

Implementing Multicultural Education to Foster Tolerance and Social Responsibility in Early Childhood: A Classroom Action Research Study in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural education is essential for fostering tolerance and social responsibility in early childhood, particularly in culturally diverse societies such as Indonesia. However, practical pedagogical strategies that effectively integrate multicultural values into daily classroom activities remain insufficiently explored. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of multicultural education in improving tolerance and social responsibility among kindergarten students. This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the Kemmis and McTaggart model, conducted in two cycles involving 15 children aged 5–6 years at Al Husna 2 Kindergarten, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation. Qualitative data were analyzed using data condensation and thematic interpretation, while quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using percentage scores to evaluate changes in students' character development across cycles. The findings demonstrated substantial improvements in students' tolerance and social responsibility following the implementation of multicultural learning activities. The classical average increased from 36.5% during the pre-cycle to 61% in Cycle I and reached 85% in Cycle II. The greatest improvements were observed in children's acceptance of diversity, empathy, willingness to cooperate, and reduction of teasing behaviors. These changes were facilitated by collaborative play, teacher modeling, and consistent habituation of multicultural values. The study indicates that integrating multicultural education into everyday classroom interactions effectively promotes prosocial behavior and inclusive character development in early childhood. Despite being limited by a small sample, single-school setting, and short intervention period, the findings provide practical guidance for educators and contribute to the implementation of multicultural pedagogy in early childhood education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an era of unprecedented global migration and digital connectivity, multiculturalism has become a defining characteristic of modern societies. Globally, the rise of social polarization and xenophobia presents a significant challenge to social cohesion, prompting international bodies like UNESCO to prioritize "learning to live together" as a core pillar of 21st-century education. Research indicates that biases and stereotypical thinking can begin to form in children as early as age three, making the early childhood period a critical window for intervention (Arphattananon, 2018a). While many nations have integrated multiculturalism into their national curricula, the practical translation of these values into the daily behavioral habits of young learners remains a complex pedagogical challenge worldwide.

Despite Indonesia's national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), early childhood educators often lack a structured methodology to address budding biases or exclusive social circles among students. The research problem lies in the disconnect between the national curriculum's idealistic goals and the actual pedagogical strategies used to foster inclusive behaviors in the classroom. Without targeted interventions, early childhood settings risk inadvertently reinforcing social silos.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in James Banks' Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education, particularly content integration and prejudice reduction. Banks (2019) argues that multicultural education is not merely a curricular add-on but a transformative process that ensures equity and social justice. This is further supported by Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that children acquire social behaviors—such as tolerance and empathy—through the observation and imitation of models, primarily teachers and peers within their immediate environment. In the context of early childhood, Maria Montessori's concept of the "Absorbent Mind" emphasizes that children between the ages of 0–6 possess a unique mental capacity to soak up environmental values, making it the "golden age" for character formation (Wartini, 2015).

One of the hallmarks of Indonesian society is its cultural, religious, and social diversity, which encourages educational institutions to instill tolerance and social awareness from an early age, particularly at the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level (Al-hikam, 2021). Local wisdom-based education can produce knowledge that explains attitudes and behaviors that represent local culture, such as daily behavior, songs, mottos, and traditional ceremonies, in their literature review stated that the availability of alternative media in the form of interactive digital books such as "Bhineka Bangsaku" which raises social issues and diversity content to support Indonesian multicultural education can attract children's interest (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017).

Character education can stimulate growth in children from an early age (Pitaloka et al., 2021). Character education is a process that instills character values in students so they can apply them in their daily lives within the family, school, community, and national environment, thus making a positive contribution to their environment. Students are guided to become well-rounded individuals with character in the aspects of heart, mind, body, as well as feelings and will (Muchlisin Riadi, 2019).

Tolerance is the fruit or outcome of close social interactions in society.⁴ In religious social life, humans cannot deny the existence of interactions, whether within their own group or with other groups that sometimes share different religions or beliefs. Given this fact, religious communities should strive to foster peace and tranquility within a framework of tolerance, thereby preventing social stability and ideological friction between people of different faiths (Beragama & Bingkai, 2020). Tolerance is generally defined as an attitude of being willing to tolerate (respect, allow, permit) the stances (opinions, views, beliefs, habits, behavior, and so on) of other parties whose stances differ from or contradict one's own. Basically, tolerance can also be defined as the ability to respect the basic nature, beliefs, and behavior of other people (Abu Bakar, 2015).

Social awareness is an action, not just a thought or feeling. Caring isn't just about knowing what's right or wrong, but also about being willing to take action, no matter how small (Elmina Fitri, 2018). Social awareness is a way of maintaining relationships with others, starting from feelings and demonstrated through actions such as caring for others and helping those in need (Kaharuddin et al., 2017).

Multicultural education focused on Indonesian character needs to be implemented from the beginning, particularly in Early Childhood Education. This is crucial because the golden age occurs during early childhood. This golden age is when children are able to absorb information from their environment effectively, or, according to Montessori (1984), "the Absorbent of the Mind" (Wartini, 2015).

Referring to previous research, the characteristics of multicultural education include inclusivity, openness, fairness, and respect for differences (S.Widiyono, 2018). Multicultural education is an educational approach that utilizes the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds as a strength for developing multicultural attitudes. This approach is invaluable, at least for schools as educational institutions that can foster a shared understanding of the concepts of culture, cultural differences, balance, and democracy in the broadest sense (Sutarto, 2016).

Banks argues that multicultural education is a set of beliefs and understandings that recognize and value the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity in various forms of lifestyle, social experiences, individual identities, and educational access for individuals, groups, and nations. He describes multicultural education as a concept, movement, educational reform, and learning process that primarily aims to transform the education system so that all students—both boys and girls, students with special needs, and students from diverse races, ethnicities, and cultures—have equal opportunities to achieve academic success in school (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017).

Education aims not only to impart knowledge but also to shape individuals who can think critically, feel empathy, and adapt to an increasingly diverse world. The primary challenge is how to build an education system that embraces cultural differences and local values, while respecting universal principles that support peace, equality, and justice throughout the world (Ariya & Ismail, 2025). In early childhood education, children from diverse backgrounds and cultures mix, creating a multicultural community. A multicultural community is understood as a group within which diverse cultures thrive (Sutarto, 2016). Indonesians should return to their original identity by re-understanding and rebuilding the noble values of their culture. Actions that must be taken include explaining the profound meaning of local cultural wisdom (Sudarmiani, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to explore how the implementation of multicultural education can strengthen the character of tolerance and social awareness among students. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of multicultural education studies and provide practical benefits for educators in developing inclusive, meaningful, and relevant learning processes for children (Sudarmiani et al., 2021).

Classroom Action Research (CAR) that demonstrates *how* specific pedagogical interventions can measurably improve tolerance and social awareness in the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) setting. Most studies remain descriptive or conceptual, leaving a void in practical frameworks for teachers to foster habituation in real-time classroom dynamics.

Despite the critical need for multicultural values, many early childhood educators struggle to move beyond symbolic multiculturalism (such as wearing traditional clothes) toward a deeper habituation of tolerance and social care that manifests in children's daily interactions.

The purpose of this Classroom Action Research study is to systematically develop, implement, and refine a multicultural teaching framework that empowers early childhood educators in Indonesia to cultivate a generation of students who are not only aware of diversity but are actively committed to social responsibility and inclusive harmony.

2. METHODS

This study employed Qualitative Classroom Action Research (CAR) supported by descriptive-quantitative data to measure behavioral shifts. Following the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model, the research was conducted in two distinct cycles, each consisting of four integrated phases: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This design was selected to facilitate immediate pedagogical interventions and evaluate their direct impact on students' character development in a naturalistic classroom setting (Ritonga et al., 2019). The research was conducted at Al Husna 2 Kindergarten, an

institution characterized by its diverse student body representing various culture and economic backgrounds. The participants consisted of 15 students ($n = 15$) in Group B (ages 5–6 years), comprising 8 boys and 7 girls. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, specifically focusing on this cohort due to observed social friction and a lack of cooperative play during preliminary observations. Each cycle was conducted in one meeting. Cycle I: Focused on the "introduction of diversity" through storytelling and individual habituation. Cycle II: Focused on "collaborative action" through multicultural-based group projects and role-playing.

Qualitative data were analyzed using an interactive model involving data condensation and narrative synthesis. Quantitative data from observation rubrics were converted into percentages to determine the attainment of success criteria. To measure the improvement of each indicator, the following formula was applied:

$$P = F/N \times 100,$$

Description:

F = Frequency whose percentage is sought

N = Number of cases (Frequency or number of individuals)

P = Percentage

This study established an 85% success threshold. This benchmark is based on the Mastery Learning (Belajar Tuntas) principle, where a pedagogical intervention is deemed successful if at least 85% of the class reaches the "Developed as Expected" (BSH) or "Very Well Developed" (BSB) criteria.

To ensure the validity of qualitative findings, the researcher employed methodological triangulation by cross-referencing observation results with interview transcripts and document reviews. Additionally, member checking was performed by sharing the findings with the classroom teachers to confirm that the interpretations accurately reflected the classroom's social dynamics.

Table 1. Tolerance and Social Concern Value Range

Value	Assessment Criteria	Description
≥ 90	BSB	Successful
71 - 90	BSH	Successful
71 - 90	MB	Unsuccessful
≤ 50	BB	Unsuccessful

¹(Amrullah, 2019)

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This study was conducted over two intervention cycles to enhance the character of tolerance and social care among 15 students at Al Husna 2 Kindergarten. Quantitative data were derived from structured observation rubrics encompassing five key indicators.

3.1.1 Cycle I

a. Planning

The research action plan for Cycle I was prepared by the researcher and then submitted to the class teacher as a collaborator or the party who would implement the learning actions. Activities related to this plan include the following:

- 1) Managing learning activities to foster tolerance and social awareness through diverse approaches.
- 2) Identifying these competencies along with basic competencies. For activities in Cycle I, a theme must be determined.
- 3) Developing a scenario for the learning process.

- 4) Preparing learning materials and equipment.
- 5) Developing assessment forms.
- 6) Determining the time for the learning process.

b. Action

The research activities in cycle I were carried out in one meeting. The learning activities were carried out by the teacher of group B4, while the researcher was the observer. Cycle I will be held on Monday, September 29, 2025. From the implementation of the first cycle, the following observations were obtained:

- 1) Students who are able to complete the character of tolerance by accepting differences in friends are 10 children or 66%, willing to cooperate with friends 9 children as much as 60%, not teasing or insulting friends 8 children or 53%. Based on these results, the average percentage of completion of the character of tolerance in group B4 students is 9 or 60% of the total number of students as many as 15.
- 2) Students who are able to complete the character of social care with indicators of helping friends who are in trouble are 9 children or 60%, sharing play together with 9 children or 60%, showing empathy when a friend is sad or injured is 10 children or 67%. Based on the results obtained, the average percentage of completion of social care in group B4 students is 9 or 60% of the total number of 15 students.

c. Observation

The observations included observing students as they carried out the actions and assessing their results. The results are as follows:

- 1) Observations of the tolerance character indicator during the first cycle of learning indicated a completion rate of 60%, an increase from the pre-cycle rate of 40%.
- 2) Observations of the social concern indicator during the first cycle of learning indicated a completion rate of 60%, an increase from the pre-cycle rate of 33%.

d. Reflection

In this phase, the researcher and the co-teacher, acting as collaborators, evaluated the actions taken, and the results are as follows.

- 1) Reflections on student activities during learning activities using a multicultural approach showed an increase in tolerance to 60% in Cycle I and an increase in social concern to 62%. Although these improvements still fell short of the 85% completion rate set in this study. Therefore, teachers need to conduct evaluations and revisions to increase completion rates in future cycles.
- 2) Reflections on the implementation of the multicultural approach in Cycle I showed that 60% of students successfully achieved each indicator related to tolerance and 62% of students achieved social concern. These percentages are still below the predetermined completion threshold, which states that students are considered to have completed the learning process if their completion rate reaches 80%.

Collaborator observations and teacher reflections after implementing learning improvements using a multicultural approach to foster tolerance and social awareness in Cycle I reflected the following:

- 1) During Cycle I, multicultural education-based learning activities began to be implemented, integrating the values of tolerance and social awareness into children's daily activities. Observations showed that most students began to demonstrate an open attitude toward accepting differences, although this was still limited to simple aspects, such as being willing to play with friends who had different game preferences and sharing learning tools.
- 2) Teachers still encountered several obstacles or challenges, including the tendency of some children to be passive in discussions and role-playing activities, resulting in the values of tolerance not being fully and consistently practiced. Furthermore, regarding social awareness,

children more readily demonstrated concern when directed by the teacher, but this had not yet developed spontaneously in daily life.

- 3) Cycle I demonstrated that the implementation of multicultural education was able to foster attitudes of tolerance and social awareness, but required reinforcement strategies. Teachers still need to use a variety of more interesting methods, for example through picture stories, group games, and providing real examples, so that children are more actively involved.

The reflections above indicate that improvements are needed in the next cycle, focusing on:

- 1) Increasing active student involvement through enjoyable collaborative activities.
- 2) Providing consistent examples from teachers demonstrating tolerance and caring attitudes.
- 3) Creating natural situations that allow children to practice social awareness without constant direction.

3.1.2 Cycle 2

a. Planning

Based on the results of the Cycle I reflections, it was discovered that some students had begun to demonstrate tolerant and socially aware behaviors, but not consistently. Some students still needed guidance in understanding their peers' differences (religion, skin color, habits, and interests) and in developing the habit of sharing and helping. Therefore, in Cycle II, the following corrective action plan was developed:

- 1) Developing a lesson plan to increase active student participation in multicultural learning activities, strengthening the application of values of tolerance (respecting differences, being willing to collaborate, not insulting friends), and fostering a sense of social awareness (being willing to share, help friends, and maintain togetherness).
- 2) Identifying core competencies and basic competencies. In this cycle, the theme entitled "My Friendly School" was chosen.
- 3) Develop learning scenarios.
- 4) Prepare learning resources and media.
- 5) Develop main themes and subthemes.
- 6) Establish a schedule for implementation.

b. Action

The research activities in the second cycle were carried out in one meeting. The learning process was led by the teacher from group B4, while the researcher acted as an observer. The meeting took place on Tuesday, October 7, 2025. The activities used a multicultural education approach with the topic "My Friendly School." After observing the learning process, the following data was obtained:

- 1) 13 students (87%) demonstrated tolerance by accepting differences among their peers, 13 students (87%) were willing to cooperate with their peers, and 13 students (87%) did not tease or insult their peers. Based on these findings, the average level of achievement of the tolerance character in group B4 students was 13, equivalent to 87 percent of the total 15 students.
- 2) 13 students (87%) were able to complete the social care character, with indicators such as helping friends in difficulty, 12 students (80%), sharing play together, and showing empathy when a friend is sad or injured, 13 students (87%). Based on these results, the average percentage of completion of social care in group B4 students was 13, or 87% of the total 15 students.

c. Observation

Observations included observing students as they carried out the actions and assessing their results. The implementation of the actions in Cycle II showed significant improvement compared to Cycle I. Students appeared more actively involved, enthusiastic, and able to spontaneously demonstrate behaviors of tolerance and social awareness without much guidance from the teacher.

Observations indicated a warmer classroom atmosphere, with students working collaboratively and appreciating differences among themselves. The results are as follows:

- 1) Observations of the tolerance character indicator during the learning process in Cycle II indicated that the completion rate could be increased to 85 percent.
- 2) Observations of the social awareness indicator during the learning process in Cycle II indicated that the average completion rate had increased to 85 percent.

d. Reflection

In this reflection phase, the researcher and the partner teachers, acting as collaborators, assessed the actions that had been implemented, and the results are as follows:

- 1) The results of the reflection on student activities during the learning activities using the multicultural approach showed an increase in tolerance in cycle II of 85%, and social concern reached the success level set in this study, which was 85%.
- 2) The results of the reflection on the application of the multicultural approach in cycle II show that students who can complete each indicator reach the standard percentage of completion required in this study, namely 85%. The results of the reflection on the use of the multicultural approach in cycle II show that students who are able to complete each indicator on the character of tolerance are 85% and social concern are 85%.

Overall, the activities in Cycle II were effective and went according to plan. Teachers successfully integrated multicultural values into play activities that were enjoyable and meaningful for the children. Teachers also actively modelled tolerant and caring behaviors by providing concrete examples, such as sharing tools, showing appreciation, and using friendly and inclusive language. Factors supporting the success of Cycle II include:

- 1) Learning activities were more varied and tailored to children's interests, such as picture stories, mini bazaars, and group collages.
- 2) Children were already accustomed to group work rules from Cycle I, making collaboration easier.
- 3) Teachers consistently provided positive reinforcement, both verbally and symbolically (praise, star stickers, etc.).
- 4) The classroom atmosphere was conducive and enjoyable, so children felt safe to express themselves.

The 48.5% overall increase in character scores from Pre-Cycle to Cycle II confirms that abstract values like tolerance can be successfully internalized by early learners when delivered through Experiential Learning. This aligns with James Banks' (2019) dimension of Prejudice Reduction, which posits that a deliberately designed learning environment can effectively modify social and racial attitudes in children.

The success of collaborative play in this study demonstrates that young children learn best through behavioral modelling. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the teachers at Al Husna 2 Kindergarten served as primary models of tolerance. By observing teachers treat all individuals with equity, students replicated these interaction patterns within their own peer groups.

These findings reinforce research by (Arphattananon, 2018b), which suggests that multicultural education in early childhood is vital for reducing social prejudice in diverse regions. Similar to the results at Al Husna 2, the integration of local culture as a learning medium enhanced students' emotional security and sense of belonging, which directly contributed to the reduction of verbal bullying (teasing), reaching an 80% success rate in Cycle II. Practically, these results suggest that Early Childhood Education (ECE) curricula must transcend cognitive goals to integrate the habituation of multicultural values. The implication for teacher training is the urgent need for pedagogical competence in designing inclusive media such as diverse folklores or multi-ethnic traditional games to foster a democratic classroom atmosphere.

Despite the significant improvements, this study is limited by its small sample size (n=15) and a relatively short intervention period of two months. Furthermore, as the research was conducted at a

single site (Al Husna 2 Kindergarten), the generalizability of the findings may require further testing across schools with different socio-economic backgrounds.

3.1.3 Improving the Character of Tolerance and Social Concern

By the end of Cycle II, all indicators successfully reached or exceeded the 85% success threshold. Analysis shows that students excelled particularly in "Acceptance of Differences" and "Empathetic Response."

Table 2. Recapitulation of Tolerance and Social Care Character Improvement.

Character Indicator	Pre-Cycle (%)	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (%)	Total Increase (%)
Tolerance	40	60	85	+ 45
Social Care	33	62	85	+ 52
Classical Average	36.5	61	85	+ 48.5

Table 3. Distribution of Specific Indicator Achievement in Cycle II (n=15)

Aspect	Special Indicator (%)	Achievement	Category
Tolerance	Accepting peers diverse backgrounds	87 %	BSB
	Willingness to collaborate in groups	87 %	BSB
	Refraining from teasing/insulting peers	80 %	BSH
Social Care	Spontaneously sharing play equipment	80 %	BSH
	Showing empathy (comforting sad peers	87 %	BSB

- Cycle I: Initial implementation through picture-storytelling and light discussions began to awaken students' social awareness. However, prosocial behaviors remained "reactive" performed only under teacher instruction. Minor conflicts regarding shared toys were still frequently observed.
- Cycle II: The intervention shifted toward experiential learning through the "My Friendly School" collaborative project. Consequently, peer interactions became more organic. Students demonstrated spontaneous initiatives to assist others without teacher prompts, and inclusive language began to characterize daily classroom conversations.

Tables 2 and table 3 show an increase in the completion of tolerance and social awareness. Therefore, a multicultural education approach is highly effective as an introduction to the development of tolerance and social responsibility (Sulfani et al., 2020)

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this classroom action research demonstrate that multicultural education, when implemented through structured habituation, collaborative play, and teacher modelling, substantially improved children's tolerance and social responsibility. The classical average increased from 36.5% during the pre-cycle to 85% in Cycle II, indicating that repeated multicultural learning experiences enabled children to internalize inclusive social values rather than merely complying with teacher instructions. This progression suggests that character development in early childhood is not an instantaneous outcome but a gradual process that requires continuous reinforcement through authentic social interaction.

One of the most significant findings is the transformation of children's behavior from externally regulated responses to increasingly autonomous prosocial actions. During Cycle I, most children demonstrated helping behavior, sharing, and acceptance of differences only after explicit guidance from the teacher. However, by Cycle II, many children voluntarily shared learning materials, comforted distressed classmates, and collaborated with peers from different social backgrounds without teacher prompts. This behavioral transition indicates that multicultural education functions not only as

cognitive instruction about diversity but also as a socialization process through which inclusive behaviors become embedded in children's daily routines. Such findings support Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that young children acquire social behaviors through observation, imitation, and repeated interaction with significant role models in their environment (Bandura, 1977). Throughout this study, teachers consistently modelled respectful communication, empathy, and cooperation, allowing children to observe and subsequently reproduce these behaviors during classroom activities.

The effectiveness of collaborative play observed in this study also reinforces experiential learning principles in early childhood education. Unlike conventional teacher-centered instruction, collaborative multicultural activities provided children with opportunities to experience diversity directly rather than merely discussing it conceptually. Through group storytelling, role-playing, shared art projects, and cooperative games, children encountered situations requiring negotiation, mutual respect, and collective problem solving. These authentic experiences encouraged children to recognize differences as normal aspects of social interaction instead of barriers to friendship. Consequently, improvements were particularly evident in the indicators of accepting peers from diverse backgrounds and demonstrating empathy, both of which reached 87% by the end of Cycle II. These findings align with previous research showing that meaningful social interaction constitutes one of the most effective approaches for reducing prejudice during early childhood because children construct social understanding through direct interpersonal experiences rather than abstract moral instruction (Arphattananon, 2018).

The findings further support Banks' multicultural education framework, particularly the dimensions of prejudice reduction and equity pedagogy (Banks, 2019). Rather than presenting multiculturalism solely through symbolic activities such as introducing traditional costumes or cultural celebrations, the intervention integrated multicultural values into everyday classroom routines. This distinction is important because symbolic multiculturalism often increases children's cultural awareness without necessarily influencing interpersonal behavior. In contrast, embedding multicultural values into daily interactions enables children to repeatedly practice respect, cooperation, and empathy in authentic contexts. The reduction in teasing behavior from Cycle I to Cycle II illustrates that prejudice reduction can occur through sustained interpersonal engagement supported by appropriate teacher facilitation rather than through isolated instructional activities.

Another important finding concerns the role of teacher consistency in facilitating character development. Improvements in children's social responsibility were closely associated with teachers' continuous reinforcement of positive behaviors through verbal encouragement, modeling, and reflective classroom discussions. This observation is consistent with previous studies indicating that teachers function as central agents in cultivating tolerant attitudes because young children rely heavily on adult behavioral cues when constructing social norms (Pitaloka et al., 2021). Importantly, the success of the intervention was not solely attributable to multicultural learning materials but also to the establishment of an emotionally supportive classroom climate where children felt psychologically safe to interact across differences. Such classroom environments encourage children to express empathy, seek cooperation, and resolve interpersonal conflicts constructively.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that developing multicultural character is neither immediate nor uniform across all students. Although the intervention achieved the predetermined success criterion, indicators related to refraining from teasing peers and spontaneously sharing learning materials showed relatively lower achievement than acceptance of diversity and empathy. This pattern suggests that behavioral habits involving emotional self-regulation may require longer periods of reinforcement than attitudes involving cognitive recognition of diversity. Therefore, multicultural education should be viewed as a continuous developmental process rather than a short-term instructional program. Extending multicultural practices beyond classroom activities through family involvement and school-wide initiatives may strengthen the sustainability of these behavioral changes.

The present study contributes theoretically by demonstrating how multicultural education operationalizes both Social Learning Theory and Banks' multicultural education framework within Indonesian early childhood classrooms. Rather than merely confirming existing theories, the findings illustrate a practical pedagogical mechanism through which multicultural values become internalized: repeated collaborative experiences, supported by consistent teacher modeling, gradually transform externally prompted behaviors into autonomous prosocial actions. This mechanism helps explain how abstract concepts such as tolerance and social responsibility can be translated into observable classroom practices during the early childhood period.

Practically, this research offers an instructional framework that extends beyond symbolic multicultural activities. Early childhood educators should integrate multicultural values into everyday classroom interactions through collaborative projects, cooperative play, reflective storytelling, and teacher modelling instead of limiting multicultural education to ceremonial cultural events. Such an approach allows children to repeatedly practice inclusive behaviors within authentic social situations, thereby strengthening both interpersonal competence and character development. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs involving larger and more diverse participant groups to examine whether these behavioral improvements are sustained over time and to investigate the contribution of parental involvement in reinforcing multicultural values beyond the classroom.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of multicultural education through collaborative play, teacher modelling, and structured habituation effectively enhances tolerance and social responsibility among early childhood learners. The findings reveal a substantial improvement in students' prosocial behaviors, with the classical average increasing from 36.5% in the pre-cycle to 85% by the end of Cycle II, indicating that multicultural learning can successfully transform externally prompted behaviors into more autonomous expressions of empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity. These results reinforce the applicability of Social Learning Theory and Banks' multicultural education framework within the Indonesian early childhood context by showing how consistent social interaction and positive role modeling facilitate the internalization of inclusive values. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its small sample size, single-school setting, and short intervention period, which may restrict the generalizability and long-term interpretation of the findings. Future research should employ longitudinal designs involving larger and more diverse samples across different educational and socio-cultural contexts, while also examining the influence of family engagement, school culture, and teacher professional development on sustaining multicultural values and character development beyond the classroom.

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