

BUILDING BRIDGES OF TOLERANCE THROUGH MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstract: In the era of globalization and increasing cultural diversity, society needs to build bridges of tolerance to create a harmonious environment. Multicultural education has been recognized as an effective way to achieve this goal. This research aims to explain the concept of 'Building Bridges of Tolerance Through Multicultural Education,' focusing on its implications and benefits in overcoming cultural, religious, and identity differences in society. Through a qualitative approach, this research outlines the concept of building bridges of tolerance through multicultural education, exploring relevant goals, principles, and approaches. Data collection techniques were conducted using in-depth interviews and observations of students and teachers at SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun in Cirebon. The findings of this research illustrate that multicultural education plays an important role in forming an inclusive mindset and fostering mutual respect between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. By realizing the importance of multicultural education, we welcome positive changes toward a more harmonious and tolerant society. The research results show that a multicultural education approach not only forms students into individuals with broad cultural knowledge but also individuals who can interact with deep respect for cultural differences. Multicultural education makes students more tolerant, open-minded, and ready to contribute to an increasingly diverse society.

Keywords: Education, Building Bridges of Tolerance, Multicultural

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main pillars in shaping the character and values of a nation's next generation (Susanti et al., 2023) (Syafi'i et al., 2023). In an era of globalization that is increasingly close and connecting various cultures and backgrounds, education does not just provide academic skills. Still, it forms individuals who have understanding, appreciation, and tolerance for cultural diversity. Multicultural conflicts and debates often stem from differences in views regarding national identity, acceptance of new cultures, and perceived threats to traditional values (Syafii et al., 2023).

Multicultural education can mitigate this social conflict through understanding and tolerance. This can help individuals avoid prejudice and confrontation while fostering harmonious relationships amidst diversity. Furthermore, multicultural education fosters positive attitudes and behavior towards cultural differences by increasing understanding of diversity and teaching effective communication skills. Thus, multicultural education can prevent and resolve social conflicts (Nurgiansah et al., 2022).

Mohamad Furqon's (2020) research entitled " Multicultural Education in the Indonesian Education System" explains that multicultural education practices in Indonesia can be implemented flexibly, not having to be separate or monolithic subjects. Multicultural education can be a tool to teach students universal values such as peace, love, and tolerance, as well as understanding and respecting cultural and religious differences. Multicultural education needs to be carefully designed to increase cross-cultural understanding and brotherhood. The positive potential of multicultural education lies in forming a younger generation that is more inclusive, open-minded, and empathetic. By strengthening multicultural education, we can develop a more harmonious and supportive society (Budirahayu & Saud, 2020). In this context, multicultural education emerges as a relevant solution for building bridges of tolerance in an increasingly diverse society.

In an interconnected world, everyone interacts with people from various cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. However, these interactions also raise challenges in the form of cultural conflicts, prejudices, and misunderstandings. This is where multicultural education plays an important role. Multicultural education is not just a concept but also an approach that underlies the development of inclusive curricula, teaching methods, and learning environments (Hajisoteriou & Sorkos, 2022). It is important to acknowledge and respect students' cultural backgrounds in teaching. It emphasizes student-centered education that integrates student culture content into the curriculum. In multicultural education, this approach aims to overcome cultural gaps in curricula that often do not reflect the reality of students' cultural diversity (Fuentes et al., 2021).

Emphasizing the complexities and challenges of integrating multicultural education into the education system is essential. The various elements in the "policy network" are often misaligned, and

there is potential for dissonance between the declarative objectives of the policy and its implementation on the ground. Factors such as resistance, lack of training, and lack of support can hinder the success of multicultural education. One important lesson is the need to deeply understand students' cultures and backgrounds and recognize individual differences. Additionally, support from various stakeholders, including teachers, schools, families, and communities, is essential. The government has implemented various policies and research to gain relevance in teaching, training, and education (Hakim & Prasasti, 2022).

This approach aims to create an environment where students learn about cultural differences and understand and appreciate that diversity. Building bridges of tolerance through multicultural education teaches students to see diversity as an asset that enriches society, not as a source of conflict. In this way, multicultural education has the potential to penetrate social structures and prepare a generation capable of adapting to an increasingly diverse society. The role of teachers is very important in designing and implementing multicultural education. Teachers need to create classroom environments that support cross-cultural learning, facilitate intercultural dialogue, and help students develop an appreciation for diversity (Banks, 2016).

One thing teachers can do is create learning to build tolerance by implementing multicultural education, based on a study conducted by Sartika, Nasehudin, and Suniti (2020), which stated that the percentage of questionnaires regarding the implementation of multicultural education was 84%, categorized as very good. Regarding student attitudes, a score of 80% was obtained in the good category and regarding student tolerance, it was stated that the students' personality fostered a sense of mutual tolerance in class VIII of SMP N 1 Ciwaringin, Cirebon Regency was 81% in the very good category. Based on the research results, the calculated F value is $39.712 >$ from F table 3.29. So, it can be concluded that the multicultural education variable (X) has a significant effect on student attitudes (Y1) and student tolerance (Y2).

Furthermore, according to Jati (2014), tolerance, especially in religiosity, can maintain the spirit of multiculturalism and strengthen brotherhood among students. Meanwhile, the theoretical study conducted by Sabrina, Komariah & Wilodati (2022) with the results of research on multiculturalism education can improve students' character. However, some teachers still do not understand and master multicultural education, so its implementation is not optimal, resulting in students' low Indonesian character.

Based on previous research, the difference researchers focus on is the importance of multicultural education as a tool for building bridges of tolerance in an increasingly diverse society, especially at SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun in Cirebon. The selection of research objects at SMPIT Ibnu

Khaldun in Cirebon can be based on several reasons involving academic, social, or practical interests. Some general reasons for choosing SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun as a research object include SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun having unique characteristics, special educational programs, or an approach to teaching students to understand and respect differences that interest researchers, as well as developing empathy skills so that they can feel other people's experiences. Another thing that is shown is the integration culture in the curriculum. This research aims to discuss the theoretical foundations underlying multicultural education, its practical implications in the educational environment, and its impact on the formation of attitudes of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity. With a deep understanding of the importance of multicultural education in building bridges of tolerance, we can inspire concrete steps in preparing a generation that is not knowledgeable and appreciates cultural diversity. Thus, multicultural education is an academic and social goal that guides us toward a more inclusive, harmonious, and civilized society.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach to determine multicultural education's influence in building tolerance bridges among students. In the context of this research, a qualitative approach allows for a holistic exploration of students' views, experiences, and perceptions of multicultural education and its impact on attitudes of tolerance. See, that's right, research design using case studies to understand the influence of multicultural education I. The case study was conducted at SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun in Cirebon with data collection techniques, including in-depth interviews and observation.

In-depth interviews involved eight students and five teachers from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The interviews aimed to explore their understanding of multicultural education, their experiences interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds, and their views on the importance of tolerance in society. Meanwhile, observations are carried out in class and extracurricular activities involving cross-cultural interactions. Data triangulation is used to maintain validity, namely comparing results from various data sources, such as interviews and observations. In addition, researchers will seek feedback from participants to ensure an accurate understanding of their findings with the steps of collecting data, reducing data, presenting data, and conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this research, data from interviews and observations provide in-depth insight into the views, experiences, and development of students' attitudes toward tolerance in a multicultural educational

environment. In-depth interviews with students from various cultural backgrounds reveal common patterns in their understanding of the importance of multicultural education. Most students feel that multicultural education helps them better understand cultural diversity and appreciate differences. One student explained, 'We learn about different traditions and values. This makes us more open and respectful of others.'

This is by interviews from SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun students in Cirebon, who explained that multicultural education is very important because it opens our minds to different cultures and religions. In this school, we learn to respect differences and understand that diversity is wealth."

This was further deepened by the results of interviews from SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun students in Cirebon, who stated that,

"The school holds various multicultural activities such as cultural festivals and collaborative projects between classes. We also have religion and ethics lessons that teach the values of tolerance and mutual respect. I learned a lot about the traditions and customs of my friends. This opened my mind about the world and made me more willing to accept differences."

Multicultural education can help overcome some of the barriers related to cultural differences by fostering a more inclusive and open perspective among the younger generation. (Kirac et al., 2022). By starting multicultural education, children can learn to appreciate differences, develop intercultural skills, and build positive relationships with others. Overall, multicultural education can lay an important foundation for cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and peace in the future.

If we review the results of interviews with SMPIT teacher Ibnu Khaldun in Cirebon, it explains that

"We integrate multicultural education into all subjects. We use textbooks that cover a variety of cultural perspectives and teach students to respect differences and appreciate diversity. In addition, the school provides opportunities for regular training in multicultural teaching. In addition, we have a discussion forum and support between teachers to share effective teaching strategies in a multicultural environment."

Multicultural education at SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun also impacts relationships between students from different cultural backgrounds, which is supported by the results of interviews with SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun teachers in Cirebon explaining that.

"We are seeing an improvement in social relationships between students. They are more open, helpful to each other, and more willing to work together. Multicultural education has helped create a welcoming and inclusive environment in our school."

Furthermore, interviews revealed that cross-cultural interactions in the classroom contributed significantly to the development of attitudes of tolerance. Several students mentioned that class discussions involving multiple cultural perspectives helped them see the world from diverse viewpoints. The in-depth interviews highlighted that cross-cultural understanding is an important first step towards greater tolerance. Intercultural education can serve as a platform for introducing different religious perspectives and encouraging constructive dialogue regarding human rights. In this context, education is important in forming tolerance, respect for differences, and deeper knowledge of human values (Marcella et al., 2023).

Based on observations in class and extracurricular activities, positive dynamics of cross-cultural interaction can be seen. In group activities, students from various cultural backgrounds work harmoniously and support each other, especially regarding the multicultural approach to teaching. Teachers at SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun are seen implementing a multicultural approach in their teaching. They use examples from various cultures to explain, ensuring that each student feels valued and motivated. Inclusive language and respect for diversity appeared to be principles in every classroom observed.

This is also shown during breaks and free time. Students seem to mix well regardless of their cultural or religious background. They spoke in a friendly and open language, showing mutual respect and tolerance. As well as being supported by religious activities during worship and Islamic teachings at this school are highly respected. Students were seen actively participating in religious lessons and praying together solemnly. Teachers emphasize the values of tolerance, justice, and compassion in their religious teaching.

This observation shows signs of inclusive attitudes and appreciation for differences in everyday conversations among students (Xu & Cooper, 2022). In addition, observations show that multicultural education can stimulate students' interest in other cultures and cultural history. In extracurricular activities related to culture, such as art exhibitions or traditional performances, students show high enthusiasm and active participation. This indicates that introducing other cultures can be done in an interesting and in-depth way.

Therefore, the results of in-depth interviews and observations in this research illustrate multicultural education's positive impact in forming tolerance attitudes among students. Multicultural education gives students a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and develops their ability to appreciate differences (Rachmadtullah et al., 2020). Cross-cultural interactions in the classroom and extracurricular activities help stimulate cross-cultural understanding and form inclusive attitudes. The role of social capital in supporting inclusive multicultural education illustrates how social networks,

social norms, and interpersonal relationships in society can be valuable resources in increasing cross-cultural understanding, appreciation, and cooperation. Incorporating local wisdom into multicultural education by integrating local values and traditions can make education more relevant and meaningful for students in their cultural context (Muwaffiqillah, 2021).

Serve as a framework for designing culturally diverse curricula (Banks, 2016). He proposed a teaching model involving four components: diverse content, appropriate methods, relevant life experiences, and the development of inclusive social attitudes. (Kamil et al., 2023) I show that there are multicultural values in cross-cultural study materials, including (1) the value of tolerance, (2) unitary values, (3) cooperation, and (4) solidarity. Moreover, the application of multicultural values by integrating them into school subjects can contribute to forming teenagers who are more inclusive, open, and appreciative of culture (Tumanggor & Mularsih, 2020).

Explore the importance of incorporating folklore knowledge into multicultural education, providing insight into cultures, histories, and values often not represented in formal curricula (Pourdavood & Yan, 2020). Folklore knowledge often comes from oral traditions and folk culture, serving as a tool for understanding and appreciating cultural diversity. Challenges in implementing multicultural education include limited curriculum, training, or resources to support multicultural education. The importance of education and training for teachers in developing an effective multicultural approach can help teachers understand the importance of inclusive teaching, respect for differences, and the ability to create learning environments that support all students. (Saihu et al., 2022). Educators must engage in ongoing reflection and dialogue to overcome aporia, understand student perspectives, and formulate more inclusive teaching approaches (Jones et al., 2023). Teaching practices and designing more inclusive strategies can help create learning environments responsive to cultural diversity and students from various backgrounds (Dimitrov & Deardorff, 2023). Supported and knowledgeable teachers are more likely to develop inclusive learning experiences.

Approaches that involve teachers, children, and families can enrich learning experiences and create inclusive environments. Multicultural education can be better integrated into curriculum and teaching through strong collaboration between these three groups. Children and families involved in decision-making and feeling valued can be more involved in learning (Cook et al., 2020). By involving various stakeholders, multicultural education can be integrated more effectively into children's learning experiences in early childhood education environments. Additionally, experiential learning can build deeper interfaith understanding, eliminate bias from ignorance and common stereotypes about others, and promote inclusion and social cohesion. (McCowan, 2017). Multicultural education is big in building bridge tolerance in an increasingly diverse. Importance approach This

lies in forming a generation that appreciates diverse cultures and can live harmoniously in the middle diversity society.

In line with the theoretical study conducted by Amaliyah (2022), which explains the condition of Indonesian society, which has differences in race, religion, and social status, making a major contribution to the development and dynamics of society. Therefore, it is very important to provide multicultural education in the Indonesian education system through standards and learning models to provide social capital in society to tolerate each other.

CONCLUSION

In an era of increasing globalization and connecting various cultures, multicultural education appears as a relevant solution to build bridges of tolerance in an increasingly diverse society.

The implications of this research are very significant. A multicultural education approach not only forms students into individuals who have broad cultural knowledge but also individuals who can interact with deep respect for cultural differences. Multicultural education makes students more tolerant, open-minded, and ready to contribute to an increasingly diverse society.

Therefore, multicultural education is not just a concept but also a tool that plays an important role in building an inclusive and harmonious society. Introducing different cultures through education helps form tolerant citizens who can maintain positive relationships with other people, regardless of cultural background. To build a harmonious and tolerant society, multicultural education must continue to be a focus and priority in the education system.

This research has limitations in terms of generalization because it was conducted in one location and with a certain student population. Future research could involve larger samples and a variety of locations to gain broader insights. In addition, research can dig deeper to understand the long-term impact of multicultural education on the formation of attitudes of tolerance.

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