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Knitting Solidarity Through Multicultural Education Inter-student in Medan City

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A B STR A CT

Multicultural education plays a crucial role in addressing social and cultural diversity. Instilling tolerance, respect for differences, and building a sense of solidarity among students strengthens a nation. This study examines the role of multicultural education in strengthening solidarity among students in Medan. The study involved 60 informants, including students and teachers who had previously participated in multicultural education. A descriptive qualitative approach was used. The author applied the Miles and Huberman model, with data being managed interactively through adjustments, presentations, and conclusions drawn from observation, interview, and documentation data. The findings of this study suggest that multicultural education promotes positive social interactions. Researchers observed an increase in students' awareness of diversity and the development of a learning environment. This study confirms that multicultural education plays a significant role in strengthening solidarity and interaction among students

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INTRODUCTION

Diversity in various areas, such as language, ethnicity, culture, and belief in God, has the potential to cause conflict. However, it can also be an opportunity to strengthen relationships between individuals. Diversity, especially in the education sector, certainly requires a holistic approach. Students need to understand their differences to avoid conflict.

Diversity in society, particularly in education, requires a mindset that values differences. Schools should protect students from the following behaviors: bullying, discrimination, intolerance, and other negative prejudices. Multicultural education is crucial in schools to strengthen tolerance among individuals and appreciate diverse cultures. This is where education plays a crucial role in offering new understandings of the cultural diversity of diverse communities. Cross-cultural understanding and building social relationships amidst an increasingly diverse society and the emergence of various social dynamics are essential (Portera & Milani, 2021). Through multicultural education, students can develop good character, enabling them to adapt to complex situations.

Indonesia boasts a rich cultural diversity, and therefore, it is essential to disseminate the values of solidarity. The values embodied in Pancasila must be passed on to students. According to the author, Medan is one of Indonesia's major cities with a highly diverse population and a high level of multiculturalism. Among these aspects of diversity are diverse cultures, religions, and social stratification. For example, Medan is home to adherents of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Catholicism, as well as ethnic groups such as Parmalim. Ethnic groups include Javanese, Batak, Nias, Bugis, Banjar, Gayo, and others. If multicultural education is not effectively disseminated to the community, especially students, it will lead to divisions within the community and a diminished sense of solidarity. Rasmitadila et al. (2020) argue that the implementation of open education can increase students' social engagement and foster a learning environment that values differences. Strengthening student solidarity and roles through multicultural education is highly relevant in society, particularly in a diverse educational environment such as Medan.

Previous research, consistent with the author's observations in schools, indicates that multicultural education is strongly linked to the development of students' tolerance and social attitudes. However, most of the research conducted focuses on the application of multicultural education concepts in the curriculum and from teachers' perspectives. On the other hand, studies examining how students build relationships through social interactions are still relatively few. Research by Hikmawati et al. (2021) suggests that multicultural education can increase student tolerance. However, their study did not fully explore the application of multicultural principles in social interactions. Furthermore, the researcher also reviewed Arphattananon's (2022) work, which states that integrating diversity values into school culture is a major challenge in multicultural education.

Multicultural education needs to be researched to increase solidarity among students in Medan through education. Multicultural education certainly serves as a tool for students to acquire social skills and improve their quality of life in a diverse society. This is supported by the statement by Tarozzi and Torres (2020), who alluded to the close relationship between global citizenship education and multicultural education. Both emphasize the principles of dialogue, social justice, and respect for various forms of difference. Furthermore, Schachner (2020) stated that the implementation of good education that is sensitive to diversity is crucial for building positive relationships, particularly between groups, and can reduce social disparities among students from various backgrounds. Based on this thinking, multicultural education can build a fair learning environment, respect diversity, and encourage meaningful involvement from all students (Gorski & Swalwell, 2021).

Based on the background description and the gaps identified by the author, the purpose of this study is to analyze the role of multicultural education in strengthening solidarity among students in Medan City. The study also explores the application of multicultural values in schools. These values contribute to attitudes of tolerance, appreciation of diversity, and other social interactions within the school environment in Medan City. To understand the application of multicultural education, this study uses a qualitative approach. According to the researcher in Rohmat's (2023) writing, the application of multicultural education can increase students' awareness of diversity and can encourage harmonious relationships in schools. This study is expected to provide empirical understanding of appropriate multicultural education strategies to strengthen student solidarity in Medan City.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of multicultural education studies. Practically, the research provides insight and understanding for schools, teachers, and all stakeholders in making educational decisions. This allows for the formulation of learning strategies that strengthen the values of tolerance in a pluralistic society. This research is useful for schools in designing educational improvements within a multicultural student culture. Portera and Milani (2021).

Cross-cultural education plays a crucial role in building harmonious social relationships in a constantly evolving and increasingly complex society. Similarly, Mushi (2024) argues that implementing multicultural values in education can strengthen social relationships, foster solidarity, and reduce identity-based conflict.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Diversity in Multicultural Education

Multicultural education emphasizes the recognition and application of multicultural values. In the teaching and learning process, multicultural education aims to increase students' understanding of differences, thereby fostering respect and cooperation among students from diverse backgrounds. According to researchers, Banks (2021), multicultural education encompasses a transformation in educational implementation, enabling all students from diverse cultural backgrounds to create and develop values of tolerance.

Multicultural education in diverse communities is an effective approach to reducing discrimination and fostering a supportive learning environment. Therefore, the core of multicultural education not only emphasizes cultural diversity but also plays a role in ensuring students' active participation in structuring a multicultural society and fostering a strong sense of solidarity.

Multicultural Education in Tolerance

Schools aim to provide students with knowledge. However, more importantly, they should cultivate attitudes and skills that respect peers from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Students should also prioritize multicultural values to avoid prejudice and foster positive relationships with individuals outside their own group. Portera and Milani (2021) state that cultural exchange education enhances social interaction by facilitating communication between individuals, deepening mutual understanding and building harmonious relationships between diverse groups. Research by Gorski and Swalwell (2021) in schools on multicultural education not only enables students to understand differences but also teaches them to think critically about issues of injustice and the values of social justice. Multicultural educators play a crucial role in schools, fostering diversity as a foundation for solidarity among students.

Multicultural Education in Indonesia

In cross-cultural research, Indonesia is an ideal country for conducting multicultural research. This is due to its vast ethnic, cultural, religious, and geographical diversity. Geographically, Indonesia comprises 13,650 islands, 250 languages, and over 30 ethnic groups. Religiously, Indonesia embraces all the world's major religions. Therefore, educational institutions in Indonesia are expected to be places where students can appreciate differences. This is supported by Rasmitadila (2020), who stated that multicultural education can create a learning environment that respects differences. This is in line with Fatgehipon's (2023) statement regarding social science learning, which can utilize multicultural education to enhance students' understanding of cultural diversity and strengthen their appreciation for diverse identities.

The Role of Multicultural Education in Strengthening Student Solidarity

The extent to which students integrate multicultural values into the teaching and learning process will influence the implementation of solidarity in a culturally diverse environment. Schools play a crucial role in fostering solidarity through the implementation of diversity values. This fosters mutual respect despite differences in cultural backgrounds. This requires a culturally sensitive learning approach to develop cultural awareness skills. According to Aydin and Tonbuloglu (2023), this can enhance students' cultural awareness and social skills, leading to better interactions with diverse backgrounds. This, in turn, strengthens social interactions and helps reduce the risk of tension in the school environment. Therefore, it is important to believe that multicultural education is a crucial step in strengthening solidarity among students, despite diversity.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Approach

The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach. The goal is to examine the role of multicultural education in strengthening solidarity among students in Medan City. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to explore students' experiences and attitudes toward multicultural values. By using this design, researchers will gain a more comprehensive understanding of the process of implementing multicultural education for student solidarity. A qualitative approach is well-suited for analyzing complex social phenomena. Researchers are given the opportunity to understand the experiences, perspectives, and conditions of the subjects studied. This approach allows researchers to understand the experiences and social circumstances of participants in a specific context (Busetto et al., 2020). Therefore, a qualitative descriptive research design is appropriate for conducting research on multicultural education.

Research Participants and Sample Selection Methods

The population of this study consisted of students and teachers directly involved in teaching and learning activities that integrate multicultural values in schools. Therefore, the respondents in this study consisted of students and teachers from various schools in the Medan City area. Participants were selected using a nonprobability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling. This qualitative research requires participants with relevant knowledge and direct experience related to the phenomenon being studied. The researchers involved 60 respondents, consisting of 30 students and 30 teachers. Student selection was based on interacting criteria. with his friends who They come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including those willing to share their perspectives. Teachers are selected based on their participation in multicultural learning. Palinkas (2020) notes that sampling is widely used in qualitative research because it allows researchers to select participants with in-depth information that can provide important insights into the phenomenon being studied.

Data Collection Methods and Research Instruments

Data collection was conducted through interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews served as the primary research tool. Interviews sought to elicit participants' understanding of multicultural education. Experiences included interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds and their diverse perspectives on multicultural values to strengthen solidarity among students. The interview structure referenced the previously explained theoretical foundations related to multicultural education and tolerance. This included respondents' attitudes toward diversity. Previous theoretical frameworks focused on tolerance, social interaction, and multicultural education. The interview guide emphasized cultural awareness, respect for differences, and the implementation of open education (Aydin & Tonbuloglu, 2023). Observations served to identify the types of interactions and social behavior of students within the school environment. Documentation was reviewed and analyzed regarding school programs, activity records, and various documents related to diversity. In

qualitative research, the elements of credibility, transferability, accuracy, and confirmability ensure instrument validity. Consistency of the research was maintained by implementing regular data collection procedures and applying triangulation techniques (Creswell, 2023).

Research Stages

The research stages were structured in an orderly manner. The initial stage was identifying the research problem. Literature was reviewed to develop an interview guide aligned with the research objectives. The next step involved selecting participants using purposive sampling techniques. Data collection was then conducted through interviews, observation, and documentation. After the data was collected, the researcher organized and validated the information through triangulation to ensure its accuracy. The final stage involved evaluating the results and drawing conclusions regarding how multicultural education can strengthen solidarity among students in Medan City. This structured procedure adheres to the principles of qualitative research, which emphasize the continuous relationship between data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Miles et al., 2020).

Data Analysis Methods

The interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña was used in analyzing the research data. The scope is three main steps:

Data collection, data presentation, and the conclusion-drawing or verification process. During the data collection stage, interview transcripts, observation notes, and research documents are then selected, grouped, and organized according to themes related to the research, for example, multicultural awareness and solidarity. The analyzed data is then presented in narrative descriptions to identify patterns, relationships, and correlations between themes that emerged during the research. By analyzing results from multiple data sources, conclusions are drawn through iterative interpretation and verification. Data analysis is supported by qualitative data management software such as NVivo 14, which functions to support coding, organizing, and discovering thematic patterns in the collected qualitative data. The use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software can improve systematic data management while maintaining the researcher's interpretive role in qualitative research (Woods et al., 2022).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Students' Understanding of Diversity

The first research finding is that multicultural education plays a role in increasing students' understanding of the social and cultural diversity that exists in the school environment. Interviews and observations indicate an understanding of differences in ethnicity, religion, language, and cultural background. These differences are a natural part of social life that should be respected and appreciated. Respondents reported that multicultural values are taught through classroom interactions, collaborative learning activities, and school programs involving students from diverse backgrounds. The results of

this study suggest that multicultural education acts as an important tool for increasing students' awareness of diversity, fostering positive attitudes toward differences, and fostering solidarity.

Researchers support the findings of research related to multicultural education contributing to broadening students' understanding of social and cultural diversity within the school environment. Based on interviews and observations, researchers found that students' differences in ethnicity, religion, language, and cultural background are natural aspects of social life that deserve to be respected and appreciated. Participants stated that multicultural values are taught through classroom interactions, collaborative learning activities, and school programs involving students from diverse backgrounds. These findings demonstrate that multicultural education plays a significant role in increasing students' awareness of diversity and encouraging positive attitudes towards differences. An undergraduate student told me on January 15, 2026, that interacting with classmates from diverse backgrounds helps deepen understanding and appreciation for diversity: "At school, we meet friends from various ethnic backgrounds and beliefs. From these interactions, I realized that differences are not a reason to distance ourselves, but rather an opportunity for mutual respect and understanding. Educators who implement open practices serve as role models for students in developing tolerance and respect for differences. Subsequent research has shown that school culture plays a crucial role in integrating multicultural values into students' daily social activities.

Formation of Tolerance Attitudes Among Students

The second finding emphasizes the importance of developing tolerance and respectful social interactions among students. Based on the analyzed data, multicultural education encourages students to interact, cooperate, and build relationships with their peers, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds. Students stated that classroom discussions and collaborative activities provide opportunities to understand different perspectives and reduce bias against other groups. The findings of this study relate to the role of multicultural education in building a more open and harmonious social atmosphere in schools. One teacher explained the school's role in shaping students' understanding of diversity: "We always remind students that every individual has a diverse background. These differences need to be respected because school is a place for students to learn to interact in a shared life."

Multicultural Education as a Support for Student Solidarity

Multicultural education plays a role in strengthening solidarity among students, which is another finding. Students emphasized that understanding diversity provides a sense of belonging and that recognizing that differences in cultural backgrounds do not prevent them from contributing to school. According to the findings as researchers, multicultural education supports cooperation, mutual support, and balanced interactions among students. A master's student on February 22, 2026 stated: "Even though we come from different ethnicities and cultures, we still feel like friends at school." "We support

and help each other both in participating in activities and when facing various challenges," said a doctoral student on March 10, 2026.

The statement indicates a growing sense of shared identity among students, despite their diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Teachers also stated that educational institutions that implement multicultural principles tend to have better social interactions because students increasingly understand the value of respecting differences. Document analysis revealed that various school activities that encourage collaboration, cultural awareness, and character development serve as supporting factors for strengthening solidarity among students.

The Role of Educators in Implementing Multicultural Education

The research findings also emphasize the importance of teachers' role in implementing multicultural education practices in schools. Teachers act as primary facilitators who convey multicultural values through classroom management, the learning process, and various student character-building programs. Teachers believe that multicultural education is not only related to specific subjects but also integrated into daily interactions and the overall school culture. One G3 teacher said on February 22, 2026: "Multicultural education does not only involve subject matter, but must also be reflected in the way teachers treat students and how students interact with each other." The research findings point to teachers' attitudes and behaviors influencing the effectiveness of multicultural education implementation. Educators who implement open practices serve as role models for students in fostering tolerance and recognition of differences. The research findings further revealed that a respectful school culture plays a crucial role in integrating multicultural values into students' daily social activities.

DISCUSSION

Multicultural education plays a crucial role in building solidarity among students in Medan. This is evident through strengthening awareness of diversity, tolerance, and the quality of social interactions. Students' experiences demonstrate that the application of multicultural values through school programs and daily social interaction learning can help them view differences as social richness, rather than as obstacles to connecting with others. These findings align with Nieto's (2020) notion of multicultural education, which emphasizes social justice, equality, and the development of meaningful relationships between individuals from diverse backgrounds. According to researchers, positive changes in attitudes toward diversity stem from the role of multicultural education, not only in enhancing cognitive understanding but also in shaping social identities based on mutual respect and collaboration. Therefore, the research confirms the strategic role of schools as venues for strengthening social interactions in a multicultural society.

Research findings describe increased tolerance and positive social interactions among students when multicultural values are integrated into school culture. Students who have more opportunities to socialize with peers from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds demonstrate greater levels of

openness and cooperative skills. These findings align with Schachner's (2020) social relations perspective, which suggests that a school environment that facilitates positive intergroup relations can reduce social inequality among students. Another report by Schmid and his team (2021) suggests that intercultural interactions within an educational context can reduce prejudice and increase appreciation for diversity among young people. However, this study differs from previous studies, which primarily examine multicultural education through curriculum implementation or psychological measurements. This research highlights students lived experiences and social interactions as crucial elements in fostering solidarity.

The role of teachers is a crucial aspect influencing the successful implementation of multicultural education. In this study, teachers acted as facilitators, instilling multicultural values through the application of classroom teaching methods, interaction methods, and implementation of learning activities. This finding aligns with the culturally responsive teaching model proposed by Gay (2021), which emphasizes that teachers' understanding of cultural diversity influences students' learning experiences and social development. This contrasts with previous research that considered teacher competence to be the main obstacle to implementing multicultural education. This study demonstrates that teacher commitment and support from the school environment are key factors contributing to its successful implementation. However, differences in teacher preparedness, educational institution policies, and resource accessibility may explain the impact of multicultural education implementation.

Researchers observed another finding: multicultural education serves to strengthen students' sense of belonging and collective identity in diverse schools. Through students' ability to collaborate across differences, multicultural education can utilize diversity as a foundation for achieving solidarity. Multicultural education, according to Portera and Milani (2021), needs to encourage dialogue, shared understanding, and appreciation for diversity as essential elements in strengthening social relations within society. Unlike previous research, which typically emphasizes multicultural education as a means of increasing tolerance, this study deepens the discussion by emphasizing its importance in building student solidarity and social interaction in a multicultural context.

The findings of this study provide additional empirical evidence regarding the role of multicultural education in fostering interpersonal social connections among students. Many factors contributed to the positive results of this study, including the supportive school culture, opportunities for intercultural interaction, and teachers' dedication to implementing open-minded learning. These factors support the initial assumption that multicultural education can foster solidarity by increasing students' understanding and acceptance of diversity. Implementation can face challenges, such as differences in students' prior experiences, limited multicultural learning resources, and varying levels of cultural awareness among individuals within the school. Similar challenges were identified by Szelei and Alves (2022), who argued that sustained institutional commitment is necessary because separate educational programs are insufficient to create change in

multicultural education. Therefore, effective multicultural education requires integration into school policies.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of multicultural education research by presenting contextual evidence from Medan, an urban area characterized by significant cultural diversity. Previous studies often analyze multicultural education from a broader perspective, while this research focuses on how students perceive and apply multicultural values in their daily interactions. Innovation in this research is evident in the effort to make multicultural education not merely a method for fostering tolerance, but also a means to strengthen student solidarity and social interaction.

The research's contribution enhances the existing understanding that multicultural education influences not only individual attitudes but also overall social interactions within educational contexts. From a practical perspective, the results provide recommendations for schools and policymakers in designing educational programs and promoting harmonious relationships among students. While useful, this study does have several weaknesses that warrant attention. The qualitative design with a limited number of participants yielded in-depth contextual understanding. Furthermore, the data in this study were obtained from the experiences and perspectives of participants, potentially impacting the tendency to provide answers that align with social expectations during interviews. Future research is recommended to employ a mixed-methods approach involving a larger sample size to examine the relationship between multicultural education and student solidarity from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Further research is expected to deepen the understanding of multicultural education as a sustainable strategy for fostering solidarity in diverse educational environments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this regard, multicultural education plays a crucial role in strengthening student solidarity in Medan City by enhancing understanding of diversity, fostering tolerance, and fostering constructive social interactions. Research conducted on multicultural education helps students understand and appreciate differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, and social background as important aspects of living together, rather than as obstacles to social relationships. Furthermore, the application of multicultural principles through the learning process, school programs, and daily interactions helps create a better learning environment and strengthens social relationships among students. Research reveals that educators play a crucial role in integrating multicultural values into the educational process and building a school culture that emphasizes mutual respect, cooperation, and equality.

Therefore, multicultural education needs to be continuously strengthened as a crucial component of educational strategies to foster solidarity in heterogeneous learning environments. Research findings suggest that schools and other stakeholders in education should strengthen the implementation of multicultural education programs by integrating these values into the curriculum, using culturally respectful teaching methods, and conducting collaborative activities involving students from diverse backgrounds. Continuous professional

development is also necessary for teachers to improve their skills in managing multicultural classrooms and creating meaningful intercultural interactions. Educational decision-makers are advised to design guidelines and programs that support education and encourage social interaction among students. Through these steps, multicultural education can function not only as a teaching method but also as a long-term strategy for creating harmonious relationships in a diverse society.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research is needed to delve deeper into the long-term effects of multicultural education on students' attitudes, social interactions, and behavior in various educational contexts. This study used a qualitative approach with limited informants. It is recommended that future research employ mixed methods or longitudinal designs involving more participants to obtain more comprehensive empirical evidence. Comparative studies between schools with different cultural variations can also provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the successful implementation of multicultural education. Furthermore, future research could investigate the role of digital learning environments, parental involvement, and community participation in strengthening multicultural values among students. Such investigations could help create a more comprehensive multicultural education model for diverse communities.

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