Prophetic Studies of Multiculturalism: A Coloring Grace or A Potential for Gnawing Division

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Abstract: *While contemporary studies on multiculturalism predominantly rely on secular political or educational frameworks, limited attention has been given to prophetic ethical paradigms as a systematic model for managing diversity. This study addresses this gap by examining multiculturalism in the era of the Prophet Muhammad SAW through a hermeneutical–prophetic approach grounded in Kuntowijoyo's prophetic social science. Using qualitative library research, the study analyzes classical Islamic texts particularly the Medina Charteralongside relevant contemporary literature. The findings demonstrate that prophetic multiculturalism constitutes an ethical–political framework based on equality, religious freedom, social justice, and dialogical coexistence. Theoretically, this study reframes multiculturalism as a value-based moral system rather than a merely sociopolitical arrangement. Practically, it offers a normative reference for contemporary multicultural governance, education, and interfaith dialogue in plural societies facing increasing identity-based conflicts.*

Keywords: *Prophetic Multiculturalism, Medina Charter, Religious Tolerance, Social Justice, Inclusive Dialogue.*

Introduction

The emergence of various global and regional conflicts, as if knocking on the soul, does the difference then cause conflict? The Russia-Ukraine war since February 2014 has confirmed how historical, national identity and geopolitical importance (Ortmann, 2023) cause prolonged disputes. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is full of mass genocide by Israel against the Palestinian people (Smith et al., 2025) which is based on religious, ethnic and historical claims of the homeland, shows how fragile the relationship between two socio-historical and religious differences can be if they are not glued together with an inclusive peace mechanism, because successful interfaith initiatives usually incorporate inclusive participation, open communication (Seran, 2025). The latest civil war in Sudan is driven by a dispute between the country's two major military wings, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the official organization of the national army, at odds with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a private military organization that is actually formed by the Sudanese government itself (Abdalla, 2024).

These conflicts voice the fact that multiculturalism should not just be a slogan to be touted, it requires strong governance in both the social and political dimensions. The reality of diverse ethnicity, religion and culture as well as identity is a necessity in life (Aliyeva & Karim, 2025). The concept of multiculturalism exists as a solution to synergize these differences while seeking harmony in the midst of diversity. Culturally responsive education within the framework of a multicultural

society supported by a strong national identity positioned to create social harmony (Redjeki et al., 2025). Thus, diversity is not only a cultural asset, but also an important factor that must be managed strategically for the sustainability of civilization and development (Đorđić, 2019).

In this context, the values of multiculturalism and peace are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) which emphasizes inclusive and tolerant education, SDG 10 (Reducing Disparities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Resilient Institutions) (Weiland et al., 2021). Creating a society that respects diversity and rejects violence is an integral part of sustainable global development. Furthermore, the spirit of multiculturalism is also in line with Asta Cita Indonesia, especially the 5th Ideal, namely "Strengthening the character of a nation that is cultured, ethical, and has the spirit of mutual cooperation", and the 8th Ideal, namely "Strengthening the legal system, democracy, and clean and effective governance" (Sui-Ni, 2023). Both emphasized that diversity management is the foundation for a peaceful, just, and sustainable Indonesia.

In Indonesia in particular, the spirit of strengthening inclusive Islam must be encouraged, a spirit that emphasizes openness, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence, serving as a framework for interacting with individuals of different faiths while maintaining their respective religious identities is a fundamental effort to make diversity a gift, not a threat (Supriatna et al., 2025). Especially the country of Indonesia which is a large multicultural country, with many ethnicities, ethnicities, cultures and religions. More than 13,000 large and small islands are found in the country. With a population of about 250 million people, more than 300 tribes, and 200 languages and 6 religions (I. W. Ningsih et al., 2022).

The dimension of Multiculturalism has actually existed since the time of the Prophet SAW. How life in Medina is a reflection of the harmonious multicultural reality (Nasution, 2019). Medina is not a place inhabited by monocultural civilizations, where people with different ethnicities, nations, races and even religions live. But it turns out that the harmonization of life can be a model for those of us who live now. This shows that Islamic law is fair to non-Muslims, especially in its fair treatment of Jews and covenant people with the rights granted (Al-Karboly, 2023). So this is interesting to explore and observe to be implemented in the joints of our daily life today.

Therefore, this paper will comprehensively examine the pilot multiculturalism in the time of the Prophet SAW. How it can be a gift that colors and prospers life, as well as how social, political, and economic dynamics can make it a potential for division that gnaws away if not managed properly.

In light of the persistence of global and national conflicts rooted in ethnic, religious, and identity-based differences, it becomes essential to re-examine whether diversity itself is inherently conflictual or whether conflict emerges from the absence of ethical and inclusive governance. This study is therefore guided by three interrelated analytical questions: how multiculturalism was conceptually and practically constructed during the era of the Prophet Muhammad SAW; what wisdom underlies differences within a multicultural society; and which factors transform diversity from a social asset into a potential source of division. These questions are formulated to respond directly to contemporary challenges of pluralism, particularly in societies where diversity coexists with political tension, social inequality, and identity polarization.

Accordingly, this paper aims to conceptually and empirically analyze the role of multiculturalism in the prophetic era by examining the ethical and political foundations of social coexistence in Medina. It further seeks to elucidate the wisdom embedded in differences as a divine

and social design intended to foster mutual recognition, cooperation, and moral responsibility. Finally, this study aims to identify the key social, political, and cultural factors that cause diversity to devolve into fragmentation when not managed through justice, dialogue, and ethical restraint. Through this framework, the study positions prophetic multiculturalism not only as a historical precedent, but as a normative paradigm capable of informing contemporary efforts to transform diversity into a source of harmony rather than conflict.

Research Methods

This study uses a type of qualitative research with a library research approach. This approach was chosen because the object of study focuses on normative-historical thoughts, texts, and concepts sourced from classical texts and contemporary scientific literature. The qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the phenomenon of multiculturalism in depth through tracing the meaning and context of the prophetic values taught by the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Rozi & Fauzi, 2023). Through literature studies, this research not only examines documents and texts, but also interprets the social, theological, and ethical meanings contained in them. In this case, a hermeneutical-prophetic approach is also used, i.e. a method of interpretation of classical Islamic texts (such as the Qur'an, hadith, and the Charter of Medina) to find their relevance to the modern social context (Wardiono, 2019). This approach refers to the prophetic social science paradigm developed by Kuntowijoyo, which is oriented towards the three prophetic dimensions: amar ma'ruf, nahi munkar, and iman (transcendence) (Labib & Nurhaedi, 2023).

The data sources in this study consist of primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources come from classical Islamic texts such as the Charter of Medina as an important historical document that describes the model of multiculturalism during the time of the Prophet SAW (Namazi, 2023). In addition, normative sources such as the Qur'an (especially QS. Al-Hujurat: 13, QS. Hud: 118, QS. Al-Mulk: 2, and QS. Al-Maidah: 2), as well as the hadiths of the Prophet related to tolerance, social justice, and religious freedom. Classic books such as Tafsir al-Tabari (al-Tabari, 1997), Musnad Ahmad (ibn Hanbal, 2001), and Saheeh al-Bukhari (al-Bukhārī, 2025) It is also used as the main reference in tracing the normative basis of prophetic multiculturalism.

Secondary sources include modern literature and scientific research relevant to the theme, such as journals on multiculturalism, prophetic education, and social peace (e.g. (Al-Karboly, 2023); (Redjeki et al., 2025); (Supriatna et al., 2025)). In addition, this study also uses global and national policy documents such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Asta Cita Indonesia to see the relevance of prophetic values to the sustainable development agenda and national diversity governance (Sorooshian, 2024).

The data in this study was collected through literature review and documentation techniques. The literature review is carried out by tracing various classic and modern references related to the research theme, both in the form of books, scientific journals, and credible digital articles. The researcher carefully reads, notes, and organizes data relevant to the focus of the study (Chand, 2025), namely the concept of prophetic multiculturalism. Meanwhile, documentation techniques are used to analyze historical texts such as the Charter of Medina and hadith texts, as well as contemporary policy documents that contain multicultural values. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for finding, assessing, and synthesizing data from different types of documents so that it can be used to answer

research questions in depth (Jung, 2024). The collected data is then selected, compared, and categorized based on key themes, such as prophetic values, social harmony, and potential divisions in multicultural societies.

The data that has been collected is analyzed using descriptive-analytical analysis and hermeneutical-prophetic analysis. Descriptive analysis is carried out by systematically describing the content, meaning, and context of religious and historical texts related to multiculturalism, i.e. to understand its social phenomena holistically in their original context (Ahmed et al., 2025). Furthermore, hermeneutic analysis is used to interpret the texts in the social, political, and cultural context of the Prophet Muhammad's society, taking into account their historical aspects and universal value. Modern hermeneutics has been described as an approach that allows for an in-depth interpretation of texts in their socio-cultural context (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Prophetic analysis is applied by interpreting contemporary social reality based on three prophetic principles, namely amar ma'ruf (the upholding of good and social justice), nahi munkar (liberation from oppression and injustice), and faith (spiritual dimension and moral transcendence) in order to capture the relevance of the normative values of the text to contemporary social practice (Ahmed et al., 2025).

The analysis stages include data reduction to select relevant information, classification of data based on thematic categories, interpretation of the meaning of the text, and drawing conclusions through synthesis between historical context and current conditions. In modern qualitative research, data analysis like this often uses a systematic thematic framework to identify patterns and meanings that emerge from complex textual data (Ahmed et al., 2025). Thus, this analysis results in a comprehensive understanding of how prophetic values can be a solution to potential divisions in a multicultural society as prophetic principles from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) have been identified as relevant models of pluralism and inclusion to confront the challenges of intolerance, marginalization, and contemporary social conflict (Sarwar, 2024).

Result and Discussion

A. The concept of multiculturalism in the era of the Prophet SAW

There are 3 things that underlie the concept of multiculturalism in the era of the Prophet SAW

1. The Charter of Medina

The first and written constitution made by the Prophet SAW after the hijrah. This charter was used to regulate the relations of various tribes, religions, and social groups there. Regarding the main content or principle of the association of the charter of Medina. Muhammad Khalid (F. Ningsih et al., 2025) Put forward the eight main contents of the charter, namely:

1) The Muhajirin and the Ansar and whoever fought together, they were all one people.

2) The believers are united in facing the tyrants even though they are their own children.

3) Equal guarantees to protect marginalized people.

4) Believers protect each other, and also provide protection to other groups. The Jews who were in their ranks were also entitled to the same help and support as given to the believers.

5) The peace of the Muslims is one.

6) The law of Allah and His Messenger is the final settlement of disputes that occur among believers

7) The Jews are free to embrace their religion because they are one people with the believers.

8) The position of their neighbors such as their own bodies should not be violated and dzoliman to him should not be allowed

2. Principles of equality and anti-discrimination

This principle was stated by the Prophet SAW during his wa'da sermon he said: *"Arabs are not superior to non-Arabs, no white man is superior to black, no black man is superior to white, except out of piety."* (ibn Hanbal, 2001)

3. Not putting emotions first when there is friction

He applied this principle when 'Aisha was ignited by the fire of emotions because of the confrontational behavior of the Jews. 'Aisha narrated: *"(Once) the Jews came to the Prophet SAW and said, "As-Samu 'alaykum" (May death befall you). He replied, "Wa 'alaykum" (And may it befall you too)*". Aisha also said, *"As-Samu 'alaykum wal la'nah (may Allah curse you and curse you!"* The Prophet SAW said, *"Take it easy, Aisha! Be gentle, and avoid harsh and unkind words."* He said, *"Don't you hear what they say?"* He said, *"Don't you hear what I said? I have returned their prayers, and my prayers to them will be answered, while their prayers to me will not be answered."*(al-Bukhārī, 2025) The summary of this discussion can be seen in the following conceptual figure:
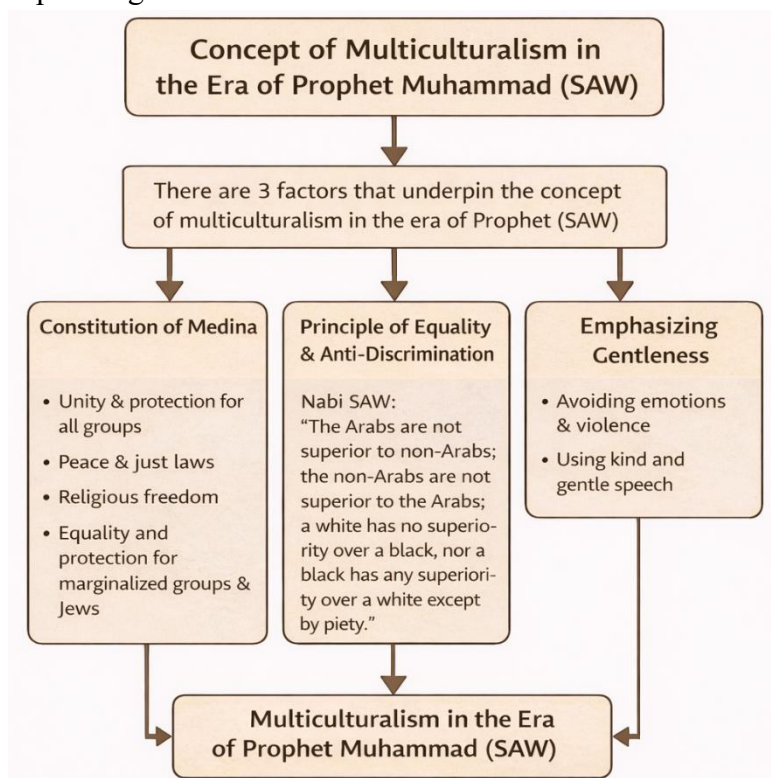

Figure 1: The concept of mutuculturalism in the era of the Prophet SAW

B. The wisdom of Allah is the will of differences and divisions

When Allah does something, there can be no futility in it, Allah affirms*: "Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, or lying down, and he thinks about the creation of the heavens and the earth (he says), "O our Lord, You did not create all these things in vain. Glory be to You. So protect us from the punishment of Hell."* (Q.S. Ali-Imran: 191) (RI, 2018) The wisdom of all of that includes.

1. In Surah Al-Hujarat: 18 it has been explained that among the wisdom is so that we may know each other, so as to enrich the value of our knowledge.

2. Collaborate. People who live together and neighbors are more likely to address problems together and collectively, neighboring human populations reveal how preferences, perspectives, and historical support for cooperation between members to manage actions (Paveglio & Shriner-Beaton, 2025).

3. Differences, including differences of opinion, are a test from God to see who is the best in his deeds. Attitudes in responding to differences, such as being patient and tolerant, are the benchmark of a person's piety. Allah said:
   "It is He who has created death and life to test you, who among you is better in deeds. He is the Mighty, the Forgiving." (Q.S. Al-Mulk:2) (RI, 2018)

4. Opportunities to complement and help each other: Differences in abilities and conditions provide opportunities to help the weak, so that there is balance and cooperation in life. Allah said: *"... Help one another in kindness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and enmity..."* (Q.S. Al-Maidah:2) (RI, 2018). The summary of this discussion can be seen in the following conceptual figure:
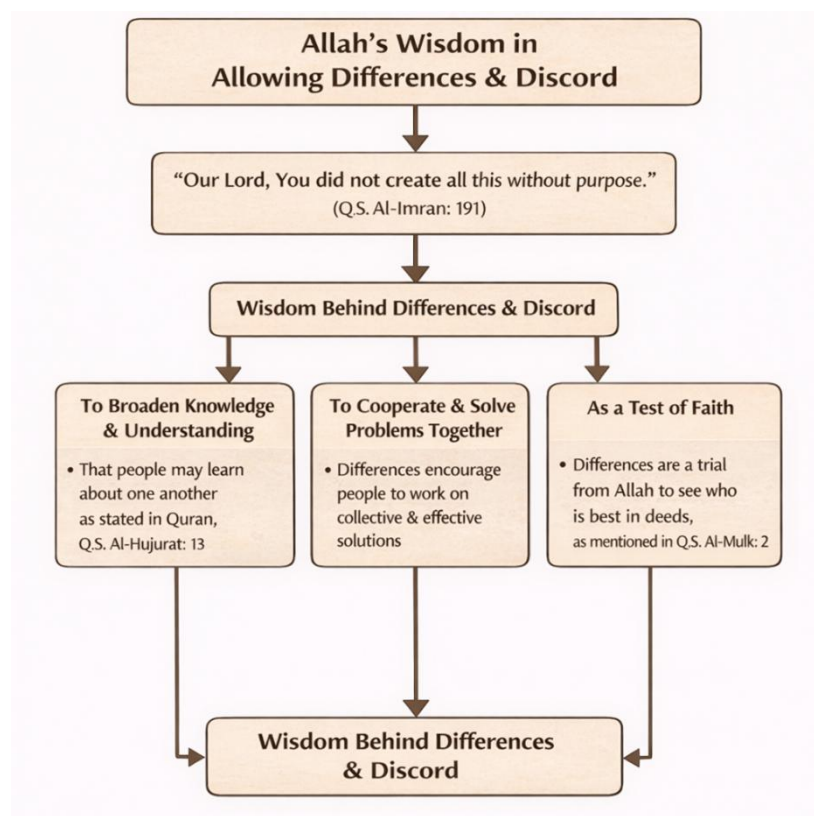

Figure 2: The Wisdom Behind Differences

C. Factors that cause diversity have the potential to divide

Among the factors causing division in the midst of diversity are:

1. Lack of multicultural awareness and understanding
   Society's lack of understanding of tolerance and the principle of coexistence, diversity is easily seen as a threat. So it can be a serious problem (Desrayaud & Hurley, 2023).

2. Discrimination and social injustice

   Envy from marginalized groups is sometimes caused by discrimination. This leads to protracted hostility so that injustice should be scapegoated as the main trigger for horizontal conflict (Yampolsky & Amiot, 2016).

3. Group Fanaticism

   Excessive fanaticism can blind objectivity. If fanaticism is excessive, the group tends to see the other party as an enemy, he no longer views the truth as the truth, because the truth according to him is in his group (Rizki & others, 2022).

4. Ineffective communication

   Miscommunication often leads to misunderstandings. When communication doesn't go well, minor conflicts can escalate. (Karanikola & Panagiotopoulos, 2025)

5. Lack of space for interaction and dialogue

   Dialogue and interaction are the main keys to understanding each other, so the absence of dialogue space increases the potential for horizontal conflict (Desrayaud & Hurley, 2023).

6. Provocation and spread of false information

   The proliferation and spread of fake news are factors among the factors that increase community conflicts. The general public is easily provoked, therefore controlling and supervising the spread of unclear news and hate speech is very important (Vasist et al., 2024). The summary of this discussion can be seen in the following conceptual figure:
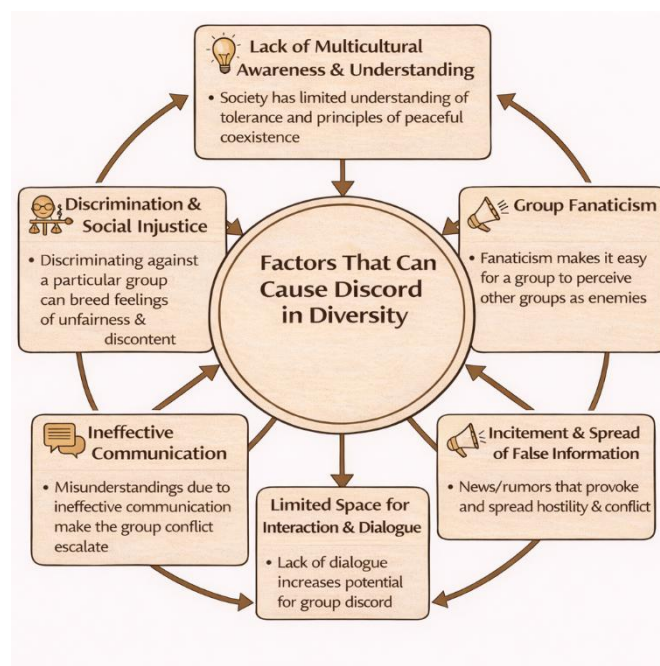

Figure 3: Factors that cause disintegration

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that multiculturalism in the era of the Prophet Muhammad SAW functioned as a coherent ethical–political framework rather than merely a historical condition of social diversity. Through a hermeneutical–prophetic analysis of classical Islamic texts—particularly the Medina

Charter the findings reveal that prophetic multiculturalism was institutionalized through principles of equality, religious freedom, social justice, collective responsibility, and ethical conflict resolution. These principles enabled diverse religious and ethnic communities to coexist within a shared moral and political order, challenging the assumption that pluralism inevitably leads to social fragmentation. From a scholarly perspective, this research contributes to the field of multicultural and Islamic studies by reframing the Medina Charter as a normative model of constitutional pluralism grounded in prophetic ethics, rather than as a pragmatic political agreement. The study also extends contemporary multicultural theory by integrating spiritual and moral dimensions humanization, liberation, and transcendence thereby addressing ethical limitations often found in secular approaches to diversity management. Theoretically, the findings offer an alternative epistemological foundation for multiculturalism that situates diversity governance within moral accountability and ethical transcendence. Practically, the study provides a normative reference for contemporary multicultural policies, inclusive education, and interfaith dialogue, particularly in plural societies facing increasing identity-based conflicts. By adopting prophetic ethical principles, diversity can be transformed from a potential source of division into a foundation for social harmony, justice, and sustainable peace.

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