

**INTEGRATION OF MULTICULTURAL VALUES IN SOCIAL
STUDIES LEARNING AS STRENGTHENING STUDENT
TOLERANCE AT SMP SULTAN ISKANDAR MUDA, MEDAN****Abet Nego Terkelin Bangun^{1*}, Ratih Baiduri², Supsiloi³**^{1,2,3} Pascasarjana Antropologi Sosial, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia***Email:** anego1992@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to analyze the integration of multicultural values in Social Studies learning as an effort to strengthen students' tolerance at Sultan Iskandar Muda Private Junior High School, Medan. The background of this research is based on the importance of multicultural education in responding to Indonesia's ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. The method used is descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques in the form of observation, documentation, and interviews with social studies teachers. The results showed that the integration of multicultural values in social studies learning is done through the formation of heterogeneous learning groups, the preparation of lesson plans based on tolerance values, and the use of learning materials that reflect diversity. This strategy is proven to be able to build an attitude of tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation among students from various backgrounds. This research confirms that social studies learning plays an important role in shaping the character of students who are inclusive and adaptive to diversity, and supports the creation of a harmonious school environment.

Keywords: Education, Learning, Multicultural, Social Studies, Tolerance.**INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural diversity, ethnicity, religion and customs. This diversity characterizes the nation as reflected in the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika", which means different but still one. However, this diversity can also be a source of conflict if not managed properly. Therefore, multicultural education is important to instill the values of tolerance and respect for differences from an early age (Christoper et al., 2024). Multicultural education aims to form individuals who are able to live harmoniously in a diverse society. Multicultural education is an approach that recognizes and appreciates cultural diversity and encourages respectful interactions between different groups (Azhari et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, multicultural education can be integrated into various subjects, including Social Studies (IPS), to instill tolerance values to students. Implementation of multicultural education in social studies learning can be done through various strategies, such as incorporating multicultural perspectives in the curriculum, using teaching materials that reflect cultural diversity, and creating learning methods that encourage interaction and collaboration between students from different backgrounds. With the right approach,

Proceeding 2nd Medan International Economics and Business

Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

“Human Resource Transformation and Collaborative Innovation to Build Independent and Competitive Business in the Digital Era”

students not only understand the differences that exist, but are also able to develop the social skills needed to live in a heterogeneous society.

One example of the application of multicultural education in social studies learning is at SMP Swasta Muhammadiyah 41 Batangtoru. This school integrates multicultural values in integrated social studies learning by using a thematic approach that emphasizes local history and national events that reflect diversity. The results showed that the integration of multicultural education in integrated social studies learning contributed to increasing tolerance among students. However, the implementation of multicultural education still faces various challenges, such as the lack of teachers' understanding of the concept of multicultural education, limited curriculum that accommodates diversity, and the existence of social prejudice in the school environment. Therefore, support is needed from various parties, including the government, educators and the community, to strengthen the implementation of multicultural education in building a more tolerant and inclusive society (Lubis & Nasution, 2024). Multicultural education can also be integrated into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. The integration of tolerance values in Islamic Religious Education learning is very important to shape the character of students who are able to appreciate differences, both in the context of belief and culture. With the right approach, this education not only instills a good understanding of religion, but also trains students to develop empathy, think critically, and adapt in a pluralistic society (Mahendra, 2023). At Yayasan Perguruan Sultan Iskandar Muda, Medan, the integration of multicultural values in social studies learning has been implemented as an effort to strengthen students' tolerance. The school accepts students from various religious backgrounds, such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. This fact shows that the school is able to penetrate the boundaries of differences in diversity identity, especially religion, in the community. Based on this background, this research aims to analyze the form of multicultural value integration in social studies learning as a strengthening of students' tolerance values at the Sultan Iskandar Muda College Foundation School, Medan. This research is expected to contribute to the upliftment of Indonesian values as the hallmark of a multicultural country, which is characterized by mutual respect, tolerance, fairness, and equality.

METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to deeply understand social phenomena through the collection of non-numerical data. The researcher conducted a field study at Sultan Iskandar Muda Private Junior High School, focusing on the integration of multicultural values in Social Studies (IPS) learning. This approach allows researchers to delve into the meanings behind social interactions and the learning processes that occur within the school environment. According to Moleong (2019), the descriptive qualitative approach produces data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observed behaviors. This approach is suitable for describing and analyzing phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals or groups. The participants in this study are social studies teachers at Sultan Iskandar Muda Private

Proceeding 2nd Medan International Economics and Business

Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

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Junior High School. The teacher was chosen because of their strategic role in integrating multicultural values into social studies education. As a key informant, this teacher provides deep insights into teaching practices that reflect cultural and social diversity in the school environment.

To obtain comprehensive data, the researcher used three main data collection techniques: documentation, interviews, and observation. The researcher collected various relevant documents, such as Lesson Implementation Plans (RPP), syllabi, and teaching materials used by social studies teachers. In addition, the researcher also reviews journals, books, and articles related to multicultural education. This documentation provides contextual information on how multicultural values are integrated into the curriculum and learning materials. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with social studies teachers to explore their understanding, attitudes, and experiences in teaching multicultural values. This interview allows researchers to explore teachers' views in depth and obtain rich data regarding their teaching practices. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility in exploring topics relevant to the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher conducted direct observations in the classroom to observe the interactions between teachers and students during the IPS learning process. This observation focuses on how multicultural values are applied in teaching practices and how students respond to them. According to Sugiyono (2017), observation allows researchers to obtain accurate data regarding behavior and social interactions in a natural context. By combining these three data collection techniques, researchers can gain a holistic understanding of the integration of multicultural values in social studies learning at Sultan Iskandar Muda Private Junior High School. The data obtained from documentation, interviews, and observations complement each other and strengthen the validity of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education and the Challenges of Cultural Diversity

Education plays an important role in shaping the character and social skills of individuals who are able to live side by side in a diverse society. According to Idris in Ibrahim (2013), education should ideally serve as a bridge between individuals and their socio-cultural environment. However, reality shows that cultural differences often pose a major challenge that hinders education in instilling values of tolerance. In response to these challenges, multicultural education has emerged as a solution. Ibrahim states that multicultural-based education is necessary for students to develop open-mindedness, tolerance, and adaptability in a pluralistic society. This type of education integrates values such as democracy, justice, togetherness, and respect for differences (Ekwandari et al., 2020). Emphasizes that multicultural education is a systematic effort to recognize and appreciate ethnic and cultural diversity and provide space for every individual to access education equally. It is not only an idea but also a movement and educational reform that prioritizes tolerance in the learning process (Lubis et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, social studies is one of the most effective subjects for shaping students' understanding of diversity. States that social studies examines human interactions within a socio-cultural

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

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framework and is highly relevant for developing values such as democracy, pluralism, humanism, and equality. Huda & Anggraini (2021) explain that democracy teaches equality, pluralism instills mutual respect, while humanism emphasizes respect for human dignity. At Sultan Iskandar Muda Private Junior High School in Medan—a multi-ethnic and multi-religious school—these values are integrated into social studies learning. According to Mr. Darto P. Manihuruk, M.Pd., a social studies teacher at the school, the application of multicultural values is carried out through teaching and learning activities and the formation of learning groups that are deliberately composed of diverse members: different religions, ethnicities, and genders. This strategy aims to accustom students to collaborate amidst differences.

This indicates that multicultural values are not merely taught theoretically but are directly practiced in the learning process. Through interactions within diverse groups, students learn to appreciate differences and develop tolerance, while also internalizing democratic values, pluralism, humanism, and equality in their daily school life. The integration of multicultural values in social studies at SMP Swasta Sultan Iskandar Muda Medan is a strategic step in shaping students' tolerant and diverse characters. As a school based on the principles of multiculturalism, this effort is reflected in various aspects of learning, especially in social studies (Arifin et al., 2025). Social studies teachers at this school, such as Mr. Darto P. Manihuruk, M.Pd., actively integrate multicultural values into the learning process. This is done by including values such as tolerance, democracy, pluralism, and humanism in the Lesson Plan (RPP). For example, in the topic of interaction between regions in geography, students are encouraged to understand how the Karo ethnic group in the highlands and the Malay ethnic group on the coast can interact and depend on each other without regard to ethnic or religious differences. Another example is in the material on the diversity of flora and fauna, where students are encouraged to reflect that nature provides benefits without discrimination, so humans should also act in the same way (Wibowo, 2024). Teachers play a role as facilitators in instilling multicultural values. In the learning process, teachers form learning groups consisting of students with diverse backgrounds, including gender, religion, and ethnicity. This aims to foster mutual respect and cooperation among students. Additionally, teachers provide real-life examples and discussions about the importance of respecting differences, as well as the negative impacts of conflicts caused by intolerance (Supsiloani et al., 2024). The integration of multicultural values in social studies learning has a positive impact on students' attitudes and behavior. Students become more open, tolerant, and able to work together with friends from different backgrounds. This is in line with the findings of research showing that the integration of multicultural values in social studies learning can have a positive impact on students' attitudes toward appreciating cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. Efforts to integrate multicultural values in social studies at Sultan Iskandar Muda Private Junior High School in Medan are an important step in shaping students' tolerant and diverse characters. Through an inclusive and contextual learning approach, students are encouraged to understand and apply multicultural values in their daily lives. This is expected to create a harmonious school

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Volume 2, Issue 1, 2024

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environment and prepare students for life in a diverse society (Nasution & Situmorang, 2024).

Challenges and Strengthening Strategies

Although the integration of multicultural values in social studies education at Sultan Iskandar Muda Private Junior High School in Medan has shown positive results, its implementation still faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is the existence of cultural bias and prejudice carried over from the family or community environment where students come from. Some students still exhibit exclusive attitudes toward their peers from different ethnic or religious backgrounds. These prejudices can hinder the creation of an inclusive and harmonious learning environment, especially if not addressed appropriately from the outset. Another challenge faced is the limited resources available to teachers in understanding and applying the principles of multicultural education in depth. Not all teachers have adequate training in multicultural pedagogical approaches. Some teachers still focus on delivering academic material without explicitly linking it to the context of diversity in the classroom (Rambe et al., 2025). This results in the potential of multicultural education in social studies not being optimally utilized to shape students' character (Wibowo, 2024). As a strengthening strategy, multicultural education training and workshops for teachers need to be conducted on an ongoing basis. This training should not only focus on theoretical aspects, but also provide practical skills in managing culturally and socially heterogeneous classrooms (Rambe et al., 2025). Teachers also need to be facilitated in developing contextual and inclusive teaching modules or tools. Support from school principals and synergy between teachers across subjects are essential to create a school culture that values diversity (Simarmata et al., 2024). Additionally, a collaborative approach between schools and parents should be strengthened through educational parenting activities that emphasize the importance of tolerance and empathy values from within the family. A supportive family environment will reinforce the internalization of multicultural values that students learn at school. Schools can also establish communication forums that allow students, teachers, and parents to share experiences and resolve issues related to diversity. Thus, these strengthening strategies are not only internal but also build an educational ecosystem that supports the creation of a tolerant and competitive younger generation in a global society (Arifin et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that diversity remains a significant challenge in the Indonesian education system. Although tolerance is important, it has not been fully understood or internalized by students in school environments, reflecting a limited understanding of diversity, particularly among students. In this context, education that integrates multicultural values is a strategic approach to fostering tolerant and inclusive attitudes from an early age. A study at Sultan Iskandar Muda Private Junior High School shows that the integration of multicultural values in social studies learning has been carried out systematically. As a multi-ethnic and multi-religious institution, this school has

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succeeded in making the learning process a medium for instilling understanding and appreciation of differences. The role of teachers as agents of change has proven to be significant, not only in delivering academic material but also in shaping students' character through the instillation of values such as mutual respect, tolerance, and cooperation in diversity. Multicultural-based social studies learning at this school demonstrates that inclusive education can be effectively implemented through participatory strategies, transformative teacher roles, and community support. Despite challenges such as limited resources and cultural resistance, a consistent and collaborative approach has created an open and empathetic learning environment. The impact is reflected in students' more inclusive, critical, and socially just attitudes. Thus, multicultural-based IPS learning not only enriches students' knowledge but also shapes their character to live harmoniously in a diverse society.

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