

## Multireligious Culture for the Development of Tolerance Character in Elementary School

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### ABSTRACT

The study entitled Multireligious Culture for the Development of Tolerance Character was motivated by the idealism of schools as safe spaces that facilitate interfaith interaction. However, reality shows that there is bullying against Catholic students, exclusion of Hindu students, and feelings of marginalization among non-Muslim teachers due to the lack of multireligious interaction. This condition prompted the school to initiate a multireligious culture as a strategy to strengthen tolerance. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the implementation of a multireligious culture, the profile of the school community's tolerance character, and its contribution to the development of student tolerance. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews with informants selected using purposive sampling, including the principal, teachers, and students of Islam, Catholicism, and Hinduism. Data analysis was conducted through reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, with validity testing using source and technique triangulation. The results of the study show that: 1) multireligious culture is interpreted as a system of values, beliefs, and social practices based on three layers of culture (basic assumptions, values, and artifacts) that emphasize harmony and non-discrimination; 2) the character of tolerance is reflected through six indicators: recognition of differences, mutual respect, freedom of belief, coexistence, self-control, and justice; 3) the contribution of multireligious culture to the development of the character of tolerance takes place systematically through three layers of culture. First, artifacts in the form of symbols of love and joint activities between religious adherents; second, embraced values, namely mutual respect, harmony, and justice, are instilled through vision & mission, rules and regulations, and role models; third, the underlying assumptions of the school community are that diverse religious beliefs are a natural reality and that human relationships are inclusive, egalitarian, and collaborative.

## I. INTROUCTION

Educational institutions consisting of students and teachers with diverse religious backgrounds have a strategic role in building the character of tolerance through the creation of an inclusive multireligious environment[1]. Ideally, schools should be social spaces that facilitate positive interactions, cooperation, and the formation of interfaith friendships, so that every individual feels safe, valued, and is part of a harmonious school community[2]. However, the reality on the ground shows that intolerance is still a real phenomenon in the world of education. Qualitatively, this phenomenon can be seen from the bullying of Catholic students, the exclusion of Hindu students, and the feeling of marginalization experienced by non-Muslim teachers at Yogyakarta before the existence of the multireligious cultural program[3]. In Islam, this behavior is a form of bullying that is prohibited[4]. This phenomenon shows that religious diversity in schools does not automatically result in an attitude of tolerance, but rather requires a planned and systematic effort through a supportive school culture.

Various previous studies have examined the formation of tolerance through multicultural education, religious activities, social activities, and habituation in school culture[5][ 6][ 7]. These studies show that joint activities, multicultural education, teacher example, and collaboration between schools and parents can be effective means of developing student tolerance[8][9]. In addition, pluralist education

that emphasizes dialogue, communication, and active participation in diversity has also been shown to play a role in shaping mutual respect[10]. However, most of the research was conducted in schools with homogeneous religious backgrounds, so it has not specifically examined how multireligious culture is applied and functions in the context of public schools that have real religious diversity in daily life.

The limitations of previous research show that there is a gap in studies, especially related to the implementation of multireligious culture in the context of elementary schools with the composition of school residents who are truly multireligious. Previous research has emphasized more conceptual or programmatic aspects of multicultural education, but has not in-depth analyzed how multireligious culture as a school culture can shape the character of tolerance through real social interactions between students and teachers of different religions. Thus, this research has novelty in examining multireligious culture as a real practice that lives in a public school environment with concrete religious diversity, as well as its impact on the formation of student tolerance character. The specific purpose of this study is to analyze the multireligious culture that develops and analyze the character of student tolerance in that context. This research focuses on how activities, habits, and interactions in multireligious school cultures contribute to the formation of mutual respect, cooperation, and respect for religious differences. Thus, this study not only complements previous research, but also provides a more contextual and empirical understanding of the role of multireligious culture in shaping the character of tolerance in the elementary school environment.

Furthermore, this study seeks to prove that a multireligious culture that is implemented in a structured manner through school activities, habituation, and social interaction can be an effective means of developing students' tolerance character. The main argument tested in this study is that multireligious culture not only serves as a symbol of diversity, but also as a social and cultural mechanism capable of shaping values, attitudes, and tolerant behaviors in real life in school life. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of multicultural education studies and practical contributions for schools in building an inclusive and harmonious educational environment.

## II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the type of case study research to deeply understand multireligious culture and its role in developing the character of student tolerance in SD Negeri Yogyakarta[11]. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to explore the meaning, experience, and social interaction that occurs in the natural context of the school environment. The case study is used because this study focuses on the analysis of a multireligious cultural program and practice in a limited system, namely a public elementary school that has religious diversity[12]. In this study, the researcher plays the role of the main instrument that directly collects and analyzes data in the field with the position of a non-participant observer[11].

The research was carried out which was chosen purposively because it had school residents with diverse religious backgrounds, namely Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, and Hinduism[11]. The research lasted for four months in the odd semester of the 2025/2026 school year. The research informants consisted of eight school principals, religious teachers from various religions, classroom teachers, and students. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in school activities and their experiences related to multireligious culture and interreligious interactions in the school environment[13][11].

Data collection techniques were carried out through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Non-participant observations were carried out by directly observing the social interactions of students and teachers, school activities, and multireligious cultural practices without the direct involvement of the researcher in these activities. In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face using semi-structured interview guidelines to obtain data on the views, experiences, and

practices of multireligious cultures as well as the character of students' tolerance[14]. Documentation is used to complement data through the analysis of school documents, such as the school's vision and mission, discipline, activity programs, school archives, and documentation of activities relevant to the focus of the research[12].

The research instrument consists of the researcher as the main instrument supported by observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation guidelines. The instrument was developed based on organizational culture theory and tolerance theory to ensure that the data collected was appropriate to the research focus. In addition, assistive devices such as voice recorders and cameras are used to support the accuracy of data and documentation of research activities[11].

The validity of the data was tested using source triangulation techniques and triangulation techniques. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing data obtained from school principals, teachers, and students, while technical triangulation is carried out by comparing data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. This technique is used to ensure the credibility, consistency, and validity of the data so that the results of the research can be scientifically accounted for[12][13].

The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data reduction is carried out by selecting and simplifying data that is relevant to the focus of the research. The presentation of data is carried out in the form of a systematic narrative description to facilitate understanding of the patterns and relationships between data. Conclusions are drawn gradually and continuously during the research process to obtain valid and in-depth findings. Through this process, the research aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of multireligious culture and its role in developing students' tolerant character in the school environment[15].

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

##### A. Multireligious Culture

The results of research show that at the basic *underlying assumptions*, multireligious culture has been internalized as a deep belief of school residents. In the aspect of the nature of reality and truth, religious diversity is seen as a natural and accepted social reality. Meanwhile, in the aspect of the *nature of human relationships*, social relations are built on the basis of cooperation, togetherness, and egalitarian attitudes without separation based on religion. The interaction between students that takes place naturally without partitions shows that tolerance has become a collective habit that shapes the mindset and behavior of school residents spontaneously in daily life.

At the espoused values layer, research found that tolerance is consciously formulated and instilled through the vision, mission, and discipline of the school. The values of mutual respect, living in harmony, and not discriminating against friends are emphasized in school policies and strengthened through the example of teachers in the learning process and daily interactions. Teachers show fairness to all students, use language that respects differences, and consistently remind the importance of maintaining speech and behavior towards friends of different religions. Thus, the value of tolerance is not only written in formal documents, but also brought to life in educational practices that take place on a sustainable basis. Meanwhile, in the artifacts layer, multireligious culture is seen in real symbols and activities that can be observed directly in the school environment. The existence of the *symbol of Gemilang Cinta* as a representation of unity in diversity, interfaith activities such as *lanterns of kindness*, joint community service, and sharing stories of holy days, is a concrete form of the implementation of tolerance. In addition, schools also facilitate the implementation of worship according to their respective religions side by side. All of these practices show that the multireligious culture at SD Negeri does not

stop at the level of discourse, but is present as a life culture that is structured, experienced, and carried out in real terms by all school residents. The results can be seen through the following image:

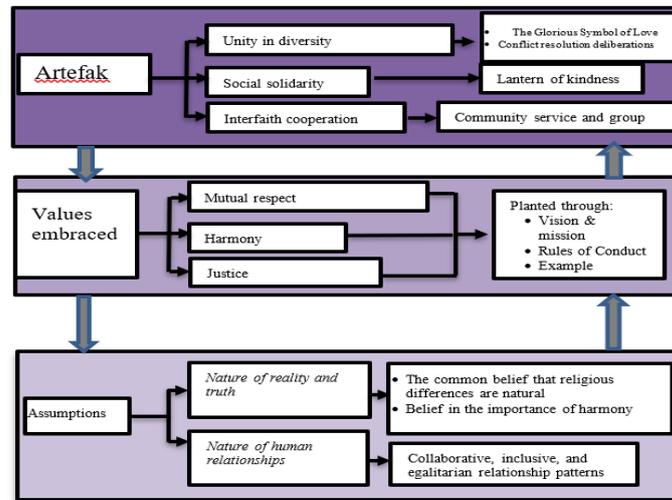


Figure 1. Multireligious Cultural Layer

Figure 1. is a picture of the multireligious cultural layer which explains that multireligious culture consists of three layers, namely: The first layer of artifacts contains several values, namely unity in diversity, social solidarity, and interfaith cooperation which is manifested in glorious love, conflict resolution deliberation, lanterns of kindness, and community service and group work. The second layer is the values embraced by in carrying out multireligious activities, namely mutual respect, harmony and justice which are instilled through vision and mission, discipline and teacher examples. The deepest layer is an assumption based on 2 aspects, namely first, the essence of reality and truth that appears in the common belief that religious differences are natural, and the importance of harmony. Second, the essence of human relationships is a pattern of collaborative, inclusive and egalitarian relationships.

## B. Character of Student Tolerance

The results of the research show that the character of student tolerance develops through six main indicators. First, the recognition of differences can be seen from the involvement of students in heterogeneous group work without religious separation and natural play interactions. Second, mutual respect is reflected when students maintain calm when friends carry out worship and comply with rules that emphasize the prohibition of discrimination. Third, freedom of belief can be seen from the provision of space and worship schedules for each religion without coercion to follow the practices of other religions. All observational findings, interviews, and documentation show that students not only understand differences conceptually, but also accept them in their daily practice at school.

In addition, the character of tolerance is also seen through the willingness to coexist, which is reflected in community service activities, class pickets, and joint activities without choosing friends based on religion. Self-control appears when differences or clashes in activity schedules are resolved through deliberation without prolonged conflicts. Meanwhile, fairness and non-discrimination are realized through the division of ceremonial tasks, class leadership, and participation opportunities that are given equally to all students. Thus, tolerance has not only become a value taught, but has become a real attitude that lives in social interactions, school policies, and students' daily learning experiences. The following is a picture of the conclusion chart of the results of the tolerance character research :

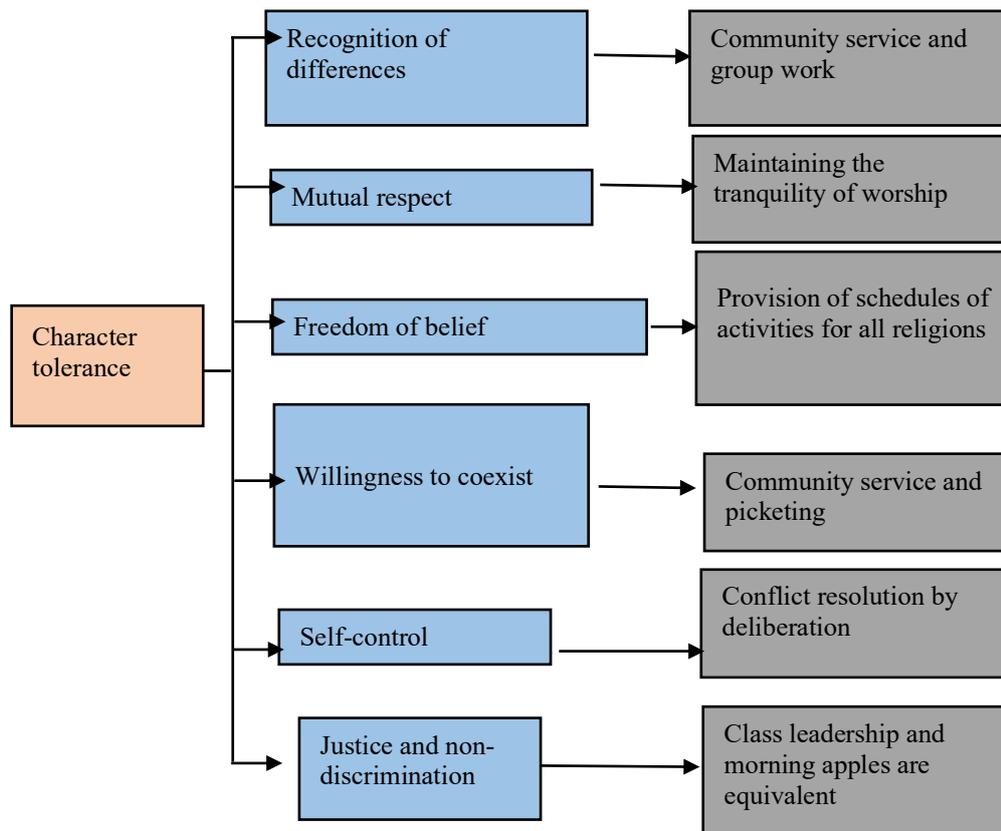


Figure 2. Character of Tolerance

Figure 2 shows 6 tolerance characters, first, the recognition of differences seen from community service and group work. Second, mutual respect is reflected in the attitude of maintaining each other's calm during worship. Third, freedom of belief is evidenced by the existence of an ibadlah schedule for all religions. Fourth, the willingness to coexist is marked by community service and picketing between religious believers. Fifth, self-control is evidenced by the resolution of conflicts by deliberation. Sixth, justice and non-discrimination, equal class leadership and apples.

### C. The Role of Multireligious Culture in the Development of Tolerance Character

The development of students' tolerance character is systematically formed through three cultural layers, namely artifacts, *espoused values*, and basic underlying assumptions. The three layers contribute integrally in forming six indicators of tolerance, namely recognition of differences, respect, freedom of belief, willingness to coexist, self-control, and justice and non-discrimination. At the artifact layer, multireligious culture is seen in real symbols and practices that can be observed directly. The findings show the existence of glorious symbols of love, lantern activities of kindness, interfaith community service, provision of worship schedules for all religions, and deliberation in adjusting the schedule of activities to worship times. The image documentation shows that the symbol of unity in religious diversity reinforces the recognition of differences. The worship schedule facilitated by the school reflects freedom of belief. Meanwhile, the practice of dialogue in resolving conflicts of activity schedules shows self-control and institutional support for harmonious relations between groups. These artifacts become a medium of direct experience for students to practice the value of tolerance in daily school life.

In the *espoused values*, tolerance is consciously expressed through the school's vision and mission, discipline, and teacher example. The main values found are mutual respect, harmony, and justice. The value of mutual respect forms an attitude of respecting students' religious differences. The value of harmony fosters a willingness to coexist and the ability to control oneself in conflict situations. The value of fairness shapes the character of non-discrimination and equality of status among students. The documentation shows the teacher greeting and treating all students regardless of religion, which serves as a model in the process of internalizing values. In addition, the existence of written rules on the obligation to maintain harmony and the prohibition of discrimination strengthens institutional norms that support the creation of positive relationships between groups.

At the layer of basic assumptions, tolerance has taken root as a collective belief of school residents. In the aspect of the *nature of reality and truth*, religious diversity is understood as a social reality that is reasonable and must be accepted. This belief forms the recognition of differences as part of a shared life. In the aspect of the *nature of human relationships*, the pattern of relationships that develop is inclusive, egalitarian, and collaborative. Documentation shows students from different religious backgrounds working in heterogeneous groups without separation of religious identities, and playing together naturally without awkwardness. This interaction reflects the fulfillment of the principle of equality of status and common purpose in social relations, while showing that tolerance has been internalized as a spontaneous habit, not just obedience to formal rules. Thus, the results of the study confirm that the multireligious culture at SD Negeri Kasihan is not only present in the form of formal symbols and policies, but has been internalized as a system of shared values and beliefs. The integration between artifacts, values adhered to, and basic assumptions shape the character of student tolerance consistently in daily school life, so that tolerance develops as a real practice as well as a collective consciousness of school residents. To be easy to understand, the following is a picture of multireligious culture for the development of tolerance character .

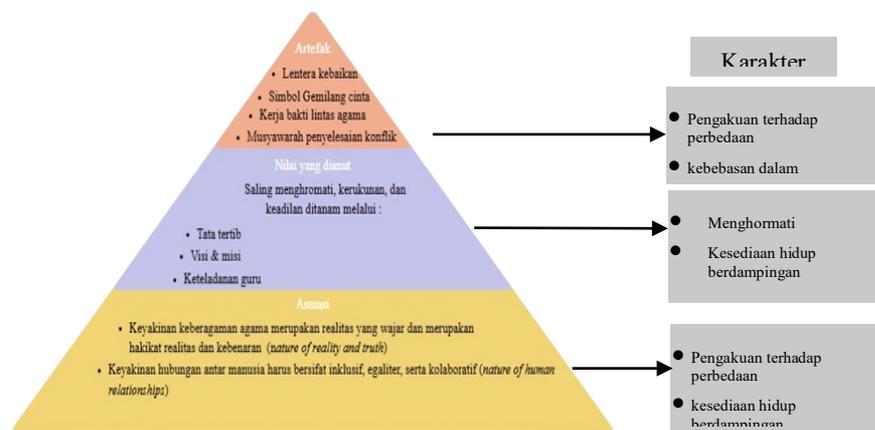


Figure 3. Multireligious Culture That Encourages Character Tolerance

Figure 3 explains that the multireligious culture at SD Negeri is pitiful seen through three layers. The layers that are visible are artifacts in the form of lanterns of kindness, glorious symbols of love, interfaith community service, conflict resolution deliberation form the character of recognition of differences, freedom of belief and equality of one hundred. The layers of values that are embraced, namely mutual respect, harmony, and justice are instilled through the vision and mission, discipline and example of teachers. The bottom layer that is invisible is the assumption that religious diversity is natural and that human relations are egalitarian, inclusive, and collaborative.

## Discussion

This research answers the formulation of the problem of how multireligious culture is formed and how this culture plays a role in developing the character of student tolerance at SD Negeri Yogyakarta. The results show that multireligious cultures are formed through the integration of values, practices, and social interactions that support religious diversity[16]. This culture is reflected in inclusive student interaction, school policies that support tolerance, and social habits that take place in a sustainable manner[17]. This finding is in line with Wantini et al who affirm that the internalization of religious values and social experiences of Islamic education plays an important role in the development of students' moral maturity in the context of formal education, including mutual respect and harmony. These findings suggest that students' tolerance character develops through direct social experiences in a school environment that supports diversity[18]. This is in line with recent research showing that an inclusive school culture plays an important role in shaping attitudes of tolerance and reducing social prejudice in students[19][20]. The concept of open and contextual value integration in religious education is also highlighted in the context of the dynamics of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, which shows the importance of integrating values and social practices in educational institutions to foster openness and understanding between groups[21]. This culture is reflected in inclusive student interaction, school policies that support tolerance, and social habits that take place in a sustainable manner. These findings are in line with research showing that Generation Z exhibits an open and inclusive perception of religious moderation, emphasizing the importance of social experiences in shaping mutual respect and harmony as part of religious learning[22].

The findings of this study can be explained through the social contact theory put forward by Allport, which states that direct interaction between individuals from different groups can reduce prejudice and increase mutual respect[2]. In the context of basic education, the approach to Islamic educational psychology developed supports the habituation of social values through learning that emphasizes students' real experiences in their social interactions[23]. In this study, students who were used to interacting with friends of different religions showed an open attitude, worked together without discrimination, and respected differences. Recent empirical research has also shown that social interaction in a multicultural educational environment contributes significantly to the development of students' attitudes of tolerance and empathy[24][25]. Thus, the findings of this study confirm that social interaction is an important factor in the formation of students' tolerance character.

In addition, the multireligious culture found in this study can also be explained through a consistent character value education strategy, as discussed in the context of religious character formation through parenting methods that involve religious and social practices in a sustainable manner, which is parallel to the function of school culture in the formation of tolerance[26]. The strengthening of these values is in line with the view of who emphasized that religious education and school culture play a strategic role in forming awareness of diversity and inclusive attitudes through habituation and example that are integrated in the education system[27]. Similarly, Widodo emphasized that strengthening character education in elementary schools must be carried out holistically through the integration of values in the curriculum, school culture, and social interaction of school residents so as to form a tolerant and humanist social character[28]. This is also corroborated by Schein's theory, which states that organizational culture is formed through basic assumptions, values adhered to, and artifacts that influence the behavior of organizational members[19]. In the context of this study, the values of tolerance embedded in school policies, teachers' examples, and daily social practices form social norms that encourage students to be tolerant. These findings are supported by previous research showing that school culture has a significant influence on the formation of students' character, particularly in aspects of tolerance and social attitudes[17].

Furthermore, this research shows that multireligious culture functions not only as a formal policy, but also as a social practice that is internalized in students' daily lives. This can be seen from the absence of discrimination, interfaith cooperation, and mutual respect between students. These findings are in line with international research showing that an inclusive school environment contributes to the formation of positive social identities and the development of students' tolerant characters[29]. National research also shows that school culture habituation plays an important role in shaping the character of tolerance through the process of internalizing values[30]. A new contribution from this study is to show that multireligious cultures can serve as an effective social mechanism in developing the character of tolerance through habituation, social interaction, and example. These findings expand the theory of organizational culture by showing that multireligious culture in the context of primary education can be a practical strategy in shaping students' tolerance characters[2]. Thus, this study reinforces and modifies the understanding that the formation of tolerance characters is not only influenced by formal learning, but also by school culture that is internalized in everyday social interactions[17]. Overall, this research makes an important contribution to the development of educational management science by showing that multireligious culture can be an effective strategy in creating an inclusive educational environment and supporting the development of students' tolerance character. These findings reinforce previous theories and provide an empirical basis for the development of education policies oriented towards strengthening an inclusive and tolerant school culture.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Multireligious culture is interpreted as a system of values, beliefs, and social practices that develop in a multi-religious school environment, which emphasizes living in harmony, mutual respect, and cooperation without discrimination in daily life based on three layers of culture, namely assumptions, values adhered to and artifacts. The character of tolerance is the attitude of accepting and respecting religious differences that are manifested in daily school life. This tolerance is reflected through six main attitudes, namely recognition of differences, mutual respect, freedom of belief, willingness to coexist, self-control, and justice and non-discrimination. The multireligious culture at in the development of students' character is formed through three layers. The first layer that can be seen is artifacts in the form of lanterns of kindness, glorious symbols of love, interfaith community service, conflict resolution deliberation forms the character of recognition of differences, and freedom of belief. The layers of values that are embraced, namely mutual respect, harmony, and justice are instilled through the vision and mission, discipline and example of teachers. The layer of assumption is the shared belief that religious diversity is natural and that human relations are egalitarian, inclusive, and collaborative.

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