
IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTICULTURAL VALUES IN SCIENCE LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of multicultural values in primary school science instruction. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study design. The study was conducted at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti, Padang City, West Sumatra, with research participants comprising one principal, two fifth-grade teachers, and two fifth-grade classes totaling 30 students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using an interactive analysis model, which included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that multicultural values such as tolerance, cooperation, mutual respect, fairness, and openness to differences have been implemented in science learning through social interactions and classroom management practices. However, the implementation of these values remains implicit and has not yet been systematically integrated into science lesson planning.

Keywords

Science Learning; Multicultural Values; Primary School; Multicultural Education.



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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping learners who are not only academically competent but also socially aware and respectful of diversity. Indonesia is widely recognized as one of the most multicultural countries in the world, consisting of more than 17,000 islands, over 1,300 ethnic groups, and more than 700 local languages, reflecting an extraordinary level of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity (Zahra, 2025). This condition presents both opportunities and challenges for the education system, particularly in fostering tolerance, mutual respect, and social cohesion from an early age. Therefore, educational approaches that intentionally integrate multicultural values are essential to support harmonious interaction and inclusive learning environments in Indonesian schools. Multicultural education is regarded as a strategic approach to fostering such awareness, as it emphasizes the recognition and appreciation of differences as an integral part of social life (Salahuddin et al., 2025; Saimun, 2025). Education at the primary school level functions not merely as a medium for knowledge transfer but also as a strategic space for cultivating attitudes of mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance of social, cultural, and individual differences from an early stage (Ackah et al., 2020; Prananda, 2020). The early internalization of multicultural values is expected to equip students with the awareness needed to live in a pluralistic society and to prevent the emergence of discriminatory attitudes in the future.

Primary school science learning plays a significant role in supporting this effort, as it is not only focused on mastering scientific concepts but also has strong potential to shape students' attitudes and character (Prananda et al., 2023; Prananda, 2021). Science content related to the environment, living organisms, and natural phenomena can be contextualized within diverse social realities. Through contextual and experience-based science learning, students can be guided to understand that, although humans live within the same natural environment, they possess diverse cultural backgrounds, habits, and perspectives in their interactions with nature and with one another (Yüzüak, 2022). This approach encourages the development of empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences as essential aspects of shared life (Davidson et al., 2024; Arifin, 2025). Thus, science learning serves not only as a means of developing scientific knowledge but also as an effective medium for integrating multicultural values into primary education.

The integration of multicultural values in learning is also aligned with national educational policies and regulations. According to the *Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional*, national education functions to develop students' potential and

shape the character and civilization of the nation to educate the life of the nation, and aims to develop learners who are faithful and pious to God Almighty, have noble character, are knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. This law underscores the importance of values development as part of the national education system, including the development of learners' social, cultural, and moral competencies. Moreover, the Merdeka Curriculum, as outlined by the Ministry of Education and Culture, emphasizes student-centered learning and character development through the Pancasila Student Profile, which includes a dimension on global diversity, encouraging students to appreciate and engage with differences in culture, background, and perspective. These policy directions provide a strong legal and curricular foundation for implementing multicultural values in science learning.

However, preliminary observations conducted at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti, Padang City, West Sumatra, indicate that science learning still tends to focus on achieving cognitive outcomes and completing subject matter as outlined in textbooks. Teachers predominantly emphasize conceptual understanding and academic achievement, while the integration of multicultural values is not explicitly incorporated into lesson planning and instructional implementation. Interactions among students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds within the school context have not been fully utilized as learning resources in science lessons, thereby underutilizing the potential of multicultural-oriented science learning.

These findings highlight the need to strengthen the implementation of multicultural values in primary school science learning. Teachers are expected to develop instructional strategies that not only emphasize the mastery of scientific concepts but also integrate values such as tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect through learning activities (Arifin et al., 2024). The application of discussion methods, heterogeneous group work, and the contextualization of science content within students' socio-cultural backgrounds can serve as alternative approaches to creating inclusive and multicultural-oriented science learning. This approach aligns with the MULIA (Multicultural Values in Science Learning) framework, which positions science learning as a medium for internalizing multicultural values.

Previous studies have demonstrated that multicultural education contributes positively to the development of students' social attitudes and tolerance. Mariyono et al. (2025) reported that integrating multicultural education into learning fosters inclusive and democratic learning environments. Abdurrohman (2025) similarly found that contextual learning approaches linking

subject matter to social diversity enhance mutual respect among students. In addition, Chimbunde (2024) explained that multicultural education helps students understand and appreciate differences while also developing their ability to collaborate in pluralistic societies. (Mandarani, 2024) further noted that multicultural education enhances students' critical and creative thinking skills by integrating diverse perspectives. Nevertheless, despite the growing body of research on the general benefits of multicultural education, studies specifically focusing on its implementation in primary school science learning remain limited. As highlighted by Bradshaw & Randolph (2021), the integration of multicultural values into science subjects warrants further investigation to optimize its role in education.

The novelty of this study lies in its analytical focus on the implementation of multicultural values in primary school science learning. Rather than merely examining the conceptual presence of multicultural values, this study explores how these values are integrated and enacted in classroom science learning practices. Accordingly, this research is expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of science learning oriented toward multicultural education.

In line with the above discussion, this study aims to analyse the implementation of multicultural values in primary school science learning. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the multicultural values integrated into science instruction and to describe the strategies teachers use to implement these values. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators and policymakers in developing inclusive and diversity-responsive science learning.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive, qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of multicultural values in primary school science learning. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on processes, meanings, and contextual aspects of how multicultural values are implemented in science learning practices, rather than on testing causal relationships or quantitatively measuring variables. As stated by (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research seeks to explore phenomena within rich and complex contexts. The research design adopted was a case study, as this study examined in depth the phenomenon of implementing multicultural values in science learning within a specific context. A case study approach enables a comprehensive understanding of instructional practices, teachers' strategies, and classroom social interactions in the context of student diversity.

The study was conducted at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti, Padang City, West Sumatra, a public primary school with 313 students in grades 1 to 6. According to school profile data, the majority of students at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti identify as Muslim, reflecting the local community's demographic composition. At the same time, students also come from diverse family and socio-economic backgrounds typical of Padang's urban environment. Although specific data on ethnic and language diversity within the school were not available in official records, the wider Lolong Belanti community includes families with diverse Minangkabau cultural traditions and varying economic conditions, reflected in student interactions and classroom dynamics. These characteristics create a learning context in which multicultural values are relevant and observable in everyday school life. The school was purposively selected based on preliminary observations showing specific practices relevant to the implementation of multicultural values in science learning. These observations revealed that science teachers frequently organized group discussions involving students from different social and cultural backgrounds, encouraged respectful communication during collaborative activities, and addressed differences in opinions and learning styles during classroom interactions. In addition, classroom management practices emphasized cooperation, fairness, and mutual respect, particularly during practical science activities and problem-solving tasks. These observable practices indicated that the school provided a relevant context for examining the implementation of multicultural values in primary school science learning.

The research participants included one school principal, two fifth-grade teachers, and two fifth-grade classes, totaling 30 students. The principal was included to obtain information related to school policies and managerial support for strengthening multicultural values in learning. The fifth-grade teachers were selected because they directly implement science instruction in the classroom and play a key role in integrating multicultural values into the learning process. The fifth-grade students were chosen because they actively participated in science learning activities and exhibited social interaction dynamics that reflected diverse backgrounds.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly examine the implementation of science learning in the classroom, particularly teacher–student interactions and learning activities that reflected multicultural values such as tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal and fifth-grade teachers to explore their perspectives, policies, and strategies in integrating multicultural values into science learning. In addition, interviews were

conducted with selected students as supporting informants to obtain students' perspectives on the learning practices they experienced. Documentation was used to complemented by analysis of lesson plans, teaching modules, instructional materials, and learning evaluation records.

The research instruments consisted of observation and interview guidelines developed based on indicators of multicultural values in science learning. These indicators were formulated with reference to the MULIA (Multicultural Values in Science Learning) framework, which emphasizes the integrative values in the science learning process. The indicators included tolerance toward differences, cooperation among students, respect for differing opinions, fairness in teachers' treatment of students, and openness to diverse student backgrounds. These instruments served as guides to ensure that the systematic collection conformed to the research objectives.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using an interactive analysis model that comprised data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were reduced to select information relevant to the research focus, then presented in a descriptive narrative to identify patterns and research findings. Conclusion drawing was conducted continuously throughout the research process.

The trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing data obtained from the principal, teachers, and students, while technique triangulation involved comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. Through these procedures, the data generated are expected to demonstrate high credibility and scientific rigor.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this study were obtained through observations of fifth-grade science interviews with the school principal, two fifth-grade teachers, and students. They were supported by an analysis of instructional documents at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti. Overall, multicultural values were reflected in daily science learning activities through teachers' interactions, classroom management, and collaborative student practices. However, these values were not explicitly articulated as learning objectives nor systematically incorporated into formal lesson planning documents. As a result, the implementation of multicultural values tended to occur implicitly through routine instructional practices rather than through deliberate and structured pedagogical

design.

Based on the analysis of instructional documents, the science teaching modules used by teachers primarily focused on achieving knowledge competencies and science process skills. Multicultural values were not explicitly stated in the learning objectives or instructional steps. Nevertheless, learning activities such as group discussions and practical experiments demonstrated potential for integrating multicultural values through patterns of student interaction.

Classroom observations of fifth-grade science learning revealed that teachers organized students into heterogeneous learning groups. During discussion and practical activities, students worked collaboratively, shared roles, and assisted one another in completing learning tasks. These interactions reflected the implementation of cooperation and tolerance among students within science learning contexts. These observational findings were reinforced by interview results with the fifth-grade teachers and the school principal, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview Results with the Principal and Fifth-Grade Teachers

No	Informant	Summary of Interview Results	Multicultural Values
1	Principal	The school promotes an inclusive learning climate that respects differences through character habituation; however, there is no specific policy integrating multicultural values into science learning.	Openness, inclusivity
2	Fifth-Grade Teacher (1)	Science learning is conducted through heterogeneous group work to encourage students to collaborate without distinguishing backgrounds or abilities.	Tolerance, cooperation
3	Fifth-Grade Teacher (2)	Multicultural values are fostered through attitude habituation and classroom management, although they are not explicitly designed in teaching modules.	Fairness, mutual respect

Source: Field data from interviews with the principal and fifth-grade teachers at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti, Padang City (2024)

In addition to cooperation and tolerance, classroom observations also indicated the application of fairness and inclusivity in teacher–student interactions. Teachers provided equal opportunities for all students to ask questions and express their opinions. When misunderstandings or incorrect responses occurred, teachers responded openly and offered positive reinforcement without discriminating against students based on their backgrounds.

Students' perceptions of science learning further indicated that these multicultural values were meaningfully experienced in their learning processes. Students reported feeling comfortable learning alongside peers from diverse backgrounds and becoming accustomed to working collaboratively. Teachers were also reported to frequently remind students of the importance of respecting peers' opinions during discussions and science practical activities. A summary of student

interview results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Interview Results with Fifth-Grade Students

No	Informant	Summary of Interview Results	Multicultural Values
1	Student 1	Students are accustomed to collaborating with peers who have different abilities and learning backgrounds during science activities.	Cooperation, Tolerance
2	Student 2	Teachers consistently remind students not to mock others and to respect peers' opinions during group discussions.	Mutual Respect
3	Student 3	All students are provided with equal opportunities to ask questions, express opinions, and participate in classroom activities.	Fairness, Inclusivity

Source: Field data from interviews with fifth-grade students at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti, Padang City (2024)

Overall, the findings indicate that multicultural values implemented in science learning at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti include tolerance, cooperation, mutual respect, fairness, and openness to differences. These values primarily emerged through social interactions and classroom management during science instruction and were supported by the perspectives of teachers, the school principal, and students' learning experiences. However, the implementation of these multicultural values remains largely implicit and has not yet been systematically integrated into science lesson planning. Therefore, further reinforcement is needed to ensure that science learning can optimally contribute to the development of students' multicultural attitudes.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that multicultural values have been embedded in everyday instructional practices in science learning at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti. However, it has not been explicitly articulated in formal lesson planning. This pattern resonates with the arguments of (Ok et al., 2022) and (Csillik, 2022), who assert that multicultural education often operates through implicit pedagogical practices rather than being formally codified in written curricula. Similarly, (Abdurrohman, 2025) and (Luconi, 2017) emphasize that multicultural values are frequently internalized through daily classroom interactions, teacher attitudes, and peer relationships, forming what is commonly referred to as the hidden curriculum.

This study extends previous findings by showing that, although multicultural values were absent from explicit science lesson objectives, they were indirectly reinforced through school documents and informal regulatory practices, such as classroom rules, codes of conduct, and anti-bullying procedures. These findings align with (Rahayu, 2024) and (Betty, 2025), who argue that institutional norms and school culture play a crucial role in shaping students' multicultural

dispositions. Within the MULIA (Multicultural Values in Science Learning) framework, such practices indicate that science learning environments can serve as contexts in which multicultural values are implicitly constructed through interactional and experiential processes.

The dominance of cognitive-oriented goals and science process skills in instructional documents reflects a broader tendency in science education to prioritize academic achievement over value-based learning. This finding corroborates studies by Maulana et al. (2024; Giantomi, 2024), and (Aulia et al., 2025), who note that values and character education are often positioned as secondary outcomes rather than integral components of science instruction. However, scholars such as (Jones, 2025) and (Camiring, 2025) argue that science learning inherently involves social, ethical, and cultural dimensions, suggesting that multicultural values can be meaningfully integrated into science instruction without compromising scientific rigor.

The use of heterogeneous group work observed in this study demonstrates an instructional strategy that fosters cooperation and tolerance among students. This finding is consistent with social learning theory, which posits that learning occurs through social interaction and observation across diverse social contexts (Xiaotian, 2024; Nurlaili, 2025). Previous studies have also shown that collaborative learning in science classrooms promotes empathy, mutual respect, and positive intergroup relations (Finkelstein, 2025; Kebede, 2025). In this regard, science group activities function not only as cognitive learning spaces but also as social arenas for multicultural engagement.

The emergence of tolerance and cooperation among students further supports the notion that science learning can simultaneously serve academic and character education purposes. Feltman et al., (2024) and Dwi et al., (2025) emphasize that effective multicultural education requires active student participation in learning experiences that reflect social diversity. The findings of this study reinforce this perspective by illustrating how routine science activities, such as discussions and experiments, can cultivate multicultural values even in the absence of explicitly stated objectives.

Teachers' practices of fairness, inclusivity, and openness to differing opinions underscore their central role as agents of multicultural education. This finding is consistent with (Zhang, 2018; Feng, 2024; Heinz, 2025), who highlight that teachers' beliefs and pedagogical decisions significantly influence the creation of equitable and inclusive learning environments. By providing equal opportunities for participation and responding constructively to diverse student perspectives, teachers at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti enacted multicultural values through their daily instructional interactions.

The school principal's support in fostering an inclusive school climate further indicates that the implementation of multicultural values extends beyond classroom practices into the broader institutional context. This aligns with research by (Ude, 2025) and Hariyadi & Rodiyah, (2023), which emphasizes the importance of leadership and policy support in sustaining multicultural and inclusive education. Nevertheless, the absence of explicit policies integrating multicultural values into science learning highlights an area for institutional development.

Students' positive perceptions of learning within an inclusive science classroom suggest that multicultural values were not only implemented but also meaningfully experienced. This finding supports earlier research demonstrating that inclusive learning environments enhance students' sense of belonging, social comfort, and engagement (Osiname, 2014; Siregar et al., 2025). Consequently, science learning that emphasizes respectful interaction and collaboration contributes to the early formation of multicultural attitudes.

Despite these positive practices, the largely implicit nature of multicultural value integration identified in this study underscores the need for more systematic instructional design. In line with the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile, future science learning should explicitly incorporate multicultural values into learning objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Such integration would strengthen the role of science education not only in developing scientific literacy but also in fostering tolerance, fairness, and respect for diversity among primary school students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that multicultural values have been embedded in everyday instructional practices at SDN 13 Lolong Belanti through interactions among teachers and students. Multicultural values such as tolerance, cooperation, mutual respect, fairness, and openness to differences primarily emerge during collaborative science activities, including group discussions, heterogeneous group work, and practical experiments. However, these values are still implemented implicitly and have not been systematically integrated into science lesson planning, as instructional documents continue to emphasize cognitive competencies and science process skills without explicitly incorporating multicultural objectives. Consequently, the enactment of multicultural values largely depends on teachers' classroom management and individual initiatives. Therefore, primary school teachers are encouraged to explicitly integrate multicultural

values into science lesson planning through learning objectives, instructional activities, and the assessment of students' attitudes, while connecting science content with students' social and cultural contexts to ensure inclusive and meaningful learning. Schools are also recommended to strengthen multicultural education through supportive policies, school programs, and professional development for teachers, and future research is encouraged to employ diverse research approaches and broader contexts to deepen understanding of the implementation of multicultural values in primary school science learning.

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