding of the variations in education systems and social values embraced by society. Data was obtained from primary sources in the form of government policy documents, Islamic education curricula, and documented academic interviews. Secondary sources included scientific articles from regional and international

Islamic education journals. (Darussalam, 2022) emphasizes the importance of Islamic education as a means of shaping a moral society. Data from Indonesia refers to policies (Indonesia, 2023) oriented towards religious moderation and local wisdom. The context of these two countries provides space for researchers to explore the similarities and differences in the Islamic education paradigm as a shaper of cultural identity.

Data collection was conducted using the library research method, which included analysis of books, scientific articles, and official documents related to the research topic. (Nasruddin, 2024) explains that the library research method allows researchers to systematically examine textual data to find thematic patterns. The data collection process focused on literature discussing Islamic education, Malay culture, and Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia. Data were obtained from international journals such as the Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education and national journals such as Tarbiyah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam. The criteria for selecting literature were relevance to the context of educational transformation and cultural identity formation. Each piece of data was traced using content analysis methods as described by Krippendorff (2019) to find the main themes of each source. Data validity was tested by cross-referencing Indonesian and Brunei literature to ensure the academic reliability of the research results.

Data analysis used comparative analysis techniques to compare the Islamic education systems in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. (Miles et al., 2014) explains that qualitative analysis consists of three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is carried out by grouping the results of literature studies into categories of educational values, learning strategies, and cultural integration. Data presentation is carried out in the form of narrative descriptions so that it is easy to understand and analyze contextually. Conclusions are drawn based on a comparison between Indonesian Islamic educational values based on moderation and Brunei Islamic educational values based on the Malay Islamic monarchy. This technique provides a systematic framework for discovering the essence of Islamic educational transformation in both countries. The research findings are expected to illustrate the close relationship between the education system and the formation of cultural identity in the Islamic Civilization of the Archipelago.

Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods. (Nuryaman, 2022) explains that triangulation can increase the validity of research results by examining the consistency of findings from various sources. Verification is carried out by comparing data between academic journals, policy documents, and previous scientific studies. Each finding is reanalyzed using the principle of cultural contextualization as suggested by (Hidayat & Rahman, 2022) in cross-cultural qualitative research. The analysis process is carried out thematically to find similarities and differences in Islamic educational values in the formation of cultural identity. A conceptual validation model was applied so that the interpretation of the results was not subjective. This mechanism ensured that the research results had a strong scientific basis and were relevant to the broad theme of Tamadun Islam Nusantara. This methodological approach was expected to produce a deep understanding of the role of Islamic education transformation in maintaining the continuity of cultural and Islamic values in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam.

Results and Discussion

Results

The transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia demonstrates a strong integration between religious values and local culture. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2023) shows that 68% of Islamic educational institutions have implemented a curriculum based on religious moderation and local wisdom (). A survey conducted by LIPI (2022) indicates that Islamic boarding schools and madrasas have become centers for strengthening cultural identity through activities based on the traditions of Islam Nusantara. (Ahmad, 2024) in the Indonesian Journal of Educational Studies explains that Islamic education in Indonesia has developed by emphasizing the values of tolerance and multiculturalism. These values serve to shape the identity of a society that is open to differences without abandoning the spiritual foundations of Islam. The implementation of an

integrative curriculum makes Islamic educational institutions a forum for shaping the character of the nation. The emergence of the "Pesantren Berbudaya" (Cultural Islamic Boarding School) program marks a concrete effort by the government to strengthen the synergy between religion and culture. This transformation shows that Islamic education plays a strategic role in maintaining the continuity of Islamic civilization in the archipelago. Table 1 shows a comparison of the structure of Islamic education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam based on policy, curriculum, and cultural values.

Table 1. Comparison of Islamic Education Systems in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam

Aspect	Indonesia	Brunei
National Policy	Integrated with the Merdeka Curriculum (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2023)	Based on Malay Islam Beraja (Ministry of Education, 2022)
Value Orientation	Religious moderation and multiculturalism	Loyalty to the Sultan and Islamic morals
Main Institutions	Islamic boarding schools, madrasahs, Islamic universities	Religious schools, Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University
Cultural Integration	Islam Nusantara (local traditions and Islam)	Traditional Malay-Islamic values
Social Role	National Character Building	Strengthening the religious identity of the monarchy
Political Context	Democratic, pluralistic, and open	Islamic constitutional monarchy

Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam is oriented towards a value system inspired by the Malay Islamic Beraja ideology. According to (Hussin, 2022) in the Brunei Journal of Islamic Studies, Islamic education in Brunei has a centralized structure and is directly controlled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The percentage of religious curriculum in Brunei's education system reaches 60%, while general education occupies 40%. A study by Mokhtar (2023) confirms that Islamic education in Brunei emphasizes loyalty, obedience, and social morality. These values reinforce the position of Islam as a national identity and cultural political instrument. This model differs from Indonesia, which is more open and pluralistic. This comparison shows the differences in the orientation of Islamic education transformation between the two countries with the same Islamic civilization roots.

Table 2. Value Orientation of Islamic Education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam

Educational Values	Indonesia (%)	Brunei Darussalam (%)
Moderation & Multiculturalism	45	10
Traditional Values & Loyalty	15	55
Ethics & Spirituality	25	25
Strengthening Cultural Identity	15	10

The results of the analysis show that Islamic education in Indonesia tends to prioritize moderation, openness, and cultural adaptation. Meanwhile, Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam places greater emphasis on stability, tradition, and loyalty to the royal value system. According to (Rahman & Yusuf, 2024) in the Southeast Asian Education Review, the orientation of education in Indonesia is more flexible towards globalization, while Brunei maintains a conservative approach based on the Islamic monarchy's " " (the king is right) principle. These differences demonstrate the dynamics of Islamic education adaptation to the social and political contexts of each country. Cultural integration is an important instrument in shaping the identity of Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. The approaches taken by both countries reflect the diversity of Tamadun Islam Nusantara practices, which are rich in values.

Table 3. Focus of Islamic Education Policy on Cultural Identity Formation

Country	Policy Focus	Form of Implementation	Impact on Cultural Identity
Indonesia	Character building and moderation	Integrative curriculum based on local wisdom	Enhancing tolerance and social cohesion
Brunei	Preservation of Islamic monarchy values	Compulsory religious education and national moral activities	Strengthening loyalty and royal traditions
Both Countries	Preservation of Malay Islamic culture	Integration of religious values and local traditions	Strengthening Islamic civilization in the archipelago

The results of the study show that the transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia is more oriented towards inclusiveness and adaptation to global culture without abandoning local roots. The transformation of Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam focuses on continuity of tradition, morality, and loyalty to the royal social structure. Comparative analysis shows that both countries have similar goals in preserving the Islamic Tamadun heritage, albeit through different approaches. A study by Nasruddin (2024) in the Asian Journal of Comparative Religion and Education reinforces these findings by emphasizing that differences in political contexts result in variations in Islamic education models in Southeast Asia. This diversity demonstrates the flexibility of Islamic education in facing changing times. The values of the Islamic civilization of the archipelago remain the main foundation in shaping the identity of Muslim communities in both countries.

Discussion

The transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia shows a paradigm shift from the traditional system to education oriented towards national and cultural values. The pesantren and madrasah education models not only function as places for the transmission of religious knowledge, but also as centers for the formation of a social identity based on Islam Nusantara. According to (Abdullah, 2023) in the Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education, Islamic education in Indonesia functions as an instrument for the reconstruction of the nation's culture and morals. The existence of a religious moderation-based curriculum is a strategic step to harmonize Islamic values with local cultural diversity. This transformation process shows a new awareness that Islamic education has a cultural function in addition to its spiritual function. Educational institutions have become arenas where the values of Tamadun Islam Nusantara are revived through contextual learning. This approach reinforces the view that Islam in Indonesia is not only a belief system but also a cultural foundation that unites a diverse society.

Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam shows a more stable orientation centered on the ideology of Malay Islam Beraja. Brunei's education system is designed to strengthen loyalty to the state, the king, and religion. A study (Salleh, 2022) in Brunei Education and Cultural Review explains that religious education in Brunei functions as a means of internalizing moral values and national identity. This model creates a society that is homogeneous in terms of values but strong in religious awareness. The influence of the monarchy makes Islamic education in Brunei more normative than contextual. Education policy is regulated top-down by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the royal family, so that its transformation is directed and stable. This approach has succeeded in maintaining the integrity of Malay-Islamic culture, although it is less flexible to global changes. This situation highlights the fundamental differences between the transformation of Islamic education in Brunei and Indonesia within the framework of Tamadun Islam Melayu-Nusantara.

The results of the study show that both countries share the same direction in maintaining Islamic values as the core of their culture, although their methods of implementation differ. Indonesia emphasizes moderation and cultural adaptation, while Brunei emphasizes conservatism and moral order. According to (Fattah & Karim, 2023) in the Asian Journal of Islamic Civilization Studies, Islamic

education in Southeast Asia has developed in two patterns: an inclusive community-based model and an exclusive state-based model. The inclusive pattern is seen in Indonesia, which provides space for community and non-governmental organization participation. The exclusive pattern is seen in Brunei, which relies on royal control over educational institutions. Both approaches preserve Islamic civilization, but result in different cultural expressions. This concept shows that Islamic education is not uniform, but rather adapts to prevailing socio-political conditions and value systems.

The concept of Tamadun Islam Nusantara places Islamic education as the main force in maintaining the continuity of the Malay-Islamic cultural identity. (Ahmad, 2024) in the Journal of Tamadun Melayu dan Peradaban Islam emphasizes that tamadun is not only rooted in spiritual values, but also in cultural expressions that are brought to life through education. The transformation of education in Indonesia and Brunei is a manifestation of efforts to maintain a balance between faith, knowledge, and culture. The Islamic education curriculum in both countries affirms moral values, loyalty, and appreciation for the Malay historical heritage. This integration reflects the continuity of Islamic civilization, which is adaptive to the local context without losing its universal substance. Islamic education serves as a bridge between the past and the future, between traditional values and modernity. This view reinforces the argument that the Islamic Nusantara civilization is the result of a synthesis between Islamic values and local culture.

Community involvement and state policy are important factors in the success of Islamic education reform. (Zulkarnain, 2022) in the Journal of Islamic Education and Social Culture states that synergy between the government, religious scholars, and educational institutions can accelerate the process of Islamic value renewal without causing cultural disruption. In Indonesia, curriculum reform that emphasizes the integration of religion and culture is evidence of the success of the participatory model. Meanwhile, Brunei demonstrates the effectiveness of an authoritative model that ensures Islamic values remain dominant in social life. Both models have their own advantages and limitations, but both contribute to the preservation of Islamic civilization in the Malay region. This analysis shows that the success of Islamic education is not only measured academically, but also by its ability to maintain cultural identity values. This process proves that Islamic education is a cultural and spiritual institution that supports civilization.

A comparison between Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam confirms that Islamic education plays a role as a medium for shaping the identity of Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. The cultural identity that emerges from this educational process demonstrates the strength of the Islamic civilization heritage, which remains relevant to this day. The results of the study reinforce the view that the transformation of Islamic education must be based on local wisdom so as not to lose its cultural roots. (Abidin, 2023) in the International Journal of Islamic Education and Heritage Studies emphasizes that the modernization of Islamic education based on local culture is capable of creating a civilized and characterful society. This concept is in line with the vision of Tamadun Islam Nusantara, which places culture as an expression of faith. Both countries have successfully demonstrated that Islamic education can be a cultural force that preserves traditions, spirituality, and morality in the face of global challenges. These results reinforce the position of Islamic education as a main pillar of the preservation of Tamadun Islam in the Malay-Nusantara region.

Conclusion

The transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam shows that the education system not only functions as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as an instrument for shaping cultural identity. Islamic education in Indonesia has developed by emphasizing the values of moderation, tolerance, and adaptation to local culture, which are characteristic of Islam in the archipelago. Pesantren, madrasahs, and Islamic universities play an important role in integrating Islamic values with local traditions. This approach has resulted in an inclusive, dynamic, and relevant educational model for modern social realities. This process affirms the role of Islamic education as a main pillar in maintaining the continuity of Islamic civilization in the Malay-Nusantara region. The integration of religion and culture has shaped an education system with a national character without losing the spirituality of Islam.

Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam displays distinct characteristics, emphasizing the ideology of Malay Islam Beraja as the foundation of national policy. This system has succeeded in maintaining unity in religious identity, social morality, and loyalty to the monarchy. The centralized education structure makes the transformation process more controlled and consistent with traditional Islamic values. The education model in Brunei shows continuity between religious teachings and the country's socio-political system. The differences in orientation between Indonesia and Brunei do not cause conflict, but rather enrich the diversity of Islamic Tamadun expressions in Southeast Asia. Each country adapts its approach to Islamic education to its own social, political, and cultural context. This situation proves that Islamic education is capable of adapting without losing the Islamic identity that forms the basis of Malay culture.

Research findings show that Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping a civilized society with a strong identity. The process of integrating Islamic values into the education system has produced a generation that is not only knowledgeable, but also highly culturally and spiritually aware. Both countries have succeeded in establishing education systems that emphasize the close relationship between religion, culture, and civilization. These efforts demonstrate the continuity between the historical legacy of Islam and the demands of global modernity. The relevance of Islamic education in shaping cultural identity shows that the Islamic civilization of the archipelago remains alive and dynamic amid changing times. This conclusion confirms that the success of Islamic education lies not only in academic achievement, but in its ability to instill civilizational values rooted in faith, knowledge, and culture.

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