

# The Role Of Multicultural Education In Shaping The Character Of Student Tolerance

Aldi Prasetyo<sup>1</sup>, Luma'ul 'Adilah Hayya<sup>2</sup>, Fauzi<sup>3</sup>

{[aldiprasetyo150196@gmail.com](mailto:aldiprasetyo150196@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [lumaulhayya@gmail.com](mailto:lumaulhayya@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>, [fauzi@uinsaizu.ac.id](mailto:fauzi@uinsaizu.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>}

Universitas Islam Negeri KH. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto<sup>1,2,3</sup>

**Abstract.** This study aims to identify the role of multicultural education in shaping the character of tolerance in students in elementary schools. The study was conducted using a descriptive quantitative approach through questionnaires given to 121 students. The results showed that multicultural education plays an important role in shaping the character of tolerance in students. Multicultural learning helps students understand and appreciate the differences between individuals, groups, and cultures. In addition, multicultural education can also help students gain an understanding of the importance of diversity in society. The emphasis on multicultural education should start from an early age, because the character and social attitudes of students begin to form at that age. Therefore, teachers and educational institutions should incorporate multicultural materials into the early childhood education curriculum. In addition, an inclusive and supportive classroom environment also needs to be created by teachers to support students from different backgrounds. The conclusion of this study is that multicultural education can help shape the character of tolerance in students. Therefore, teachers and educational institutions should pay special attention to multicultural education and ensure that students engage in inclusive and supportive learning, as well as gain a deep understanding of the values of diversity and mutual respect for differences.

**Keywords:** Character, Multicultural Education, Tolerance

## 1 Introduction

Education is one of the important factors in the formation of a person's character and personality. Character is a set of values, attitudes, and behaviors that a person has that make up their personality [1]. Strong and positive character is important for students to grow and develop into independent, responsible, and ethical individuals. One of the important and necessary characteristics in a heterogeneous society is the character of tolerance. Tolerance is a person's ability to accept differences and diversity in society [2]. The character of tolerance is important in maintaining harmony and harmony in a society consisting of various backgrounds, cultures, and religions.

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural, religious, and racial diversity [3]. This diversity is one of the uniqueness and wealth of the Indonesian nation [4]. However, in reality there are still differences in views, thoughts, and behaviors that can trigger conflicts between different groups. This can be seen from the frequent acts of discrimination and intolerance in society, both in the

school environment and outside the school. There are various efforts that have been made to overcome the problem of intolerance in society, one of which is through multicultural education in schools

In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, people from different cultures, religions, and backgrounds interact with each other every day. Therefore, it is very important to form a sense of tolerance and understanding between individuals from different backgrounds [5]. In the context of education, this means promoting a curriculum that emphasizes multiculturalism and teaches students the values of tolerance[5]. The role of education in shaping student character is very important because education can shape the mindset and behavior of students [6]. One of the characters that need to be built in students is the character of tolerance. The character of tolerance will help students to be able to understand and appreciate the differences around them, so as to be able to live in a plural and respectful society[7].

Multicultural education is an approach in education that respects and respects the diversity of cultures, religions, languages, and different ethnic backgrounds of students [8]. Multicultural education aims to help students understand, appreciate, and accept differences in a plural society [10]. One of the main roles of multicultural education is to form a character of tolerance in students. Multicultural education helps students understand and appreciate differences among individuals, groups, and cultures [11]. Thus, students will be more open in interacting with individuals from different backgrounds and better able to live in a diverse society [12]. According to Solomon and Portelli, multicultural education helps students to understand that differences between individuals are not always negative and can have positive values [13]. In addition, students will learn that differences can be a source of self-recognition and positive change. Multicultural education also helps students to understand the importance of diversity in society. Students will learn that diversity is something to be valued and promoted, and that every individual has the right to be respected and treated equally in society [14].

However, there are still concerns that these efforts have not yielded significant results in shaping the character of tolerance in students. Multicultural education is also expected to help students to develop an open, tolerant, and respectful attitude towards differences, so as to form a better and positive character. However, multicultural education efforts carried out by the school still face several obstacles, such as lack of resources, curriculum that has not fully paid attention to diversity, and uneven experience and understanding of diversity in students. Therefore, research on the role of multicultural education in shaping the character of tolerance in students is very important to do.

The purpose of this study is to further explore the role of multicultural education in shaping the character of tolerance in students. Through this research, it is hoped that a clearer picture can be obtained about the factors that influence the success of multicultural education in shaping the character of tolerance in students. In addition, this research is also expected to provide information for educators about strategies and the best ways to develop multicultural education programs that are effective in shaping the character of tolerance in students.

## **2 Method**

This study used a descriptive quantitative approach through questionnaires given to 121 students with a pretest-posttest control group design [15]. In this study there were two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. Research Subject The subject of research is a student at MI Ma'arif NU Penaruban. The number of research subjects was 121 students who were divided into 2 groups, namely the experimental group and the control group.

Research Instruments The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire to measure the tolerance character of students before and after being given treatment. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions developed based on the character construct of tolerance, with a score range of 1-5.

The first research procedure is the selection of research subjects carried out using purposive sampling techniques, namely the selection of samples determined based on certain criteria. Second, after the study subjects were selected, a pretest of tolerance characters was carried out in both groups. Third, the experimental group was given treatment in the form of multicultural education for 8 weeks with lecture, discussion, and simulation methods. The control group was not given treatment. Fourth, after the treatment period was over, a tolerance character posttest was carried out in both groups. Fifth, the data obtained are analyzed using a t-test.

Data obtained from student tolerance character questionnaires were processed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques using SPSS software. Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the tolerance character of students before and after being given treatment. While inferential analysis was carried out with t-tests to test differences in students' tolerance characters between the experimental group and the control group.

## **3 Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Student Tolerance Character**

Of the 121 respondents, the majority of students showed good tolerance towards diversity. 75% of students indicated that they felt comfortable and open to friends from different backgrounds, while 15% of students admitted to feeling a little uncomfortable, and 10% of students admitted to feeling very uncomfortable.

When asked about their attitudes towards cultural differences, the majority of students (80%) showed a positive attitude and accepted cultural differences. The rest (20%) admitted that it was difficult to accept cultural differences and needed time to adapt.

### **3.2 The Effectiveness of Multicultural Education in Shaping the Character of Student Tolerance**

In this study, the effectiveness of multicultural education was measured by asking students questions about their experiences while studying at school. As many as 65% of students stated that they have learned about cultural diversity through subjects such as history, religion, and language, as well as through extracurricular activities such as student exchanges and comparative studies.

As many as 35% of students said that they had never participated in activities involving cultural diversity. Even so, the majority of students who have not participated in the activity stated that they are interested in participating in the activity in the future.

### 3.3 Constraints in the Application of Multicultural Education

When asked about constraints in the implementation of multicultural education, most students identified that lack of awareness and understanding of cultural diversity is a major problem. In addition, some students also identified that a curriculum that does not accommodate cultural diversity and lack of support from the surrounding environment are also obstacles in the implementation of multicultural education.

However, on the other hand, most students also stated that they wanted to get more involved in activities involving cultural diversity at school and that they wanted to learn more about cultural diversity through extracurricular activities and visits to historical places.

From the results of data analysis, it was obtained that the average score of student tolerance characters in the experimental group was 82.33, while in the control group it was only 73.00. This shows that multicultural education can improve students' tolerance character. In addition, the results of the t-test showed that there was a significant difference between the tolerance character scores of students in the experimental and control groups. This shows that the treatment of multicultural education has a significant impact in shaping the character of tolerance in students. This result is in line with the results of previous studies which also show that multicultural education has an important role in shaping the character of tolerance in students. Multicultural education can help students understand and appreciate cultural diversity, thereby reducing conflict and increasing tolerance between individuals. However, it should be noted that this study was only conducted in one school with limited research subjects. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the wider population. In addition, this study was also only conducted within 8 weeks, so further research is needed to see the long-term impact of multicultural education on students' tolerance character.

Based on these findings, it is recommended for schools to pay special attention to multicultural education and include it in the curriculum as one of the important aspects in the formation of student character. In addition, it is also necessary to conduct training and development for teachers in implementing multicultural education in the learning process in the classroom. In addition, it should be noted that the character of tolerance is not only important to reduce conflicts between individuals, but also to build harmonious social relations and respect cultural diversity. In an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural society, the ability to accept differences and be tolerant is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, the formation of tolerance character in students through multicultural education needs to be improved.

However, there are several obstacles that may be faced in the implementation of multicultural education in schools. Some of these include a lack of support and understanding from schools and communities, a lack of resources to support multicultural education, and resistance from some students or parents who still hold to exclusive and intolerant values. To overcome these obstacles, efforts are needed from all relevant parties, including schools, teachers, parents, and the

community. Schools need to provide support and facilitate the implementation of multicultural education, such as by providing resources and training for teachers. Teachers need to understand the concepts and principles of multicultural education, and be able to integrate these concepts into classroom learning. Parents also need to play an active role in supporting multicultural education by teaching the values of tolerance and respecting cultural diversity at home. In addition, communities need to be involved in developing an environment that is inclusive and respects diversity, and avoids behaviors or actions that can lead to conflicts between individuals.

In the Indonesian context, multicultural education also has an important role in strengthening the unity and unity of the nation.[16] Indonesia is a country that has a very rich cultural diversity, so the formation of tolerance character in students is increasingly important in building a harmonious society and respecting diversity. In order to develop multicultural education, the Indonesian government has issued various policies and programs, such as the character education program, the 2013 curriculum, and the Inter-School Cooperation Education Unit (SPKAS) program.[17] However, the implementation of these programs still needs to be improved and evaluated continuously.

There are also several things that need to be considered in shaping the character of tolerance through multicultural education. First, the importance of paying attention to the social and cultural context of the community in designing multicultural education programs. Each community has different characteristics and conditions, so the program designed must be adapted to these conditions to be right on target and effective in shaping the character of tolerance in students.[18] Second, further research needs to be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of multicultural education programs in shaping the character of tolerance in students at various levels of education and different regions. This will help in improving multicultural education programs and making them more targeted. Third, there needs to be an active role from all relevant parties, such as teachers, parents, and the community in developing multicultural education. Teachers as teachers in the classroom, must have sufficient understanding and skills to teach multicultural concepts. Parents also need to pay attention to multicultural values in the family and community, so as to provide good support for multicultural education. In addition, the community also needs to be involved in multicultural education programs and provide support to schools and teachers.[19] Fourth, further research is needed to evaluate the impact of multicultural education programs on students' futures. This was done to see whether multicultural education programs were really effective in forming a strong character of tolerance in students, and whether that character of tolerance was maintained in their lives after leaving school. Finally, special attention needs to be paid to the problem of intolerance and discrimination in the school environment. The school should be a safe and welcoming place for all students indiscriminately, so that students can grow and develop in a healthy and positive environment. This can be done by implementing anti-discrimination policies and involving all relevant parties in ensuring the safety and comfort of students at school.[20]

Overall, multicultural education programs have an important role in shaping the character of tolerance in students. These programs can help students understand and appreciate cultural diversity, as well as teach them to respect and appreciate differences. In improving multicultural education programs, it is necessary to pay attention to the social and cultural context of the

community, involve all relevant parties, and conduct continuous evaluations to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. That way, it is hoped that the character of tolerance in students can be formed strongly and can have a positive impact on their lives in the future.

## 4 Conclusion

Based on the results of research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that multicultural education plays an important role in shaping the character of tolerance in students. Through a multicultural approach in learning, students can understand the values of diversity and respect each other's differences between individuals, groups, and cultures.

In the context of multicultural learning, teachers must ensure that the material delivered covers cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. In addition, teachers must also be able to create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment for students from different backgrounds. By providing opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds, students can increase their understanding of diversity and strengthen their character of tolerance.

The results of this study also show that the emphasis on multicultural education should start from an early age, because at this age the character and social attitudes of students begin to form. Therefore, it is important for teachers to incorporate multicultural materials into the early childhood education curriculum.

However, this study has some limitations. One of them was a research sample consisting of only students in elementary schools in one city. Therefore, future research can expand the research sample to different cities or even countries, so that the results can be more representative for a wider population.

Overall, the results of this study show that multicultural education can help shape the character of tolerance in students. Therefore, teachers and educational institutions should pay special attention to multicultural education and ensure that students engage in inclusive and supportive learning, as well as gain a deep understanding of the values of diversity and mutual respect for differences.

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