

Multicultural Education in Multicultural Community: A Case Study at Palm Kids Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

Character education plays a crucial role in fostering tolerance and harmony in multicultural environments. This study explores the implementation of character building at Palm Kids Elementary School, Purwokerto, Central Java, a school with students from diverse religious backgrounds. This qualitative research employs a case study approach. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Analysis was conducted using the Interactive Model of Miles and Huberman. Findings indicate that Palm Kids Elementary School successfully maintains harmony despite religious diversity (Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism). A key factor in sustaining this harmony is the comprehensive character education program, which is systematically integrated into daily activities. Additionally, the school organizes inclusive events, such as interfaith holiday celebrations, that encourage participation and understanding among students. Tolerance and mutual respect are instilled from an early age through daily habituation, preventing conflicts related to ethnicity, religion, race, or inter-group differences. The school's approach aligns with global efforts to promote peace and unity in educational settings. The character-building model at Palm Kids Elementary School serves as a practical framework for fostering tolerance in multicultural school environments. Its implementation could be beneficial for schools worldwide seeking to enhance social harmony among diverse student populations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, multicultural countries were created through conquest, political agreements, and economic necessity (Holmes, 2022). It is different from Indonesia; since its birth, it has been a multicultural nation with a high level of pluralism (Nugraha, Ruswandi, & Erihadiana, 2020). Pluralism is a natural thing, so it should be accepted by all citizens of the nation (Soekmono & Ningtyas, 2020). Factually, pluralism is the wealth of the nation; but on the other hand, if this treasure is not managed properly, it can trigger social conflict which leads to the disintegration of the nation (Budiono, 2021). As a pluralistic nation, Indonesia has various tribes, races, languages, religions and cultures. In a

pluralistic or multicultural society, multiculturalism as a concept of diversity needs to be accommodated in the national education system (Gofur, Auliya, & Nursikin, 2022). Whether we admit it or not, conflicts based on ethnicity, religion and race between groups (SARA) in various parts of the country still often occur. Conflicts are prone to arise due to the limited distribution of multicultural education services, and the approach is still partial, so a more comprehensive approach is needed to involve many parties. All the conditions above means that multicultural education still needs strengthening (Nugraha et al., 2020).

Recently, multiculturalism and multicultural education are receiving great attention from scholars and researchers in the field of education (Abduh, Rosmaladewi, & Andrew, 2023). However, the implementation of multicultural education in this country still faces many obstacles, both in terms of teacher competency and learning facilities (Cathrin & Wikandaru, 2023). After all, the future of a culture depends on the ideology of the educated class in that country; it means that the education system in a country greatly influences its culture (Dunghav, 2021). Hence, multicultural education is a necessity to maintain diversity so that a nation can live together in harmony (Wirda et al., 2023). As one of the largest multicultural countries in the world, multicultural education is very relevant for Indonesia (Akhiruddin, Sukmawati, Jalal, Sujarwo, & Ridwan, 2021). This education is important to implement in this country because it can be a bridge that accommodates the differences that exist. This education is a quick solution to minimize conflict and division. By implementing it, Indonesian people can understand, accept and appreciate the differences that exist in various circles. Instilling this multicultural concept can be done at the elementary school stage so that the process of developing multicultural education becomes easier (Wales, 2022). However, its implementation is not easy; it requires hard work and a long effort (Riyadi, Rahman, Julianti, Ananda, & Baharudin, 2022).

Multicultural education is a solution to the nation's complex problems. It is time for multicultural education in Indonesia to become an important choice (Wirianty, 2023). Indonesia is a country with the highest level of diversity in the world. This country has 300 ethnic groups and more than 250 regional languages used by various ethnic groups (Masri, 2020). After all, the future of a culture depends on the ideology of the educated class in that country; it means that the education system in a country greatly influences its culture (Dunghav, 2021). Hence, multicultural education is a necessity to maintain diversity so that a nation can live together in harmony (Wirda et al., 2023). Basically, multicultural education is a process of developing all human potential that respects plurality and heterogeneity as a consequence of cultural, ethnic, tribal and religious diversity (Abd Karman, Hakim, Harahap, & Jasiah, 2022); it emphasizes mutual understanding, respect, fairness, tolerance and prioritizing deliberation (Muzayroh, 2021). This education has a vital role in building the competence of the younger generation in facing the challenges of the times (Sephawardani & Bektiningsih, 2023). As one of the largest multicultural countries in the world, multicultural education is very relevant for Indonesia (Akhiruddin et al., 2021). It must be developed, because if a global revolution occurs, the multicultural approach will remain relevant (Sipuan, Warsah, Amin, & Adisel, 2022).

In fact, multicultural education in Indonesia has gone through a long journey and various stages (Nurcahyono, 2018). Multiculturalism is now interesting to discuss, because the nation was faced with a decline in the sense of togetherness, brotherhood and social solidarity, which triggered conflict between citizens. So, it is very appropriate to choose multiculturalism as the mainstream in social, national and state life (Apriani, Azizah, & Nasution, 2021). Multicultural education is important to implement in this country because it can be a bridge that accommodates the differences that exist. This education is a quick solution to minimize conflict and division. Instilling this multicultural concept can be done at the elementary school stage so that the process of developing multicultural education becomes easier (Wales, 2022). However, its implementation is not easy, but it requires hard work and a long effort (Riyadi et al., 2022).

It is essential to implement multicultural education in elementary schools to cultivate tolerance and respect for diversity from an early age (Hartono, Riyanti, & Feriandi, 2024). Palm Kids Elementary School in Purwokerto, Banyumas Regency, Central Java, serves as a model institution, accommodating

students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. The school exemplifies a truly multicultural environment, making it a representative microcosm of Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Despite this diversity, Palm Kids Elementary School has successfully maintained harmony among its students. This unique aspect motivated the researcher to explore and describe the school's approach to multicultural education. In this study, the terms *character education* (Character Building) and *multicultural education* are used interchangeably, as both concepts align in fostering moral values, social awareness, and inclusivity.

The novelty of this research lies in the distinctive implementation of character education at Palm Kids Elementary School. The study highlights the school's unique strategies in delivering Character Building lessons and their direct application in daily student interactions. By examining these approaches, this research aims to contribute valuable insights into how multicultural education can be effectively practised in elementary schools to nurture tolerance, mutual respect, and unity in diverse societies.

2. METHODS

This research is qualitative descriptive research using a case study method, collecting and analyzing data regarding a case, in this case, excellence or success (K., 2018). Case studies are differentiated into studies that are curative in nature or retrospective case studies, which allow further action (treatment); there is also a prospective case study which is used to read trends (Ridlo, 2023). This research falls into the second category. Data collection was carried out using interview, observation and documentation techniques. The research was conducted in the period May-June 2024. The analysis technique used the Miles & Huberman version of the Interactive Model. The analysis in question consists of three activity elements that take place simultaneously, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (verification). In this view, the three types of analysis and data collection activities are cyclical and interactive processes (Milles & Huberman, 1992).

Qualitative research does not recognize the terms random sampling, sampling size, sampling area, and sampling method. In qualitative research, the terms informant and snowballing sampling are better known. In fact, the number of informants does not determine whether the research is acute or not. It could be that in qualitative research, there is only one informant (Basrowi & Sukidin, 2002). Some of the informants in this research were obtained through snowballing sampling. These informants include school principal, teachers, students, parents and community members. To maintain their privacy, informants in this research are only referred to by their initials.

At first, this research was not designed intentionally. This study began with a small chat, when Palm Kids Elementary School invited orphans in the area where the author lived. They were invited to a charity event, early April 2024. Since then, the author has conducted interviews with informants who attended the invitation at Palm Kids Elementary School. From there, the story about a life of tolerance in a school with religious diversity emerged. Life in a basic educational institution, which is beyond my expectations, is very interesting to be appointed as a research object. So, I, the researcher, decided to conduct research at that school during April-May-June 2024.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Multiculturalism and Multicultural Community*

True multiculturalism presupposes the unity and coherence of state policies, practices and ideologies. It cannot be a matter of the state or society alone, because it must simultaneously involve all social and state institutions based on the same principles (Adygezalova, 2021). Multiculturalism is intended to respect different cultures and give them a constitutionally equal place; no one culture is dominant over another culture so that one culture can disappear (Dunghav, 2021). Multiculturalism in Indonesia is something that cannot be avoided. However, it cannot be denied that the face of Indonesian

multiculturalism so far is not good and at any time conflicts may arise (Abdin & Tuharea, 2023). Indonesia is a multicultural nation, a real multicultural country, and it can be the biggest multicultural community in the world. A multicultural nation is a nation in which various ethnic and cultural groups can live peacefully side by side with the principle of coexistence, which is characterized by a willingness to respect other cultures. This pluralistic condition can also be captured by religion, then religion regulates it to maintain the balance of a pluralistic society (Nashihin, 2022).

Banyumas Regency is one of the districts located in Central Java Province. This district consists of 27 sub-districts and 331 villages. There are at least 811 basic education institutions in this district. Of the 811, there are 761 public elementary schools and 50 private elementary schools (Tim BPS, 2023). One of the 50 private elementary schools is Palm Kids Elementary School Purwokerto. At a glance, this school has no difference with other schools. The significant difference is that the most of members of Palm Kids Elementary School are speaking multi-languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, and English). From this scene, people can say it is a multilingual school. More than that, the students adhere to different religions (Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism) and they also come from various ethnicities. From this view, it can be said that Palm Kids Elementary School Purwokerto is a multicultural community in the truest sense. Currently, there are 250 students studying at this school. The diversity of students' religious beliefs over the last five years can be seen in Table 1 below. At the request of the school management, the researcher considered presenting the data in the form of percentages.

Table 1. The Diversity of Student's Religious Beliefs
(in the last five years)

No.	Religion	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1.	Islam	31.69	32.66	35.65	39.67	47.20
2.	Confucian	0.55	0.50	0.43	0.41	0.40
3.	Christian	39.34	38.69	36.96	34.71	31.60
4.	Catholic	24.59	24.12	23.91	21.90	17.20
5.	Hindu	2.73	3.02	2.17	2.07	2.40
6.	Buddha	1.09	1.01	0.87	1.24	1.20
Total		100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: primary data, processed.

As a note, students take religion lessons according to their respective religious beliefs. In practice, for the same schedule, students will join groups to take Religion Subjects in separate places, taught by Religion Teachers according to their respective religions.

"Actually, my main motivation for sending my son to this school is because this school uses an international language of instruction (English). After that, I just found out that the students in this school have different religious beliefs. However, I am very proud because the attitude of tolerance has been instilled in the children since early on. And, my son is comfortable and easy to make friends with students who have different religious beliefs," said GI (43 years old), one of the parents.

In short, the religious diversity in this school is a source of pride for the students' parents because it instills an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect.

3.2. Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is an inseparable part of character education. One of the central issues that is a hot topic in the world of education today is character education (Saputri & Sukartono, 2023). Character education is a necessity to face the challenges of character shifts that are currently being faced (Aryadiningrat, Sundawa, & Suryadi, 2023); it is a potential answer to the current moral problem (Wandari & Rohana, 2023); it is expected to be the main foundation in the success of a golden generation

that is noble, moral, ethical, cultured and civilized based on the Pancasila philosophy (Fradila & Dahlan, 2023).

Multicultural education can be understood as an educational model about differences in societal realities and about justice for all cultural expressions (Zamzami & Majid, 2021); it is an urgent matter for students to develop a sense of pride as citizens of the nation, foster democratic attitudes, mutual respect, honesty and tolerance. Multicultural education is expected to foster the resilience and flexibility of the nation's citizens in facing conflict (Budiono, 2021). The multicultural education paradigm includes cultural preservation, social justice, equality, unity in diversity, and social interaction. The more people apply these values, the faster they will achieve a peaceful and harmonious life (Jayadi, Abduh, & Basri, 2022).

In multicultural learning, the process of digging up the roots of social injustice and suspicion between groups is the beginning of opening up self-awareness to change injustice. One source of injustice lies in a person's thinking system, therefore, the process of change also begins with changing the thinking system (Moeis, 2014). The Indonesian nation is currently facing various problems that indicate low behavior that shows respect for multiculturalism even though the issue of multiculturalism has become a public discourse. Various approaches recommended by the behavioral psychology school can help Indonesian society become accustomed to behavior that respects multiculturalism. Habituating behaviour that respects multiculturalism will create a new generation that respects the existence of ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity (Nashori, 2016).

The Indonesian nation has the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and Pancasila, which are the foundations for maintaining unity amidst existing cultural diversity (Wirada et al., 2023). This nation's multicultural awareness is not something that comes from outside, but local wisdom that has been created for a long time. However, considering the unequal access to education in society, the potential for conflict in multicultural societies always exists (Liata & Fazal, 2021). Multicultural education is urgently needed in educational practice. This is because education with a multicultural perspective is believed to be able to develop students into individuals who are not only proud of themselves (their culture, language and other specialties), but they are also able to recognize, accept and respect the different specialties of other people so that they live in harmony (Tarnizi, 2020). However, multicultural education is a part of character education. According to Azyumardi Azra, the praxis of multicultural education can be carried out through three domains of education, namely formal, informal and non-formal education. Multicultural education in a non-formal scope starts from the family. In the formal scope, this is to integrate the values of multicultural education in every subject. In an informal scope, it is carried out through youth organizations, mass organizations, and other community forums (Hamzah, Idris, & Otta, 2022).

Practically, multicultural education is necessary to provide an understanding that differences are God's will and must be grateful for with a spirit of tolerance. The success of multicultural education is marked when people have knowledge, skills and attitudes that are manifested in real life which is full of tolerance, not hostile to each other which leads to conflict due to differences in ethnicity, religion, culture and so on (Abdin & Tuharea, 2023). Multicultural education is needed by the Indonesian people to reduce the occurrence of horizontal conflicts between communities, whether due to differences in culture, ethnicity, customs or religion. It emphasizes learning to respect differences because differences are natural laws that must be faced, not a source of division between humans. Multicultural education in Indonesia is still looking for an appropriate and effective form that can enlighten all students (Ambarudin, 2016).

Precise and careful efforts are needed to raise the collective consciousness of the Indonesian people in order to create lasting harmony in national life. Teachers are one of the most important components in education. Therefore, teachers must be able to be role models in creating a multicultural life that is applied in everyday life both at school and in society (Ambarudin, 2016). In fact, Palm Kids Elementary School Purwokerto has been carrying out all these ideal actions.

3.3. Character Building

In teaching and learning activities, Palm Kids Elementary School Purwokerto applies the Merdeka Plus Curriculum and uses bilingual instruction: Bahasa Indonesia and English. This school really pays attention to the importance of character education lessons –it is called “Character Building”, in efforts to develop the character of its students. Character education at this school is given two hours of lessons per week. In short, multicultural education in this school is an inseparable part of character education. Every week, students receive a number of lessons: Religious Education, Citizenship Education (PPKN), Indonesian Language, Mathematics, Natural and Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Physical Education (Sports & Health), Javanese Language, Local Culture, English, Mandarin, and Computer Operating Skills. Apart from the subjects mentioned, Palm Kids Elementary School Purwokerto provides a special portion for the Character Building subject of two lesson hours per week. In other words, multicultural education at this school is packaged as a character-building subject. In total, there are 12 Character Building themes taught at Palm Kids Elementary School as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Twelve Themes of Character Building

No.	Theme	Learning Time
1.	Learn to Be Responsible	First-year
2.	Becoming Independent	First-year
3.	Learn to Respect	Second year
4.	Be Disciplined	Second year
5.	Be Tolerant	Third year
6.	Be Honest	Third year
7.	Learn Empathy	Fourth-year
8.	Be Humble	Fourth-year
9.	Develop Your Creativity	Fifth year
10.	Show Friendliness to Others	Fifth year
11.	Dare to be a Riskaker	Sixth year
12.	Building Strong Leadership	Sixth year

Source: primary data, processed

Like schools in general, Palm Kids Elementary School Purwokerto implements five days of effective study. Class hours start at 07.20 to 12.30 WIB for Grade 1 students; 07.20 to 13.30 WIB for Grade 2; and 07.20 to 14.30 WIB for Grade 3 to Grade 6, from Monday to Thursday. As for Fridays specifically, class hours start at 07.20 to 11.00 WIB. Multicultural education in this is packed formally in the subject of character education, which called Character Building. Although certain themes of Character Building are taught effectively in certain years, there are no rigid restrictions. Take the theme of leadership, for example.

In the school curriculum, the leadership theme is formally taught through Character Building in the sixth year. However, in practice, the theme of leadership has been introduced to students since the first year. Religion lessons at schools tend to be taught simply to strengthen faith, without being accompanied by an awareness of dialogue with other religions; this condition makes religious education exclusive and intolerant. Therefore, a multicultural education model could be an alternative (Junaidi, 2018). Multicultural education is important to equip students to be sensitive in dealing with social problems that are rooted in differences in ethnicity, race, religion, and values (T. Wulandari, 2020).

“The delivery of certain themes (12 themes in Character Building) in certain years is decided through a meeting forum. We, the teachers, together with the curriculum team, had quite intensive and long discussions, until finally a decision was made,” said NA (41), the principal of Palm Kids Elementary School.

“The decision was made by considering various things, including the psychological development of students. So, we decided that certain themes are relevant to be given in the early years, and other themes are relevant for the following years. While the themes ‘Dare to be a Risk-taker’ and ‘Building Strong Leadership’ are considered appropriate to be delivered in the sixth year,” explained NA.

3.4. Habituation

The internalization of multicultural values in education can be achieved through habituation strategies, teaching kindness, fostering empathy, and leading by example (Muizzuddin, 2021). At Palm Kids Elementary School, religion teachers play a crucial role in instilling tolerance and mutual respect among students. Multicultural education is fundamentally integrated into religious studies, providing a strong foundation for fostering inclusivity. This foundation is further reinforced through character education (Character Building), which is embedded in the daily learning process.

As a result, despite their diverse religious beliefs, students at Palm Kids Elementary School coexist peacefully, demonstrating tolerance and respect for one another. This harmonious environment extends beyond the students, fostering a culture of mutual understanding and cooperation among parents, guardians, and the entire academic community. The school’s approach exemplifies how character education, when combined with multicultural and religious studies, can effectively nurture a respectful and united school environment.

Apart from the twelve character-building themes, there are several supporting activities carried out at Palm Kids Elementary School, such as habituation. These activities are scheduled daily, weekly, annually and temporarily. These supporting activities implemented in this multicultural school include (1) Leader of Today, (2) Students on Duty, (3) Greetings and Cheerful Morning, and (4) Celebration Day. Basically, multicultural education is a concept that provides students with equal opportunities to obtain education at school, regardless of differences in gender, race, class and religion (Srinarwati, 2023). For your information, at Palm Kids Elementary School there is no permanent elected Class Leader; the reason is, every student has the right and is given the same opportunity to become Class Leader. The school promotes an activity so-called “Leader of Today”, a kind of Class Leader who is valid for one day. The Leader of Today acts like a normal Class Leader. His duty is leading the reading of prayers at the start and end of lessons, ensuring the class atmosphere remains steady before the teacher enters the class. He also has the right to choose whom will be the first person to enter or leave the class, the second, and so forth. With the Leader of Today pattern, every student has the same opportunity to become a “Class Leader for a Day” in their respective class. The daily thematic activity entitled “Leader of Today” is intended to instill a spirit of leadership in all students, and every student has the same opportunity to become a leader in their class. Some of the duties of the Leader of Today have been mentioned previously.

Meanwhile, “Students on Duty” is a kind of daily picket schedule. Every student who is scheduled to be on duty on the day of rest is responsible for ensuring cleanliness and tidiness on that day. This is one way to instill a sense of responsibility for the tasks or obligations given and entrusted to students. Every morning before entering class, children group together in the school yard according to their respective classes. They will receive greetings from the teacher on duty (Teacher on Duty), as well as a welcome from the class, whose turn is to perform various things. Performance can be in the form of conveying characters, entertaining things, singing and so on. Monday morning’s special activity is the Flag Ceremony. Tuesday is a morning greeting by teachers and school staff, welcoming students and continuing to sing the national song together. Wednesday is the morning greeting activity, followed by student performances, which can be modern dances, traditional dances, short dramas, material presentations, singing, and the like. Thursday is the morning greeting agenda, followed by literacy activities in the library in turns per class. Friday is the morning greeting agenda, followed by general prayer guided by each religious teacher according to the students’ religious beliefs. The agenda for building togetherness and joy entitled “Morning Greeting” or “Cheerful Morning” is carried out

routinely every morning for around 30 minutes, before students receive lessons in their respective classes. With various strategies, teachers need to condition and make the classroom atmosphere pleasant (A. D. Wulandari & Nurjaman, 2023). This arrangement will attract students' attention so that they become active and more relaxed in learning, and more easily absorb the learning material provided (Djaafara, 2018). Teachers play a very important role in implementing fun learning and accommodating the diversity of students with different religions (Suryaman & Juharyanto, 2020). And, all teachers of Palm Kids Elementary School carry out all of these, every morning since the students arrive at school.

Apart from formal learning, Palm Kids Elementary School always organizes religious holiday activities held by its students. Celebrations of religious holidays are carried out by adherents of certain religions and witnessed by all students of different beliefs. Students can watch various activities at their own school, such as Cheerful Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr Celebration, Chinese New Year Celebration, Christmas Celebration, and so on. During the month of Ramadan, Muslim students convey the theme of the Ramadan Fast in a kind of mini performance. They conveyed about the Ramadhan fast carried out by Muslims, fasting starts from Imsak time (before dawn) until Maghrib time, without eating or drinking for a whole day within a period of one month. An example of a fairly simple form of performance, a student holds a pamphlet that says Ramadhan Fasting, while another student explains: what Ramadhan fasting is like, when it starts, when it ends, things you shouldn't do, etc. On another occasion, Confucian students explained about Chinese New Year, Catholic students talked about Easter, and so on.

It has been proven that celebrating different cultural traditions in a city has made its people more united. Singkawang City, a city with a multi-ethnic population, has strong religious and cultural traditions. It turns out that celebrating diverse cultural traditions (Imlek, Cap Go Meh, Gawai Dayak, Naik Dango, Saprahan) can further unite its diverse citizens (Juniardi & Marjito, 2018). In a multicultural environment, boundaries that have been traditionally recognized such as race, ethnicity, language, religion, and social and political differences are increasingly blurred. In the future, increased involvement of people from different cultures will occur more frequently (Masita, 2023). Therefore, it is urgent and relevant to equip students as potential future generations with multicultural education. According to Wilson, multicultural education is related to education and teaching designed for the cultures of several different races in an educational system. This teaching and learning approach is based on building consensus, respect, and fostering cultural pluralism in a racialized society. Multicultural education recognizes and incorporates positive racial privileges into the classroom atmosphere (Wilson, 1997). In line with globalization and advances in communications technology, every nation faces increasingly complex challenges. So, the sense of multiculturalism must be continuously improved, and there is no harm in learning and taking lessons from other nations or countries (Patras, Hidayat, Maksun, & Nurhasanah, 2022).

Instilling good character and making it a habit in daily life will foster good and commendable attitudes in students. Respectful and friendly attitudes towards others, for example, can at least be traced from the following facts.

"I was very excited when I visited Palm Kids Purwokerto Elementary School in the Ramadhan Ceria program. At that time I came with several orphans to the event. The students, parents and teachers of this school welcomed us with great warmth," said NIR (38), a local resident.

"I was also very surprised when my group and I visited this school. The students are very friendly. They greeted us cheerfully, and they even carried our bags," said EHA (51), another local resident.

The students' friendliness is felt not only by the community or visiting guests but also by the school's security guards.

"Palm Kids Elementary School students are very friendly to me, who is only a school security guard. They also do not differentiate between me as a school security guard and fellow janitor with the

teachers and school employees. In fact, the children like to present their learning materials in front of us, in small groups consisting of 4-5 students," said US (45), a school security guard.

In fact, the results of habituation in schools are also felt by parents of students in the home environment.

"Since my child went to Palm Kids Elementary School, I feel that he is more independent and disciplined. After school, he changes his own clothes, puts his bag and shoes in the place provided. Takes out his lunch box and puts it in the kitchen," said GI (43), father of a student.

"Apart from that, he seems more sociable and confident. He doesn't feel inferior when he meets friends from a new environment," added GI.

The interview results highlight the successful internalization of good character traits among students at Palm Kids Elementary School. Through consistent habituation and character education, students naturally develop commendable attitudes, such as respect, friendliness, and empathy in their daily interactions.

Community members who have engaged with the school express their admiration for the students' warm and welcoming nature. Visitors note the students' enthusiasm, hospitality, and willingness to assist, demonstrating the values instilled through the school's character-building approach. The school's commitment to fostering inclusivity is also reflected in how students interact with staff, treating security guards, janitors, and teachers with equal respect.

Beyond the school environment, parents observe significant behavioral improvements at home. Students display increased independence, discipline, and confidence, applying the values they learn at school to their daily routines. This transformation indicates that the character education provided at Palm Kids Elementary School extends beyond the classroom, shaping students into responsible and socially aware individuals.

Given the positive impact of these educational practices, the school should continue reinforcing such behaviors by providing appropriate recognition. Rewards in the form of praise, appreciation, or other forms of encouragement can further motivate students to uphold these commendable attitudes, ensuring that character education remains a core pillar of their development.

4. CONCLUSION

Multicultural education in Indonesia as a pluralistic nation has a very urgent position. This kind of education is very strategic to be given to students from an early age, at least at the elementary school level. In general, the implementation of multicultural education in schools can be divided into two approach patterns. First, providing Multicultural Education as a separate subject (Character Building). Second, multicultural values are given to students by integrating them into various subjects. As a multicultural community, Palm Kids Elementary School has successfully implemented these two approaches. Multicultural education at this school is not only provided in theoretical form, but is also practiced in real life at school environment. Apart from that, various supporting activities are also held, such as Leader of Today, Students on Duty, Cheerful Morning, and Celebration Day –celebrating religious holidays.

The success of implementing multicultural education at Palm Kids Elementary is a portrait of hope for the success of our education in the future. Therefore, other schools need not hesitate to implement similar policies according to the potential and conditions of the local school. In addition, Multicultural Education, with its various names (*Budi Pekerti; Akhlak Karimah*) also needs to be implemented at the junior high and high school levels. Each school can innovate in compiling a character education curriculum that is in accordance with its environmental conditions and local wisdom. In line with that, further studies need to be conducted that examine the implementation of multicultural education,

which has been running and is relatively successful at the junior high and high school levels. Further studies can also be in the form of longitudinal studies on the impact of multicultural education on student behavior at any level.

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