



Religious Values and Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in a Multireligious Indonesian Elementary School

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Abstract

Religious and cultural diversity in elementary schools creates opportunities for belonging within faith communities and relationships across them. Yet how religious values are expressed through school practices and associated with bonding and bridging social capital remains insufficiently understood. This study aims to explore pupils' social identities and the practices associated with both forms of social capital in a multireligious elementary school in Gresik, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach involving 11 participants: one principal, two Islamic Religious Education teachers, five pupils, and three parents, selected mainly through purposive sampling with limited snowball recruitment. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and school documents, and analyzed through iterative data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that pupils maintained distinct religious and cultural affiliations while identifying with a shared school community. Differentiated religious instruction provided space for particular identities, whereas Lunar New Year celebrations, halal bi halal, and community service offered opportunities for cross-group interaction. Bonding social capital was reflected in shared norms, trust, and mutual assistance, while bridging social capital appeared in cooperation across differences. The study contributes a context-bound heuristic linking religious values, habituated practices, social networks, and belonging with implications for school activities that recognize differences and support meaningful cross-group participation.

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1. Introduction

An elementary school serves as a space for socialization where children develop an understanding of themselves, learn the norms of living together, and interpret differences through daily social experiences. This role is increasingly important in Indonesian elementary schools with diverse religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds. Reports of bullying in Indonesian elementary school settings further underscore the need to understand how schools shape social relationships (Borualogo et al., 2020; Kurniawan et al., 2024). Social identity is



not formed solely from individual or family characteristics; it is also shaped through routine interactions within educational settings. Students regularly encounter diverse values, norms, and social positions at school (De Schaepmeester et al., 2022). Research further suggests that intercultural learning experiences and the relationship between family and school messages are associated with young people's cultural identity (Aral et al., 2025). Thus, schools are arenas where social identity is produced and negotiated, in addition to delivering the formal curriculum.

The issue becomes more complex in schools whose students differ in religion, ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic background because diversity does not automatically lead to positive social relationships. De Schaepmeester et al. (2022) show that more heterogeneous classrooms can increase openness to differences, although this relationship is not uniform across aspects of social development. Similarly, Nishina et al. (2019) and Spitzerová et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of how students experience intergroup relations. Alan et al. (2021) show that perspective-taking interventions in ethnically mixed elementary schools can reduce social exclusion and peer violence while fostering cross-ethnic bonds, trust, and cooperation. These findings suggest that diversity requires social and pedagogical mechanisms that support safe, routine, and meaningful interactions. Therefore, the central challenge is not to eliminate group identities, which remain important to students' sense of belonging, but to maintain them while creating opportunities for cross-group interaction. Diverse schools need to combine the recognition of minority identities with cooperative learning and the development of social competencies.

One approach highlighted by previous studies is to build school environments that foster a sense of belonging and social cohesion through shared norms, trust, and cross-group networks. Coleman (2009) identifies norms, expectations, and social relationships as resources that enable collective action. Studies of multiethnic societies by Rahman (2018) and Suryaningsi (2019) likewise identify trust, mutual aid, and shared agreements as resources for maintaining harmonious social relationships. In religious education, Futaqi (2020) demonstrates that social harmony can be supported by a combination of internal bonding and external bridging. Research on inclusive school practices further suggests that diversity alone is insufficient: the quality of contact, cooperation, and inclusive norms influences intergroup relations (Wilson-Daily et al., 2018; Nishina et al., 2019). Accordingly, schools need pedagogical strategies that intentionally shape social interactions while recognizing students' distinct identities.

In the context of Islamic education, these strategies can be implemented through values education, habit formation, modeling, and social experiences that connect religious values to communal life. Previous studies suggest that Islamic

education can contribute to tolerance, social character, integration, and cohesion when religious teachings are translated into social practice (Arif et al., 2023; Rissanen & Sai, 2018; Yusri et al., 2023). Arif et al. (2023) report that character education integrating local culture and family involvement can support children's awareness of tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding. Similarly, Adiyono and Sholeh (2025) examine the role of social values within Islamic education. These studies indicate the potential of religious education to support relationships beyond shared religious affiliation. However, they do not fully explain how such values become relational resources in multireligious elementary schools.

Social capital helps clarify these mechanisms through three interrelated pathways. First, values and norms provide behavioral guidance. Saumur et al. (2025) identify social norms as an important dimension of social capital associated with the internalization of Islamic values. Second, trust and networks enable coordination, support, and participation. Firmansyah and Nugraheni (2026) identify trust as a mechanism associated with conflict reduction and social support, while Rahmadani and Alimi (2023) highlight parental and institutional networks. Third, solidarity can be reinforced through collective practices, including **haul**, **halal bihalal**, social activities, and joint projects. Futaqi (2020) shows how internal bonding and external bridging can work complementarily in fostering social harmony. These findings suggest that the educational significance of social capital lies not only in shared values within groups but also in relationships connecting different groups.

This study draws on two complementary levels of theoretical explanation. At a broad level, Berger and Luckmann's (2010) theory of social construction views social reality and identity as emerging through recurring processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization. This perspective is complemented by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2019), which explains how students categorize themselves and others, and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 2002; Coleman, 2009; Putnam, 2020), which explains how norms, trust, and social networks function as relational resources. Within this framework, bonding social capital supports solidarity within groups, whereas bridging social capital connects people across group boundaries. These theories provide complementary perspectives for examining how religious education, social identity, and social capital intersect in a multireligious elementary school.

Although these studies provide a useful theoretical foundation, they leave an empirical and explanatory gap. Studies on social identity tend to focus on how children categorize themselves and other groups, whereas Islamic education research more often emphasizes character formation, tolerance, or social integration. Research on social capital examines trust, norms, networks, and solidarity, but these concepts are frequently discussed separately from identity formation through religious learning. Studies on Islamic boarding schools

(*pesantren*) have explored bonding and bridging, yet their institutional contexts differ from elementary schools serving students of multiple religions. Consequently, limited attention has been given to how Islamic education contributes to translating religious values into relational resources that can maintain group affiliation while supporting interaction across religious, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. The gap is particularly relevant where religious instruction is institutionally differentiated, but school life provides shared spaces for all students.

Setia Budhi Elementary School in Gresik offers a relevant empirical context because its students have diverse religious, ethnic, regional, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This study proposes that bonding and bridging social capital are analytically distinct but potentially complementary in converting religious values into social relations. Values introduced through learning and teacher modeling may become norms of respect, tolerance, empathy, and responsibility. Through repeated activities such as mutual assistance, cooperation, and shared celebrations, these norms may be enacted in social practice and extended through networks linking students, teachers, and families. Such experiences provide opportunities for trust, solidarity, and a sense of belonging to develop across group boundaries without erasing religious or cultural affiliations. The proposed process is treated as an interpretive framework for examining participants' experiences, rather than a predetermined causal sequence.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the characteristics of students' social identities, explain the role of Islamic education in constructing social identity, and identify the forms of social capital involved in this process at Setia Budhi Elementary School in Gresik. By examining how differentiated religious education coexists with shared social experiences, the study seeks to clarify how bonding and bridging social capital may work together to shape inclusive social relations and layered identities in a multireligious elementary school.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) to understand students' lived experiences, interpretations, and processes of negotiating social identity within a pluralistic school environment. The study focused not only on the presence or absence of tolerance but also on how students and educational actors experience diversity, interpret differences, and form social relationships through everyday school interactions. This approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore subjective meanings associated with educational and social experiences (Faishol et al., 2026; Ramadona et al., 2026). Specifically, the study examined religious learning, socialization, teacher modeling, peer interactions, and

collective practices as contexts in which values, social relationships, and identities are constructed.

The study involved 11 participants from Setia Budhi Elementary School in Gresik, comprising one principal, two Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, five students, and three parents. The principal provided information regarding institutional policies and school culture, while the PAI teachers explained instructional practices, habituation, modeling, and the management of diversity. Students served as the primary source of insights into identity, peer interactions, and shared activities, whereas parents provided perspectives on school–family relationships. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their roles, experiences, and involvement in educational practices and social interactions at the school (K. & Mahyuddin, 2019). Student selection considered differences in religion, ethnicity, and social background to capture diverse experiences within the school community. Limited snowball sampling was also employed to identify additional relevant informants.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document review (Sugiyono, 2016). In-depth interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding diversity, social identity, Islamic education, and peer relationships. The interviews followed a semi-structured guide informed by the study's theoretical perspectives on social identity, Islamic education, and social capital, with questions adapted to each participant group. Participatory observation focused on classroom learning, student interactions, group work, extracurricular activities, religious practices, habituation, and collective activities involving students from different backgrounds (Rahman, 2018; Suryaningsi, 2019). Document review included school vision and mission statements, policies, curriculum documents, and habituation programs to examine consistency between institutional policies, participants' accounts, and observed practices (K. & Mahyuddin, 2019; Napsiah, 2019).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification throughout the research process (Miles et al., 2015). The analysis distinguished between bonding social capital, reflected in religious values, moral norms, rituals, solidarity, and interpersonal support, and bridging social capital, reflected in cross-religious, ethnic, and cultural interactions, participation, cooperation, and social networks. These dimensions were examined alongside data on students' social identities to explore how internal group relationships were connected to interactions across group boundaries. Evidence from interviews, observations, and documents was compared to examine consistency across data sources and support the interpretation of emerging patterns. The analysis was informed by the theoretical

proposition that bonding social capital may provide relational conditions that facilitate bridging across groups (Iantosca et al., 2024).

The study obtained institutional permission from Setia Budhi Elementary School and ethical approval from the Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM) at Qomaruddin University. Because the research involved minors, informed consent was obtained from students' parents or guardians, accompanied by verbal assent from the students, before interviews and observations were conducted. All participants were informed about the study's objectives, their right to decline or withdraw without consequences, and measures to protect confidentiality. Participants' identities were anonymized using initials or codes, and research data were securely stored with access restricted to the research team.

3. Results

3.1 Social Identity Characteristics of Students at Setia Budhi Elementary School

The results show that students' social identities at Setia Budhi Elementary School are shaped within a pluralistic environment characterized by religious, ethnic, cultural, regional, and socioeconomic diversity. The analysis identified six interrelated findings concerning the plurality of social identities, identity categorization, layered identities, boundary negotiation, intergroup relational norms, and shared collective identity, as illustrated in Figure 1.

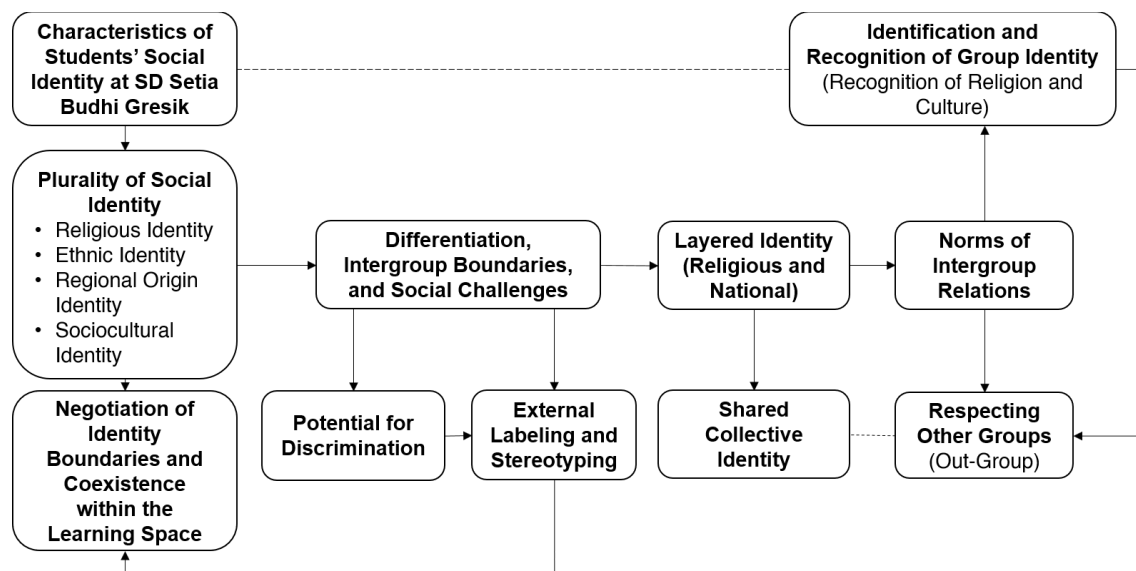


Fig. 1. Characteristics of Students' Social Identity at Setia Budhi Elementary School.

Source: Authors' original diagram based on the study findings.

The first finding concerns the plurality of social identities. Students encounter diverse religious, ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds in their daily school experiences. The principal explained: "At Setia Budhi Elementary School,

there are students who are Muslim, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Sapta Darma... The diversity of students' regions of origin across Indonesia is also evident at this school, ranging from Surabaya, Palu, Banjarmasin, Medan, Samarinda, and so on. There are also many students of Chinese ethnicity... The majority of students at Setia Budhi Elementary School come from Gresik City and its surrounding areas, such as Gresik District. In contrast, some come from outside Gresik Regency due to relocation—from Surabaya, areas outside Surabaya, and even outside Java.” Students also come from families with different occupational backgrounds, including employees, civil servants, day laborers, merchants, and business owners. This diversity extends beyond student composition into everyday social interactions, where students encounter the practices and cultural expressions of other groups. School curriculum documents also acknowledge concerns about discrimination and bullying associated with religious, cultural, and social differences. The school is externally labeled a “Chinese school,” reflecting perceptions associated with its substantial Chinese student population. These findings indicate that plurality is both a demographic characteristic and a social condition experienced within the school community.

The second finding relates to the categorization and differentiation of identities. Religion represents one of the most visible identity categories in the educational process, particularly through the organization of separate religious education services. A PAI teacher explained: “Students still go to their respective religious classrooms. If they are Muslim, they go to the Muslim classroom. If they are Buddhist, they go to the Buddhist classroom. If they are Christian, they go to the Christian classroom... Their curriculum remains specific to their respective religions.... Every Thursday, we usually have a routine. During that practice session, we go into our respective religious rooms.” These arrangements maintain recognizable religious boundaries within the educational structure. Students also recognize ethnic and cultural differences, including those between Chinese and Javanese communities. Their questions about other religious practices, such as the use of incense in Buddhist worship, illustrate awareness of these differences. Expressions such as “in your religion” and “in our religion” further indicate the presence of in-group and out-group distinctions in everyday communication. However, such categorization does not necessarily result in negative attitudes. In PAI classes, teachers encourage students to respect differing opinions and avoid regarding their own perspectives as the only legitimate ones.

The third finding concerns layered identities. Students maintain religious identities alongside national, ethnic, cultural, familial, and school-community affiliations. School practices illustrate how these identities coexist. Students pray according to their respective religions and subsequently participate in national activities, including singing “Indonesia Raya.” Religious affiliation also does not

necessarily restrict cultural participation. For example, a fourth-grade Muslim student participates in the lion dance extracurricular activity. The principal further noted: “There are also students who have converted to Islam... but whose fathers are still Catholic.” These examples illustrate how religious, cultural, national, and familial affiliations may coexist within students’ social experiences. Rather than replacing one another, different identity dimensions remain relevant in different contexts.

The fourth finding relates to the negotiation of identity boundaries. Although students recognize distinct group identities, these boundaries do not consistently restrict their social relationships. Observations indicate that students from different ethnic backgrounds and students with special needs participate in shared school activities. In some situations, students expressed annoyance toward peers with special needs, but teachers explained the circumstances and encouraged more appropriate responses. Students also interact during classroom activities and recess without consistently separating themselves according to religion or socioeconomic background. School arrangements further reflect contextual boundary negotiation. For example, random seating during group activities allows Muslim and non-Muslim teachers to interact, whereas separate spaces are maintained for particular religious practices. These observations illustrate the coexistence of differentiated religious activities and shared social interaction.

The fifth finding concerns relational norms between groups. Respect, acceptance, empathy, and non-discrimination are introduced through classroom instruction and everyday school practices, including from the first grade. PAI teachers encourage students to respect classmates of different faiths and discourage behaviors that mock or disrupt religious practices. These expectations are reciprocal. During the celebration of the Prophet’s Birthday (Maulid Nabi), students from other religions are instructed to respect the event. Similarly, Muslim students are encouraged to respect Christmas and Easter celebrations. Such practices position mutual respect as a shared expectation across religious groups rather than an obligation imposed on only one group.

The sixth finding relates to shared collective identity. Students participate in extracurricular activities and competitions without restrictions based on religion, ethnicity, or social background. Chinese New Year celebrations involve teachers, parents, Muslim students, and non-Muslim students, while halal bihalal gatherings bring together members of different religious communities. National and cultural symbols are also incorporated into school activities, allowing students to wear Indonesian traditional attire while maintaining their specific cultural expressions. These shared experiences provide opportunities for students to participate as members of a common school community without abandoning their individual or group identities.

Overall, the six findings reveal the coexistence of distinct group identities and shared school-community membership. Students recognize religious, ethnic, and cultural boundaries while participating in activities governed by reciprocal respect, cooperation, and inclusion. The findings suggest that collective identity at Setia Budhi Elementary School develops alongside, rather than through the elimination of, students' existing group affiliations.

3.2 The Model of Islamic Education in the Construction of Students' Social Identity

The findings indicate that Islamic education at Setia Budhi Elementary School operates within a multireligious environment through two complementary pathways. The first maintains religious identity through differentiated religious education services, while the second supports social interaction through values education, habituation, teacher modeling, participatory learning, and shared experiences. Six findings characterize this educational model, as summarized in Figure 2.

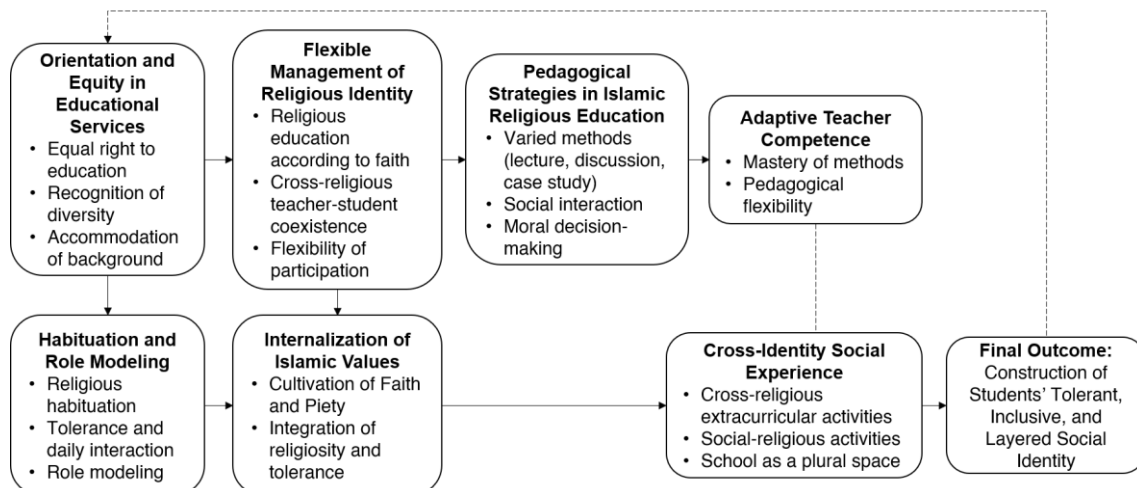


Fig. 2. Model of Islamic Education in the Construction of Students' Social Identity.

Source: Authors' original diagram based on the study findings.

The first finding concerns the recognition and management of diversity. The school provides equal educational opportunities regardless of religious affiliation. The principal stated: "Setia Budhi Elementary School does not prioritize students of any particular religion; therefore, at Setia Budhi Elementary School, all students have equal rights to learn, regardless of their religious beliefs." This principle is implemented through differentiated religious education services appropriate to students' beliefs. Within PAI instruction, teachers employ lectures to explain religious teachings, discussions to encourage cooperation and respect for differing opinions, and case studies or problem-solving activities to support decision-making. Outside the classroom, students are encouraged to collaborate across backgrounds, visit sick classmates, and respect others' religious practices. Extracurricular activities and competitions are also accessible without religious restrictions.

The second finding relates to the internalization of Islamic values through learning, habituation, and role modeling. Faith and piety are introduced through the recitation of short surahs and narratives about the exemplary lives of the Prophet, his companions, and pious individuals. Instruction also incorporates tolerance, humanity, empathy, respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. These values are reinforced through recurring activities, including greetings, handshakes, prayers before learning, Quranic recitation, Dhuha prayer, and the memorization of prayers. Religious practices are conducted according to students' respective beliefs, while tolerance and cooperation are encouraged through shared school activities. The routines take place daily, weekly, monthly, and annually, allowing religious and social values to be repeatedly practiced within school life.

The third finding concerns inclusive, contextual, participatory, and adaptive learning. PAI instruction provides opportunities for students to express opinions, participate in discussions, collaborate, deliver presentations, and reflect on their experiences. Teachers combine lectures, question-and-answer sessions, assignments, practical activities, and experiential learning while serving as facilitators during classroom discussions. Learning materials are connected to students' experiences of religious, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. Certain learning activities are also adapted to accommodate non-Muslim students. For example, during Eid al-Adha activities, students from different religious backgrounds may observe the sacrifice, while non-Muslim students are permitted to assist in distributing the meat. Such activities provide opportunities for students to experience religious practices alongside cross-group cooperation.

The fourth finding concerns the differentiation of religious services alongside shared social activities. Religious education is organized through teachers, classrooms, materials, and practices corresponding to students' respective beliefs. Instruction is also adapted to individual learning needs. For example, teachers adjust Iqra's materials according to students' abilities, including those with special needs. Despite this differentiation, students continue to interact through extracurricular activities, competitions, community service, Lunar New Year celebrations, halal bihalal, and other collective activities. Thus, separate religious learning arrangements coexist with opportunities for interaction across religious and cultural boundaries.

The fifth finding relates to the integration of faith, character, and social life within the curriculum. School curriculum documents identify educational objectives covering faith and piety, citizenship, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, independence, health, and communication. Curriculum implementation considers local conditions, regional potential, and student characteristics. Religious activities are organized according to students' beliefs,

while social and civic values are practiced through collective activities. Christmas, Easter, the Prophet's Birthday, and Lunar New Year celebrations form part of the school's educational environment. Religious visits, the distribution of iftar meals, and charitable activities further connect religious practices with social participation.

The sixth finding concerns the integration of religious, national, and cultural identities. School activities include prayers according to religious affiliation, singing "Indonesia Raya" and regional songs, lion dance performances, community service, Chinese New Year celebrations, halal bihalal gatherings, and sharing iftar snacks. During Chinese New Year celebrations, teachers, parents, Muslim students, and non-Muslim students participate together. Similarly, halal bihalal gatherings involve students and teachers from different religious groups. These activities allow specific religious and cultural identities to remain visible while providing opportunities for shared experiences.

Taken together, the findings describe an educational model characterized by identity differentiation and social integration. Differentiated religious services accommodate students' religious affiliations, while habituation, teacher modeling, participatory pedagogy, and shared activities provide opportunities for cross-group interaction. These pathways coexist within school practices that recognize religious, national, cultural, and school-community identities.

3.3 Social Capital Utilized by Islamic Education in the Construction of Students' Social Identity

The third dimension concerns relational resources associated with school norms and recurring activities. Figure 3 distinguishes bonding social capital, reflected in solidarity and support within familiar groups, from bridging social capital, reflected in cooperation across religious, cultural, and social boundaries. It also maps the supporting role of school policies, teachers, parents, routine activities, and shared cultural practices. Although the original diagram uses outcome-oriented terminology, the relationships presented here are treated as interpretations of the case rather than measured effects.

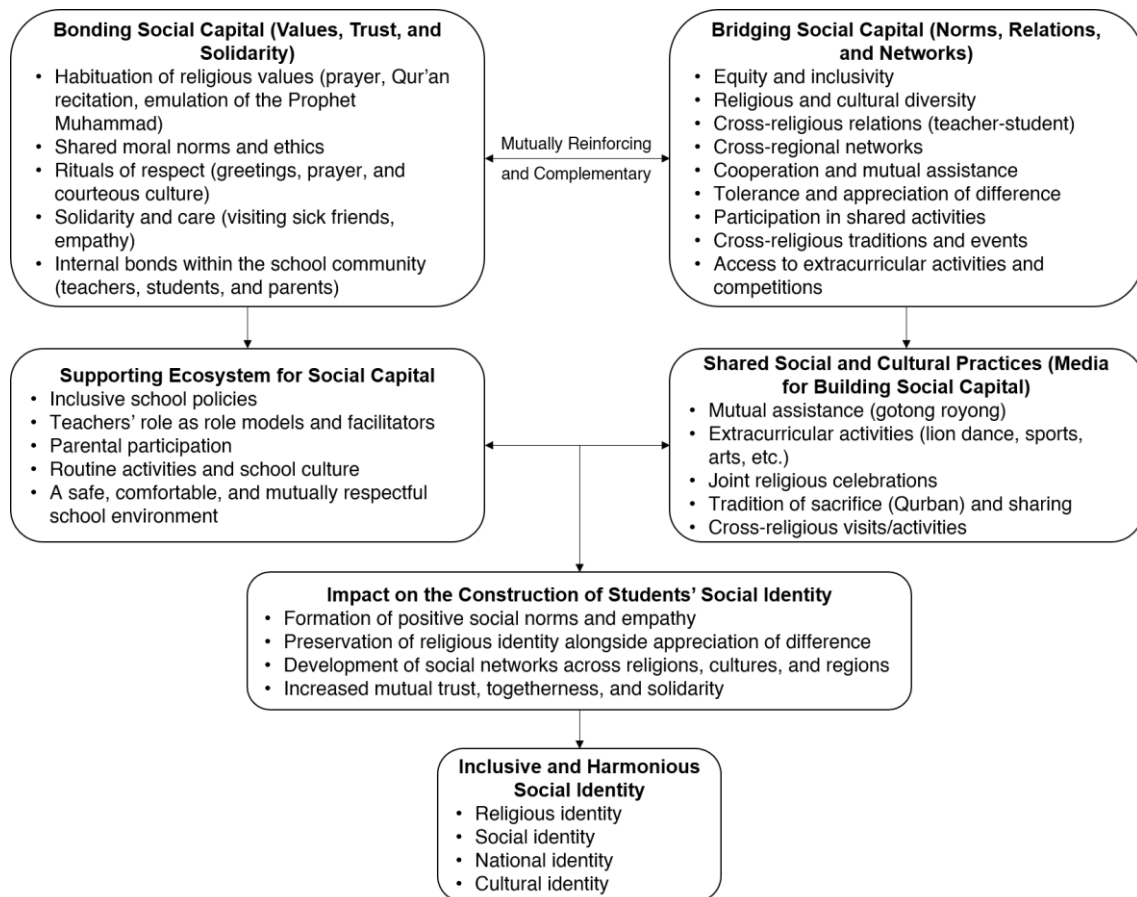


Fig. 3. Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in School Practices and Relationships.

Source: Authors' original diagram based on the study findings.

Equality, tolerance, respect, and mutual assistance were expressed as school expectations and enacted through practices such as greeting others, maintaining cleanliness, participating in group activities, and helping classmates. Teachers described introducing these norms in Islamic education discussions and through examples, while school-wide routines reinforced them in interactions across classes and groups. The findings suggest that the school's diversity was accompanied by explicit relational expectations, although the presence of such norms does not by itself establish their consistent acceptance by every pupil.

Bonding social capital was associated with shared religious learning, moral expectations, familiar relationships, and acts of care. Among Muslim pupils, prayer, Quranic recitation, the Prophet's Birthday celebration, and Pondok Ramadhan offered recurring opportunities to engage with shared beliefs. Participants also described mutual assistance in everyday situations: pupils contributed to a class fund for sick classmates, lent writing materials and Juz 'Amma books, and offered support when peers experienced difficulties. These practices reflected solidarity and reciprocal assistance. Whether any particular example constituted bonding within a religious group or a relationship across

groups depended on the participants involved; the activity alone did not determine its classification.

Bridging social capital was apparent in reported and observed cooperation across social boundaries. Group discussions, Scouting, extracurricular activities, competitions, and community service provided opportunities for pupils from different backgrounds to work together. A Muslim pupil's participation in lion dance activities illustrated cultural engagement beyond one's religious affiliation. Lunar New Year celebrations and halal bihalal gatherings also brought pupils, teachers, and families together. These examples document opportunities for cross-group contact and cooperation, rather than quantifiable growth in trust or durable social networks.

Community-oriented religious activities offered further examples. Participants described teachers, pupils, and parents preparing and distributing takjil to surrounding residents. During Eid al-Adha, meat was distributed to people in need, and non-Muslim pupils were permitted to assist. Pupils from other religious communities also engaged in their own spiritual practices, including visits associated with Buddhist and Catholic traditions. Across these arrangements, the maintenance of particular affiliations coexisted with opportunities for shared service and participation. The school's recurring routines, leadership, and parental involvement formed an organizational setting for these interactions.

Across the evidence, religious and moral values were linked in participants' accounts to norms of respect, repeated habits, collective activities, and interpersonal relationships. The authors interpret these connections as a possible conversion of religious values into relational social capital. In this interpretation, bonding and bridging remain analytically distinct but potentially complementary: shared practices may sustain relationships within groups while other activities connect members across group boundaries. The study did not establish a chronological or causal pathway from values to norms, networks, and shared identity. Its empirical contribution is to show how both forms of social capital were described and enacted alongside differentiated religious education in a single multi-religious elementary school.

4. Discussion

4.1 Layered Social Identities and the Negotiation of Group Boundaries

The findings suggest that pupils' identities were neither singular nor confined to religious affiliation. Religious, ethnic, cultural, and national identities remained recognizable alongside identification with the school community (Figure 1). Social Identity Theory helps explain how group membership remains part of self-understanding even when relationships extend beyond one's immediate

group (Tajfel & Turner, 2019). A Muslim pupil's participation in lion dance activities illustrates how cultural participation can coexist with religious membership, consistent with research on identities negotiated across social contexts (Hu & Cheung, 2024; Schachner et al., 2024).

Social construction theory adds an institutional perspective. Berger and Luckmann (2010) view social meanings as maintained and negotiated through recurring interaction. At this school, religion-specific classes made group distinctions visible, while ceremonies, cultural events, and shared activities offered opportunities for broader belonging. These experiences suggest that collective school identity may be an additional layer rather than a replacement for existing affiliations.

Nevertheless, diversity alone did not ensure inclusion. Teachers explained unfamiliar practices and addressed difficulties among classmates, indicating that boundaries were negotiated through guidance and expectations of mutual respect. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing the quality of interaction and inclusive norms over demographic diversity alone (Nishina et al., 2019; Killen & Rutland, 2022). Therefore, the study illustrates the coexistence of differentiated and shared identities, although pupils may have experienced belonging differently, and the cross-sectional data cannot establish identity change over time.

4.2 Religious Education and Shared Practices as Complementary Arrangements

The second finding concerns how religion-specific instruction coexisted with shared participation (Figure 2). Differentiated services enabled pupils to learn in line with their beliefs, while classroom collaboration, extracurricular programs, cultural events, and community service created opportunities for interaction among religious groups. Therefore, maintaining distinct religious provision was not synonymous with separating all aspects of school life; its inclusive significance depended on access to shared and meaningful experiences.

Within Islamic Religious Education (PAI), teachers described discussions, practical activities, reflections, and contextual examples that linked religious teachings to respect, empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. Such practices align with research emphasizing reflection and social relevance in Islamic education (Altinyelken, 2021; Arif et al., 2023). Repeated greetings, collective activities, and school routines also provided occasions to enact these norms. From the perspective of Berger and Luckmann (2010), such repetition may contribute to their institutional recognition. However, reported practices alone cannot demonstrate measurable changes in pupils' attitudes.

Importantly, Islamic education formed only one part of the institutional setting. Religious provision, Lunar New Year celebrations, halal bihalal, extracurricular activities, and service projects depended on wider school policies,

teachers, and families. Consequently, inclusive relationships cannot be attributed exclusively to PAI. Research on structured perspective-taking in mixed elementary schools similarly highlights meaningful interactions rather than physical proximity alone (Alan et al., 2021), although its intervention design differs from this study. The distinctive contribution here is the contextual account of how religious differentiation and shared social participation were organized together, not evidence that a particular teaching strategy was effective.

4.3 Bonding, Bridging, and the Conversion of Religious Values into Social Capital

The third finding concerns the connection between religious values and relational resources. Social capital theory emphasizes norms, trust, reciprocity, and networks supporting collective action (Coleman, 2009; Putnam, 2020). Bonding refers to solidarity within familiar groups, whereas bridging connects people across group boundaries (Figure 3). The findings suggest that these forms are analytically distinct but can coexist within the same school environment.

Bonding was reflected in religious practices, familiar relationships, moral expectations, and mutual assistance, including contributions for ill classmates and the lending of learning materials. Bridging was visible in cross-group participation in extracurricular programs, community service, Lunar New Year celebrations, and halal bihalal. Muslim participation in lion dance activities and non-Muslim participation in distributing sacrificial meat illustrated how practices associated with particular traditions could also involve wider cooperation. Yet solidarity cannot automatically be classified as bonding: the relevant distinction is whether support occurs within an identifiable group or crosses its boundaries.

The relationship between the two forms requires caution. Iantosca et al. (2024) suggest that bonding can provide resources for bridging, whereas Murray et al. (2020) show that strong internal networks may reproduce unequal opportunities when broader connections are limited. The present school combined religion-specific practices with shared activities, creating opportunities for both forms of social capital. However, the data do not establish that internal solidarity preceded or caused cross-group cooperation, nor do shared events demonstrate durable increases in trust or network size.

The principal conceptual contribution is a heuristic account of how religious values may acquire relational significance. Respect, empathy, responsibility, and mutual assistance were expressed through educational norms and enacted in recurring school practices. Some practices sustained relationships within groups; others supported interaction across religious and cultural boundaries. This interpretation brings together dimensions previously discussed in studies of Islamic education and social cohesion (Futaqi, 2020; Yusri et al., 2023; Wahono et al., 2023). It does not establish a linear pathway from values to norms, networks, and collective identity.

The three theoretical perspectives illuminate different dimensions of this interpretation: social construction theory concerns institutional meanings and routines (Berger & Luckmann, 2010); Social Identity Theory concerns pupils' group affiliations (Tajfel & Turner, 2019); and social capital theory concerns the resources embedded in relationships (Coleman, 2009; Putnam, 2020). Their integration positions religious values education within the social organization of school life. The resulting framework is a context-dependent interpretation of the evidence, not a validated causal theory.

4.4 Implications for Multireligious Elementary Education

The findings suggest that multireligious elementary schools can recognize distinct religious and cultural affiliations while creating equitable opportunities for shared participation. Differentiated religious instruction can coexist with collaborative learning, extracurricular activities, cultural celebrations, and community service, provided that these arrangements do not reinforce exclusion. For PAI teachers, dialogic instruction, contextual examples, reflection, and appropriate collaborative activities may help connect religious values with everyday interactions. These are practice implications drawn from observed arrangements, not interventions whose effectiveness was tested in this study.

School leaders and families also contribute to the conditions for cross-group contact. Inclusive programs, accessible activities, and parental participation can create opportunities for cooperation beyond the classroom. However, shared events should not be assumed to automatically produce trust: the quality, reciprocity, and equity of participation deserve attention. For elementary education scholarship, the case illustrates how recognition of identity and relational integration may be pursued together, while offering contextual insights rather than a universally applicable model.

4.5 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations qualify these interpretations. The single-site study involved 11 participants, including five pupils; their experiences cannot represent all groups within the school or schools with different conditions. Interviews, participatory observations, and institutional documents offered complementary evidence, but researcher involvement may have influenced interpretation. Adult and institutional accounts also cannot substitute fully for pupils' own perspectives, particularly regarding experiences of exclusion. Greater detail about qualitative analysis and contradictory evidence would strengthen methodological transparency.

The cross-sectional design did not track changes in identity, trust, or social networks, nor isolate the contributions of PAI from wider school practices. Therefore, the proposed conversion of religious values into relational social capital remains heuristic. Comparative and longitudinal studies could examine diverse school settings and explore when bonding supports, accompanies, or

constrains bridging. Future research should give greater attention to pupils' perspectives and, where appropriate, combine qualitative accounts with measures of intergroup interaction and participation.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that Islamic education at Setia Budhi Elementary School functions not only as a means of internalizing religious values but also as a context in which social capital and students' social identities are shaped. Students maintained religious, ethnic, and cultural affiliations while participating in shared school experiences and developing identities as members of the school community. The educational arrangements combined two complementary pathways. Differentiated religious services accommodated distinct religious affiliations, while dialogic learning, habituation, teacher modeling, and collective activities provided opportunities for cross-group interaction. The findings identify bonding social capital in norms, rituals, solidarity, and interpersonal support, and bridging social capital in cooperation and in networks that cross group boundaries.

The principal contribution is a heuristic formulation of the conversion of religious values into relational social capital: values may be enacted as shared norms and recurrent practices that support wider social relationships. The findings suggest that multireligious elementary schools can retain differentiated religious instruction while intentionally providing shared spaces for cooperation. However, this single-site, cross-sectional qualitative study cannot establish a causal sequence or support broad generalization. Comparative and longitudinal research could further investigate how school policies, pedagogy, and student composition shape the relationship between bonding and bridging.

Declarations

All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript and declare no competing interests. The study adhered to applicable ethical principles, including informed consent and the protection of participant confidentiality. Grammarly was used to refine academic language and improve citation consistency. Artificial intelligence was not used to generate or alter research data or findings. All authors have verified the manuscript and assume full responsibility for its accuracy, integrity, and scholarly content.

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