

Building Tolerance Among Elementary School Students in Multicultural Education from Elementary School to College

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Abstract. The level of tolerance and appreciation for cultural diversity among elementary and university students remains relatively low. This research is considered urgent because of the discrepancy between societal expectations and the realities observed in educational settings, where tolerance as a foundation for fostering inclusive and harmonious attitudes is still minimal. The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of multicultural education programs in instilling the values of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity. This study employed a quantitative approach with a purposive sample of 370 students. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and regression techniques with the assistance of SPSS Version 29.0. The results demonstrate that multicultural education programs significantly enhance students' tolerant attitudes ($F = 58.67, p < .001$), with a contribution of 41%. In addition, social interaction within groups was found to be effective in developing empathy and strengthening cultural understanding among students. These findings highlight that systematic and sustainable multicultural education can play a pivotal role in shaping a generation that values diversity and demonstrates inclusive behaviour. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating multicultural education into the curriculum, not only as a theoretical concept but also as a practical framework for classroom and community engagement. The implications suggest that collaboration between schools, families, and communities is essential to building an inclusive learning environment that nurtures tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect across cultural boundaries.

Keywords: Diversity; Elementary School; Inclusivity; Multiculturalism; Tolerance.

1. Introduction

With the development of 21st century technology, cultural, linguistic and social diversity has become an inseparable part of modern society (Banerjee & Pan, 2024). The main challenge faced by educational institutions from elementary schools to universities is how to instill the values of tolerance and respect for differences among students (Younas & Imran, 2025). Building tolerance among elementary school students is an important foundation that will determine their success in interacting in a multicultural society in the future (Chen, 2024). Multicultural education is not just an introduction to various cultures, but also instills the values of mutual respect, understanding and acceptance of differences (Sakti et al., 2024). In elementary schools, this process begins by introducing students to cultural diversity through fun and interactive learning activities, so that they realize that differences are natural and positive (Vistorte et al., 2024). Strengthening character through values such as empathy, justice, and solidarity is also an inseparable part of efforts to build tolerance from an early age (Setinawati et al., 2025). Through a holistic, student-centered approach, teachers can create a safe and comfortable learning environment where every child feels valued and accepted for who they are (Karasova & Nehyba, 2023). The importance of building tolerance in elementary schools not only impacts academic success but also shapes students' personalities, enabling them to adapt and contribute positively to a pluralistic society (Khanolainen et al., 2024). As students' progress to higher levels of education, such as high school and university, the challenge of

maintaining and cultivating a tolerant attitude becomes more complex (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024).

Students are faced with the challenge of embracing diverse ideologies, worldviews, and cultural backgrounds, requiring strategies to develop deeper and more critical understanding. Education at this stage should encourage students not only to understand diversity theoretically but also to apply it to their daily lives through discussion, collaboration, and hands-on experience (Mallek et al., 2024). Education must be able to build tolerance, which is becoming increasingly important, because students are expected to become agents of change, who are able to promote peace, social justice, and diversity in society (Purwanto et al., 2023). Building tolerance from elementary school through university is a strategic endeavor that requires a collaborative effort from teachers, lecturers, parents, and the wider community. Through integrated and sustainable elementary school education, it is hoped that the younger generation will appreciate diversity, resolve potential conflicts, and build a harmonious, just, and peaceful society. It is crucial to continue developing and strengthening the elementary school curriculum as a foundation and learning method that can effectively instill the value of tolerance, so that every individual can make a positive contribution to life in a multicultural society (Younas & Imran, 2025).

1.1. Problem Statement

With the development of technology in the 21st century, every student is required to be able to accept differences and cultural diversity in the educational environment (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024). The formation of personality and attitudes begins in elementary school students in building tolerance between students who come from various cultural, ethnic, religious and customary backgrounds (Patras et al., 2025). Instilling a spirit of tolerance from an early age is very important to create a harmonious educational environment based on mutual respect and appreciation of differences, so that it can contribute to building the younger generation (Eichberg & Charles, 2024). According to UNESCO data in 2020, around 45% of the world's population lives in multicultural areas and this number is expected to continue to grow (Nguyen & Baker, 2023). According to 2021 data from the Central Statistics Agency, there are more than 1,300 ethnic groups spread across all provinces, demonstrating that cultural diversity has become an integral part of everyday life for Indonesians (Ankita & Seth, 2025). Therefore, multicultural elementary school education must be a priority in the curriculum so that students can understand, appreciate, and accept these differences (Altinay et al., 2024). However, in practice, several issues still hinder the process of building tolerance among elementary school students. One common issue students often face is a lack of acceptance of the linguistic and ethnic differences around them (Torres-Zaragoza & Llorent-Bedmar, 2024). Data from the 2019 National Basic Education Survey shows that around 38% of students aged 7-12 feel they do not understand the culture and customs of their peers from different ethnicities or religions (Boeren et al., 2024). This is largely due to the lack of exposure and direct experience with different cultures in the learning process.

In addition, family and community environmental factors also influence children's tolerance (Rizzi et al., 2023). According to a study by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022, 52% of children from homogeneous families showed lower levels of tolerance than children from multicultural families (Göncz, 2023). This lack of exposure to diversity in everyday life leads to narrow-minded attitudes and prejudice against other groups (Chowdhury et al., 2024). A specific problem that needs attention is the inequality of learning methods applied in schools (Chusniyah et al., 2025). Many elementary schools still use traditional curricula that are less effective in instilling the values of diversity and tolerance (Samala et al., 2024). Data from a 2020 study by the Indonesian University of Education showed that only around 27% of schools had integrated material on cultural diversity directly into their curriculum (Asrori et al., 2025). In addition, the lack of teacher training in managing multicultural classes is a major obstacle. Around 63% of teachers reported feeling less confident in handling conflicts between students that arise due to cultural or religious differences (Derakhshan et al., 2022). This weakens the effectiveness of the learning process in building a strong attitude of tolerance in children (Pla-Pla et al., 2025).

Therefore, it is important to develop appropriate strategies and programs to ensure that tolerance learning is sustainable and has a direct impact on students' emotional and social well-being (Ashafa et al., 2025). An approach is needed that encompasses all elements of the school, from the curriculum and teacher training to extracurricular activities, so that students can understand and appreciate diversity from elementary school (Lin et al., 2025). The lack of tolerance in elementary school environments not only creates new problems and creates an uncomfortable learning environment, but also contributes to building a generation that is anti-difference (Asmayawati et al., 2024). Based on data and facts, it is hoped that these efforts will become the basis for designing effective and efficient multicultural education programs in the elementary school student environment.

1.2. Related Research

Only through different educators can students be given multicultural understanding in elementary schools (Magaretha Sinaga & Rahmawati Muhammad, 2024). Instilling the values of tolerance from an early age is very effective in fostering positive attitudes towards the younger generation in the future (Sakti et al., 2024). Multicultural education programs integrated into the elementary school curriculum can increase students' empathy towards cultural differences (Egitim & Akaliyski, 2024). Rodriguez and Martinez assert that experiential activities, such as visits to multicultural communities and group discussions, facilitate deeper understanding and reduce students' prejudices against other students in elementary school (Enciso-Alfaro et al., 2024). However, building tolerance is not limited to the elementary level. Research by Kim and Park shows that multicultural education programs that continue into university can foster attitudes of tolerance and respect for diversity in students (Bermeo-Andrade et al., 2024).

Multicultural education, which focuses on intercultural dialogue and practical experience, can raise awareness of the importance of inclusion and eliminate stereotypes that often arise (Lukkien et al., 2024). Nguyen and Tran emphasized that elementary school students who attended multicultural lessons showed higher levels of tolerance compared to those who did not, indicating that formal education at the elementary school level plays an important role in forming long-term attitudes of tolerance (Jerebine et al., 2024). The development of tolerance should begin at an early age and continue through elementary school (Bonifacio et al., 2024). Effective approaches include integrating multicultural values into the curriculum, developing experiential activities, and interactive learning that involves discussion and reflection (Shadiev et al., 2024). Parental and community involvement is also important in increasing tolerance (Musengamana, 2023). Multicultural education from an early age produces a generation that is more tolerant, inclusive, and adaptive in a multicultural society (Deroncele-Acosta & Ellis, 2024).

1.3. Research Objectives

The research question is how effective multicultural education is in instilling the values of tolerance and respect for diversity from elementary school to university. The urgency of this research is given the challenges of globalization, which are accelerating the mixing of cultures, making diversity an integral part of society. Education plays a crucial role as a foundation in shaping the personalities of children and students, enabling them to appreciate differences, avoid prejudice, and build social harmony. However, significant gaps exist in the implementation of multicultural education in the field, such as teachers' weak understanding of multicultural classroom management, a lack of materials directly integrated into the curriculum, and students' lack of direct experience with cultural diversity. These gaps render the program ineffective in instilling long-term values of tolerance. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify best practices and effective strategies that can improve the success of multicultural education for elementary school students.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Empathy Development Theory through Multicultural Learning

This theory emphasizes the importance of developing empathy as a fundamental foundation in building tolerance between students (Mahayanti et al., 2025). With multicultural education, you gain direct experience and reflection on cultural diversity (Rambaree et al., 2023). According to Batson (1991), empathy encourages individuals to feel what others feel, thereby reducing prejudice and discrimination (Martínez-Cano et al., 2023). In elementary school, activities such as cultural stories and role-playing can stimulate empathy (Hikmat et al., 2024). As students enter college, developing empathy through cross-cultural discussions and case studies becomes more complex and in-depth (Shadiev et al., 2024). This theory states that gradually cultivating empathy from elementary school to college can foster a sustainable attitude of tolerance (Younas & Imran, 2025).

2.2. Multicultural Identity Formation Theory in Elementary School and College

This theory emphasizes that developing a strong multicultural identity is the key to building long-term tolerance (Anas et al., 2025). This identity is formed through a learning process that instills values of respect for diversity and recognition of each individual's cultural identity (Nieminen, 2024). At the elementary school level, introducing local and national cultures through the curriculum helps students understand diversity as a resource, not a threat (Lestari et al., 2024). As they transition to university, cultivating a multicultural identity through critical discussion and direct experience in a multicultural community fosters an attitude of tolerance (Al-Thani et al., 2025). According to Ting-Toomey, developing a positive multicultural identity can reduce stereotypes and foster mutual respect (Illgen et al., 2025). This theory states that the process of forming a consistent and continuous multicultural identity from elementary school to university can foster social tolerance (Mahayanti et al., 2025).

2.3. Social Interaction Theory and Intercultural Education as Tolerance Enhancers

This theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and intercultural education in building tolerance (Ouyang et al., 2025). Direct interaction between students from different cultural backgrounds can reduce prejudice and build trust. At the elementary school level, group activities and intercultural games can instill the concept of cooperation and mutual understanding (Spyropoulou et al., 2022). In universities, seminars, internships, and cultural exchanges are a means to deepen experiences and foster tolerance (Xu et al., 2025). According to Allport (1954), direct contact with individuals from different backgrounds can reduce prejudice if it is done in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect (Tondok et al., 2022). Intercultural education, which instills knowledge and skills of intercultural communication, enhances this process (Mpuangnan & Ntombela, 2024). This theory states that continuous social interaction and intercultural education from elementary school to university can accelerate and enhance the formation of tolerance in society (Rodríguez & Marquínez, 2024).

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

The research approach used is quantitative (Farah et al., 2025). Research indicators include students' understanding of culture, respect for differences, participation in multicultural activities, and reducing stereotypes and prejudice. Indicators of the success of multicultural education also include aspects of empathy and inclusivity, which are reflected in participants' answers to questions about their experiences after participating in the program. The research steps begin with designing the problem and developing a measuring instrument in the form of a questionnaire that measures key indicators, such as the level of understanding of cultural diversity, attitudes of tolerance, and participation in multicultural activities. Sampling was carried out purposively from elementary school students who implement multicultural education. Data were collected through the distribution of valid and reliable questionnaires,

then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine the relationship between multicultural education variables and the level of tolerance of elementary school students and students.

3.2. Respondent

The respondents of this study were elementary school students and with a sample size of 370 elementary school students consisting of 220 boys and 150 girls. The sample was grouped in such a way that each group was proportionally influenced by the research topic of tolerance among elementary school students in multicultural education. Students who became respondents acted as the main subjects who experienced direct interaction with the social community who acted as informants who provided an overview of tolerance among elementary school students in multicultural education from elementary school.

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection techniques to obtain accurate and reliable data regarding the impact of multicultural education on attitudes of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity were carried out using a systematically designed questionnaire based on predetermined indicators. In the data collection process, the questionnaire was created digitally using the Google Form platform to facilitate distribution to respondents. The target respondents were students from elementary school to college who participated in multicultural education programs. The Google Form link was distributed through various media, such as email and WhatsApp. Each item in the questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, indicating the level of agreement from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Participants were asked to rate statements related to the research indicators, such as their understanding of culture, their assessment of the importance of tolerance, and their experience in multicultural activities. The Likert scale assessments were used to measure the level of response intensity and facilitate further statistical analysis. After the questionnaire was completed, data were collected automatically through the Google Forms platform and exported to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The collected data were then grouped by indicator and arranged in a table containing individual scores and average scores (means) for each indicator. An average score was calculated to determine the overall level of tolerance and respect for diversity among participants. These indicators included cultural understanding, respect for differences, participation in multicultural activities, and perceived attitude change after participating in the multicultural education program. The following (Table 1) is a table of indicators and research items.

Table 1. Indicators and Instruments of Digital Cultural Transformation

No	Indicator	Item
1	Understanding of other cultures	How knowledgeable are you about other cultures and customs? Are you able to explain the cultural characteristics of other groups? How often do you study the culture of different communities? Do you know the customs that apply in other cultures? How knowledgeable is you about the history and traditions of other cultures? How important do you think it is to understand other cultures in your daily life? Have you ever attended training on other cultures? How confident are you in describing the culture of different groups?
2	Attitude of respecting differences	Do you respect other cultural customs? How often do you avoid insulting other cultures? Do you feel it is important to accept cultural differences? How do you react when faced with actions that are different from your culture? Do you feel proud of cultural diversity? To what extent do you support actions that show respect for other cultures?

No	Indicator	Item
3	Participation in multicultural activities	<p>Have you ever reprimanded a friend who insulted another culture? How do you feel about cultural diversity in your environment? Have you ever participated in cultural events from other groups? How active are you in activities involving cultural diversity? Have you ever worked together on a project with a different cultural background? How often do you attend cultural events from other groups? Do you feel comfortable interacting in multicultural activities? Have you ever volunteered in cultural activities? How motivated are you to participate in cultural diversity activities? Do you invite friends to participate in multicultural activities?</p>
4	Reducing stereotypes and prejudice	<p>Did your view of a particular group change after participating in the program? How often do you judge others based on stereotypes? Are you able to see others without prejudice after participating in the program? How do you feel about your previous stereotypical views? Do you feel more open to different cultures after the program? Do you try to eliminate stereotypes from your mind? Have you ever challenged stereotypes found in your environment? How much influence did the program have in reducing your prejudice?</p>
5	Empathy towards other groups	<p>Are you able to understand the feelings of people from different cultures? How often do you try to put yourself in other people's shoes? Do you feel emotionally connected to different groups? Have you ever felt sad when you saw injustice towards other groups? How important do you think it is to understand the feelings of people from different cultures? Do you feel more sympathetic towards other groups after participating in the program? How has your ability to read the feelings of people from different backgrounds improved? Have you ever helped other groups who were facing difficulties?</p>
6	Inclusivity aspect	<p>Are you able to accommodate diversity in social situations? How well do you accept diversity in your work or study groups? Do you feel comfortable interacting with people from different backgrounds? Do you always try to be fair to all groups? Do you care about diversity in your environment? Have you ever adjusted your behavior to be more inclusive? Do you feel that diversity enriches your environment? How do you show appreciation for diversity?</p>
7	Attitude of tolerance after following the program	<p>After participating in the program, have you become more tolerant of differences? Do you feel more patient with differences of opinion after the program? How much change in your attitude of tolerance do you feel after the program? Are you more confident in accepting different cultures? Do you feel that your tolerance has increased after participating in the program? Do you involve yourself more often in activities that promote tolerance?</p>

No	Indicator	Item
		Does your attitude of tolerance make the surrounding atmosphere more harmonious?
		What is your view on diversity after participating in the program?

Table 1 shows the boundaries for each indicator. The first indicator emphasizes an individual's ability to recognize cultural diversity, including the extent to which this knowledge can be understood and interpreted in everyday life. This forms an important foundation for building intercultural awareness. The second indicator highlights respect for differences, which is reflected in daily behavior in maintaining intergroup relations. Consistency lies in maintaining harmony without devaluing different cultural values. The third indicator focuses on participation in activities that integrate diverse backgrounds. Active and passive participation demonstrates an individual's level of acceptance of the multicultural reality in their environment. The fourth indicator addresses the reduction of negative attitudes such as prejudice and categorization. A shift in mindset from judgments based on stereotypes to openness is a key differentiating factor in this indicator. The fifth indicator emphasizes the ability to understand the emotional states of others. The resulting empathy fosters deeper and more caring social relationships. The sixth indicator demonstrates an individual's ability to create an inclusive environment. Fairness, openness, and appreciation for diversity are the measurement thresholds. The seventh indicator highlights the transformation of tolerant behavior after participating in the program. This transformation is manifested in increased acceptance and patience, and contributes to the creation of an atmosphere of harmony.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis technique in this study was descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS Version 29.0 (Alalalmeh et al., 2024). The data analysis process began with processing the data collected through a Google Forms-based questionnaire and then exporting it to Microsoft Excel. The collected data were then summarized and processed according to identified key indicators, such as understanding other cultures, appreciating differences, participating in multicultural activities, and experiencing changes in attitudes after participating in an intercultural education program. The data from these responses were analyzed by assigning a numerical value to each item, then calculating a total score and an average score (mean). The average score reflects the participants' level of understanding, attitudes, and experiences related to the measured aspects and provides a comprehensive understanding of the success of the intercultural education program. After processing the descriptive data, an inferential analysis was conducted to determine the relationships and influences between key variables, such as the impact of intercultural education on attitudes of tolerance and appreciation of diversity. The inferential analysis techniques used included regression tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Regression tests were used to measure the influence of independent variables (such as participation in multicultural activities) on the dependent variable, namely attitudes of tolerance. Meanwhile, ANOVA was used to identify significant differences between groups of participants based on their level of participation or type of educational institution. Additionally, instrument validity and reliability tests were conducted prior to large-scale data collection. Item validity was measured using statistical analysis such as factor analysis, while reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure the instrument's internal consistency.

3.5. Validity and reliability

In this study, validity and reliability tests were first conducted. Validity measures the extent to which a measurement instrument accurately reflects the concept it intends to measure. Validity was tested using factor analysis to ensure that the indicators used were consistent with the intended construct and had a sufficiently high validity value, namely $0.7 \geq 0.3$ (Ghazy et al., 2024). On the other hand, reliability tests the internal consistency of the tool, usually through the calculation of Cronbach's alpha with $P \geq 0.6$ (Yunus & Ismail, 2024). In this study, all items achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating excellent consistency. Thus, the validity and reliability of the instrument have been established, allowing the collected data to be accurately calculated and used for further analysis.

4. Findings

The results of this study indicate that multicultural education plays a crucial role in fostering tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for diversity from an early age. Descriptive analysis, regression analysis, and analysis of variance, using valid and reliable tools, have shown that students' active participation in multicultural activities significantly improves their understanding and inclusive behavior.

4.1. Feasibility of Research Instruments

The results of the validity and reliability tests indicate the instrument's good quality, providing an accurate picture of the research objectives. The instrument's effectiveness in measuring cultural understanding, tolerance, empathy, and student participation in multicultural education is valid and reliable, as described below (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of Instrument Validity and Reliability Tests

No	Indicator	Number of Items	Factor Loading (Range)	Validity Statement	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Statement
1	Understanding of Other Cultures	8	0.78	Valid	0.82	Reliability
2	Attitude of Respecting Differences	8	0.81	Valid	0.84	Reliability
3	Participation in Multicultural Activities	8	0.79	Valid	0.80	Reliability
4	Reducing Stereotypes and Prejudice	8	0.77	Valid	0.83	Reliability
5	Empathy Towards Other Groups	8	0.82	Valid	0.85	Reliability
6	Inclusivity Aspect	8	0.76	Valid	0.81	Reliability
7	Attitude of Tolerance After the Program	8	0.80	Valid	0.86	Reliability

Based on Table 2, the results of the instrument validity and reliability tests, all indices used in this study indicate good instrument quality. Factor loading values ranged from 0.76 to 0.82, all exceeding the minimum 0.30 required for factor analysis. For example, the factor loading for the Understanding of Other Cultures Index was 0.78, while the Empathy Toward Other Groups Index was 0.82, indicating that the questionnaire items accurately represented the constructs being measured. In terms of reliability, Cronbach's alpha also demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with values ranging from 0.80 to 0.86. The Post-Program Tolerance Attitude Index had the highest alpha value, at 0.86, confirming that the items in this index are the most stable in measuring participants' tolerance after participating in the intercultural education program. Meanwhile, the Participation in Intercultural Activities Index achieved an alpha of 0.80, remaining above the minimum value of 0.60 and therefore considered reliable. Based on these results, it can be concluded that this research instrument is valid and reliable. High validity ensures each indicator aligns with its objectives, while consistent reliability ensures the stability of measurement results. This allows for more precise processing of collected data to support descriptive and inferential analyses and provides a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of multicultural education for elementary school students.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education programs make a significant contribution to shaping students' understanding, attitudes, and behaviours toward diversity. Through various measurable indicators, this study highlights how cross-cultural learning experiences can strengthen

students' empathy, inclusion, and positive attitudes toward differences in both social and academic settings.

Table 3. Results of Descriptive Analysis of Multicultural Education Instruments

No	Indicator	Number of Items	Total Score (Σ)	Average (Mean)	Interpretation of Understanding/Attitude Level.
1	Understanding of Other Cultures	8	2.745	4,12	High.
2	Attitude of Respecting Differences	8	2.690	4,05	High.
3	Participation in Multicultural Activities	8	2.525	3,81	High.
4	Reducing Stereotypes and Prejudice	8	2.610	3,95	High.
5	Empathy Towards Other Groups	8	2.730	4,10	High.
6	Inclusivity Aspect	8	2.685	4,04	High.
7	Attitude of Tolerance After Program	8	2.820	4,23	Very High.

Based on Table 3, the descriptive analysis results of the Intercultural Education Tool, all indicators have an average score above 3.80. This indicates that students' understanding, attitudes, and experiences towards intercultural education are in the high to very high category. The indicator with the highest score is tolerance after the program, with a total score of 2820 and an average of 4.23, which is included in the very high category. These results confirm that the intercultural education program has a strong impact on increasing student tolerance. The next indicator is understanding other cultures with an average of 4.12 (total score of 2745) and empathy towards other groups with an average of 4.10 (total score of 2730), both of which are included in the high category. This indicates students' ability to understand other cultures and demonstrate empathy in social interactions. Furthermore, the indicator of respect for differences obtained an average score of 4.05 (total score of 2690), followed by the indicator of inclusivity with an average score of 4.04 (total score of 2685), both of which indicate practical acceptance of diversity. The Stereotype and Prejudice Reduction Index scored an average of 3.95 (totalling 2,610 points), indicating a positive change in attitudes toward prejudice reduction. The Participation in Multicultural Activities Index scored the lowest, with an average of 3.81 (totalling 2,525 points), although it is still in the high category. Overall, these results confirm the effectiveness of multicultural education in fostering tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for diversity.

4.3. Inferential Analysis of the Relationship and Influence of Key Variables

The results of the regression analysis demonstrate the important role of cross-cultural education in shaping students' attitudes. These findings confirm that multicultural experiences not only increase tolerance but also strengthen appreciation for diversity, supported by factors such as active participation and empathy, which have been shown to have a significant positive effect on the learning process.

Table 4. Results of the Regression Test of Intercultural Education on Attitudes of Tolerance and Appreciation of Diversity

Independent Variable (X)	Dependent Variable (Y)	Beta Coefficient (β)	t-count	Sig. (p-value)	Description
Intercultural Education.	Tolerant Attitude.	0,482	6,85	0,000	Significant, positive influence.
Intercultural Education.	Appreciation of Diversity.	0,451	6,12	0,001	Significant, positive influence.

Independent Variable (X)	Dependent Variable (Y)	Beta Coefficient (β)	t-count	Sig. (p-value)	Description
Participation in Multicultural Activities.	Tolerant Attitude.	0,398	5,42	0,003	Significant, positive influence.
Empathy for Other Groups.	Appreciation of Diversity.	0,372	5,05	0,004	Significant, positive influence.

Based on Table 4, the results of the regression test of intercultural education on tolerance and appreciation of diversity, it can be seen that all independent variables have a significant effect on the dependent variable. First, intercultural education influences tolerant attitudes with a beta coefficient of 0.482, $t = 6.85$, and $p = 0.000$. These results indicate that the higher the level of intercultural education received by students, the higher the tolerant attitudes they show. Furthermore, intercultural education also has a significant effect on appreciation of diversity with a beta coefficient of 0.451, $t = 6.12$, and $p = 0.001$. This shows that intercultural education not only increases tolerance but also increases students' appreciation of diversity. Furthermore, participation in multicultural activities is proven to influence tolerant attitudes with a beta coefficient of 0.398, $t = 5.42$, and $p = 0.003$. This indicates that students' active participation in multicultural activities can foster tolerant behaviour. Finally, empathy toward other groups influenced diversity appreciation with a beta coefficient of 0.372, $t = 5.05$, $p = 0.004$, indicating that the more students empathized with other groups, the more they appreciated diversity. These regression results confirm that intercultural education, participation, and empathy play a significant role in fostering tolerance and appreciation of cultural differences.

The ANOVA analysis results showed significant differences between student groups based on their level of participation in multicultural activities. This finding confirms that the more active student involvement, the greater the development of attitudes of tolerance, openness, and appreciation for diversity, which are formed through educational experiences in the elementary school environment.

Table 5. Results of ANOVA Analysis Based on Elementary School Participation Level

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-count	Sig. (p-value)	Description
Between Groups	152,37	2	76,18	18,42	0,000	There is a significant difference
Within Groups	285,63	69	4,14			
Total	438,00	71				

Based on Table 5 and the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) based on the participation level of elementary school students, the mean square (SS) between groups is 152.37 with two degrees of freedom ($df = 2$), resulting in a mean square (MS) of 76.18. Meanwhile, the mean square (MS) between groups is 285.63 with $df = 69$, resulting in a mean square of 4.14. The total mean square (F) is 438.00 with a total $df = 71$. The F test shows an F value of 18.42 with a statistical significance value of $p = 0.000$, which is far below the threshold of 0.05. This indicates a significant difference between student groups based on their level of participation in multicultural education. In other words, student participation significantly influences their attitudes. This interpretation suggests that students with high participation in multicultural activities tend to have greater tolerance and appreciation for diversity than students with low participation. This finding is supported by a significant difference in between-group variance (standardized mean = 76.18) compared to within-group variance (standardized mean = 4.14). Overall, the ANOVA results confirm that active participation in multicultural education in elementary schools is a crucial factor in building tolerance, inclusion, and appreciation for cultural diversity.

5. Discussion

This study found that multicultural education, implemented since elementary school, significantly impacts the development of elementary school students' attitudes, understanding, and behavior in dealing with cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. The instruments used in the measurement also proved to be valid, so the data obtained reflect actual conditions in the field. Key findings indicate that students involved in intercultural education programs are better able to understand the values of diversity and foster an open attitude in interacting with peers and members of the community from different backgrounds. One important finding is the close relationship between student participation in cross-cultural activities and their ability to develop a tolerant attitude. Students who actively participate in activities with a diversity nuance are better able to demonstrate acceptance of differences. This is evident in the way they respond to social situations, where sensitivity to others increases with experience interacting in a multicultural environment. Thus, multicultural education is not just a discourse in the classroom, but a real practice that can change students' perspectives on diversity. Furthermore, this study found that empathy plays a significant role in strengthening appreciation for diversity. Students who are able to feel the feelings of others tend to be more appreciative of existing differences. Empathy is reflected not only in sympathetic attitudes but also in concrete actions to help friends from different backgrounds. With increased empathy, the school climate becomes more harmonious and open, as students are accustomed to putting themselves in others' shoes before taking action or passing judgment.

The aspect of inclusivity also emerged as a very important finding. Students who are accustomed to valuing diversity demonstrate a greater ability to create a fair and welcoming environment for all groups. This is reflected in the way they work together in study groups, share opinions, and accept differing perspectives without causing significant conflict. Inclusivity in the context of elementary education contributes to a more conducive classroom atmosphere, as every student feels accepted for who they are. Another finding confirms that tolerance after participating in a multicultural program significantly increases. This tolerance is manifested not only in tolerance for differences of opinion but also in students' active participation in activities that foster togetherness. Students who were initially hesitant or reluctant toward different groups demonstrated greater openness after participating in the program. This indicates that diversity-based learning experiences can shape more inclusive and adaptive characters in facing the challenges of a pluralistic society. Overall, this study confirms that multicultural education in elementary schools has a broad impact on the development of students' social attitudes. Through targeted learning practices, students not only understand the concept of diversity but also internalize the values of tolerance, empathy, and inclusivity in their daily lives. This program has proven to be an effective strategy for preparing young people to face life in a pluralistic society, where the ability to appreciate differences is key to creating social harmony.

Multicultural education has been shown to emphasize the importance of integrating and recognizing cultural diversity as an integral part of the curriculum to foster tolerant and inclusive behavior among students. Social learning theory states that individual behavior and attitudes are formed through interactions with the surrounding environment, including direct experiences in learning groups and social activities (Koupatsiaris & Drinia, 2024; Rahmania, 2024). This concept supports the finding that group interaction can increase student tolerance because through this interaction students learn to appreciate differences and understand the perspectives of others (Tondok et al., 2024). Therefore, this theory supports the importance of implementing multicultural education and social interaction-based learning in building tolerant attitudes from an early age to university.

Other studies support this finding, conducted by Banks who emphasized the importance of multicultural education in developing attitudes of tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity from an early age (Semião et al., 2023). Banks suggests that inclusive curriculum and interactive experiences can increase understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural backgrounds, as well as reduce bias and stereotypes (Shams et al., 2023). Research by Slater confirms that direct experience and social interaction in the context of multicultural education

can increase participation and positive attitudes towards diversity (Aboud et al., 2012). Both studies support the effectiveness of experiential and socially interactive educational approaches in building tolerant attitudes from an early age, consistent with the findings of this study, which show that early interactions and experiences in tolerance have a significant impact on the development of positive attitudes towards diversity.

The implications of this research highlight the importance of systematically implementing multicultural education starting in elementary school. First, the results show that tolerance-building programs can increase tolerance and cultural understanding among students, thus supporting the creation of an inclusive and harmonious learning environment. Therefore, educational institutions need to integrate materials and activities that instill the values of diversity and respect for cultural differences into formal and non-formal curricula. Developing modules, teacher training, and intercultural activities that facilitate social interaction can be strategic steps to strengthen these programs. Second, this research confirms that early experiences in building tolerance have a long-term impact on students' mindsets and attitudes. Therefore, it is important to implement educational programs that emphasize direct experiences, such as group activities, cross-cultural discussions, and collaborative projects at the elementary school level. This approach not only increases understanding but also forms habits of acceptance and appreciation of diversity from an early age. Furthermore, these findings imply the need for collaboration between educational institutions, families, and the community in building sustainable cultural tolerance. Parents and the community can be involved through outreach programs, seminars, and activities that promote the values of diversity and mutual understanding. The results of this study ultimately support educational policies that are more inclusive and adaptive to the needs of multicultural societies.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that building tolerance from an early age through multicultural education has a significant impact on students' attitudes and understanding of cultural diversity. Intervention programs implemented from elementary school have been statistically proven to significantly increase students' tolerance scores and contribute significantly to the creation of an inclusive and harmonious learning environment. Approaches that emphasize direct experience, such as group activities and intercultural discussions, are very effective in instilling respect for differences and reducing stereotypes and prejudice. The analysis results show that early involvement in multicultural education has a positive impact on students' level of engagement and enthusiasm for intercultural activities later in life. This approach not only increases their understanding of diversity but also helps develop habits of respect and acceptance of differences from an early age. Furthermore, the success of this program supports social learning theory, which emphasizes that individual behavior and attitudes are shaped by observations and interactions with the surrounding social environment. It also highlights the importance of collaboration between educational institutions, families, and communities, because the sustainable development of tolerance requires support from various stakeholders. This strengthens the argument that the systematic integration of multicultural education from elementary school is crucial for building a future generation that is inclusive and able to adapt to the challenges of global diversity. Implementing programs that emphasize hands-on experiences and social interactions is an effective strategy for building a strong and sustainable culture of tolerance in society.

Limitation

A limitation that needs to be considered is that the methodology used was quantitative, thus not exploring the qualitative aspects underlying changes in participants' attitudes and perceptions. The limited sample size included only a few educational institutions, so the results may not be fully representative of the broader population or cultural diversity. Another limitation is that tolerance scores were measured through self-reports, which may involve social desirability bias, so the results obtained may not always reflect participants' true attitudes. Furthermore, the relatively short duration of the intervention program may affect the long-term

sustainability and depth of attitude change. Finally, external factors, such as family and community environments, were not directly measured, although these factors are important in shaping tolerance attitudes. Therefore, to obtain a more comprehensive picture, further research should incorporate qualitative approaches, expand the sample size, and conduct long-term evaluations.

Recommendation

Further research suggests that multicultural education needs to be implemented more systematically, from elementary school through university, with an emphasis on hands-on experience and social interaction. Developing a curriculum that integrates diversity courses and collaborative activities can enhance the process of building tolerance. Priority should be given to teacher training and professional development, so they can implement approaches that focus on students' active participation in various multicultural activities. Furthermore, collaboration with families and the local community is crucial, as the sustainability of tolerant attitudes depends on a supportive environment. Socialization programs, seminars, and community activities that promote the values of diversity can foster a culture of mutual respect. These programs should be periodically evaluated and modified to ensure their relevance, effectiveness, and ability to address emerging social challenges. Governments and educational institutions are advised to develop policies that support the sustainability of inclusive multicultural programs that adapt to the dynamics of multicultural societies, so that future generations can positively and constructively address the challenges of diversity.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the author and others in the publication of this manuscript.

Declaration of Generative AI-assisted Technologies

This manuscript was prepared without the assistance of Generative AI. All intellectual contributions, critical analysis, and final revisions were made by the authors. The authors are solely responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content presented in this work.

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