



Exploring students' perceptions of multicultural religious education: Strategies for promoting multicultural values in social and educational environments

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ABSTRACT

Background: Multicultural education has emerged globally as a response to the undeniable reality of multiculturalism, driven by the struggle for human rights, democracy, and equality. The diversity of ethnicities and cultures in Indonesia forms the background of this research. Diversity contributes to national development; however, issues in Indonesia also demonstrate how diversity can lead to violence and loss. **Methods:** This study aims to explore students' perceptions of multicultural religious education and their views on the strategies used to instill multicultural values. To ensure scientific rigor, methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation were employed, supported by relevant references. **Findings:** Public Vocational Secondary Schools/Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Negeri 1 Purwokerto (SMKN 1 Purwokerto) provides dedicated spaces for each religion practiced within the school. Additionally, the school organizes a monthly "Religious Friday" event to strengthen the spiritual well-being of both students and teachers. During these events, the school invites religious leaders to deliver lectures. Despite not all students being Muslim, the school strives to be fair; Christian students, for instance, are encouraged to attend church for worship and participate in the "Religious Friday" program. **Conclusion:** Similarly, even if there is only one student practicing Hinduism, Confucianism, or another religion, the school ensures that a religious leader is invited to address their needs. SMK Negeri 1 Purwokerto is firmly committed to implementing a multicultural-based educational curriculum. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This research provides new insights into schools' commitment to inclusivity and the promotion of spiritual well-being through diverse religious practices.

KEYWORDS: multicultural education; religious education; student; students' perceptions.

1. Introduction

Education can be defined as the process of developing and enhancing innate physical and mental abilities in alignment with societal and cultural values for human life. Education is also crucial because, to educate children, a society must achieve a high level of education. Terminologically, the development of human potential that values heterogeneity and pluralism as a result of cultural, ethnic, tribal, ideological, or religious diversity is known as multicultural education (Izzah, 2020).

Multicultural education can be defined in three ways: as an idea, as an effort to improve the quality of education, and as a process of multicultural education. Multicultural education

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is the proposition that all students, regardless of race, social class, gender, or culture, should have equal opportunities to learn in schools (Rijal, 2021).

It is undeniable that multicultural learning is crucial for educational institutions in the era of globalization. With the increasing mobility of people worldwide, educational institutions are encountering increasingly complex cultural diversity. Multicultural education aims to create an educational environment that promotes respect for cultural diversity, cross-cultural understanding, and the resolution of inequalities. Given its importance, multiculturalism must become an integral part of the national curriculum. This integration will ultimately shape a multicultural Indonesian society. In education, multiculturalism is considered a means to resolve conflicts and foster harmony in Indonesia's inherently pluralistic society (Rijal, 2021).

Multicultural education is just as important as Islamic education because it is a process of instilling a way of life that respects, sincerely appreciates, and tolerates cultural diversity within a plural society. Multicultural education is expected to make the nation more adaptable in addressing social conflicts. The role of these two forms of education is vital in shaping students' character and attitudes in an increasingly connected and advanced era. To create an inclusive and relevant educational environment, the foundation lies in the combination of Islamic values, which emphasize justice, compassion, and equality, with a multicultural approach that values cultural diversity.

Religious education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character. Based on various studies and literature, religious education focuses not only on cognitive development but also on the formation of attitudes and behaviors aligned with religious values. This education serves as the foundation for instilling values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and discipline, which act as guidelines in students' interactions with their social environment (Jannah, 2023; Salisah et al., 2024). Through the learning process, students are trained to internalize these values, which are essential in developing a positive personality.

In the digital era, religious education also plays a vital role in helping students face new challenges, such as technology abuse and exposure to unhealthy information. Religious education provides ethical guidance in technology use and supports students in recognizing and strengthening their religious identity, enabling them to better navigate negative influences (Salisah et al., 2024). Overall, religious education holds a central role in shaping a generation of young people with strong character. By instilling moral and ethical values, integrating them into the curriculum, and adapting approaches to the challenges of the digital age, religious education makes a significant contribution in preparing students for the future (Ainiyah, 2013).

In Indonesia, with its motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), it is crucial for schools to implement and develop multicultural education. This reflects Indonesia's status as a nation rich in extraordinary diversity in terms of ethnicity, race, language, and religion. However, the country faces challenges related to low religious awareness that is not aligned with a critical understanding of religious doctrines. This has led to increased hate speech, emotional conflicts, and persecution of those with differing opinions. As a result, the multicultural elements that have long been protected risk being diminished (Intitsal et al., 2024).

The role of multicultural education in shaping students' attitudes and character has become increasingly important in navigating a more interconnected and complex world. To create an inclusive and relevant educational environment, the foundation lies in combining Islamic values—emphasizing fairness, compassion, and equality—with a multicultural approach that respects cultural diversity. This integration not only educates students about religious teachings but also teaches them to value differences, embrace tolerance, and prepare to face global challenges in an increasingly diverse society.

1.1 Multicultural education

The term "multicultural education" is derived from the words "multicultural" and

"education." Education refers to the process of fostering attitudes and behaviors in individuals with the goal of improving human resource quality through teaching, training, processes, actions, and educational approaches. Knowledge transfer, also known as the transfer of knowledge, is another key aspect of education. Linguistically, "multicultural" means "many" or "more than one," while "cultural" originates from the word "culture," which refers to "tradition," "politeness," or "nurturing." Terminologically, multicultural refers to the process of individual development that respects plurality and heterogeneity as a result of cultural, ethnic, tribal, and ideological diversity.

The awareness and understanding of "interculturalism," which emerged after World War II, form the foundation of multicultural education. The rise of this awareness and these ideas is not only linked to global shifts in human rights politics, decolonization, racial discrimination, and other issues but also to the high level of diversity in the West resulting from increased migration from developing countries to the Americas and Europe (Ningsih et al., 2022). Multicultural education means caring about and understanding differences or the political recognition given to minority groups. Multicultural education is no longer new in Indonesia; it is taught within families, the broader community, and in formal schools.

Multicultural education arises from the "commonality" of human experiences and the "diversity" of cultural factors. These factors, expressed by groups and individuals, can help enhance candidates' socio-cultural awareness and foster an understanding that our cultural identities—overlapping, flexible, socially constructed, and complex—indeed influence our living conditions (Prasetyo et al., 2021). Early education can help foster multicultural awareness. Multicultural education enables students to understand, accept, and appreciate people from diverse ethnicities, cultures, values, and religions. Through this education, a strong sense of mutual respect can be developed effectively (Alkhofifah et al., 2022).

Multicultural education is a conscious effort to build character through learning about various social statuses, races, ethnicities, and religions to develop individuals who are intelligent in addressing cultural diversity issues. This process occurs both inside and outside of schools. The lack of a profound understanding of multiculturalism often leads to negative behavior among younger generations. Perceptions and behaviors that frequently arise are unpleasant and even contradict the noble cultural principles of our ancestors. Values such as mutual cooperation, respect, and togetherness are beginning to fade (Suarlin et al., 2022).

The aim of this study is to analyze students' perceptions of multicultural religious education and examine the strategies implemented to instill multicultural values within the school environment. This research is of significant importance for identifying the extent to which students are able to understand and apply the values of diversity in their daily lives.

The urgency of this study is based on the need for education that can respond to the challenges of globalization, which is characterized by high human mobility and intensified cross-cultural interactions. In Indonesia, the lack of critical religious awareness often serves as a trigger for conflicts, hate speech, and persecution against those who are different. Therefore, instilling multicultural values through religious education is expected to shape a generation that upholds the principles of tolerance, justice, and harmony in the face of diversity, both at the local and global levels. This research plays a crucial role in providing academic contributions to the development of an inclusive, adaptive, and relevant educational environment in the context of Indonesia's societal pluralism.

1.2 Student

Education is designed to shape students' multicultural character, as it serves as a tool to instill multicultural values in learners. Educational programs should focus on two key topics: prejudice and its mitigation. The first program addresses the origins of prejudice, whether rooted in religion or race. The second program focuses on eliminating prejudice through effective behavioral change. Equality is a crucial principle in this context. Building a multicultural character is essential for both current and future learners. If students develop a multicultural personality, they will be better equipped to manage conflicts when

living in diverse societies. To thrive in a broader community, students must learn to be socially sensitive. To realize multicultural education, students must not only have access to academic resources at school but also opportunities for direct engagement in multicultural practices. Therefore, teachers, principals, staff, employees, and security personnel must possess the ability to create a multicultural atmosphere within the school environment. Additionally, multicultural education should be implemented in both formal and non-formal education settings. As a result, multicultural character will be reflected in the attitudes and behaviors of the learners. (Wa Windiyani Baharudin et al., 2023)

Three important reasons put forward by Basri to promote character development in schools are as follows: 1) Everyone should possess good character. Each individual must have a strong mind, conscience, and a desire for quality, such as honesty, empathy, care, self-discipline, perseverance, and moral drive; 2) Schools are a good and enjoyable place to engage in character learning; and 3) Schools provide an effective and positive environment for character education (Aulia & Susanti, 2021).

Because diversity can lead to conflict, character values such as tolerance, democracy, social concern, love for peace, and nationalism should be instilled from an early age. Multicultural education helps shape the nation's character. Given the importance of multicultural education in character development, the author aims to discuss the role of multicultural education in character formation at the elementary school level (Aulia & Susanti, 2021).

2. Methods

2.1 Types and approaches

The research conducted in this mini study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. A case study involves a series of scientific activities that are conducted intensively, in detail, and in-depth. These activities focus on a program, event, or activity, whether at the individual level, within a group of people, an institution, or an organization, to gain a deep understanding of the event.

2.2 Location, subjects and research objects

The research location selected for this study is Public Vocational Secondary Schools/*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Negeri* 1 Purwokerto (SMKN 1 Purwokerto), located at Jl. DR. Soeparno No.29, Purwokerto Wetan, Kec. Purwokerto Tim., Kabupaten Banyumas, Jawa Tengah 53123. Phone: (0281) 637132. The reason the researcher chose to conduct the study at this school is that SMKN 1 Purwokerto is one of the most popular vocational schools in Purwokerto. In addition, the school has maintained a good reputation year after year. This is why SMKN 1 Purwokerto attracts many students eager to pursue their education there.

The subject of this study is the students' perceptions of multicultural religious education, with the object of the study being the students of SMKN 1 Purwokerto, specifically from the Software Development and Game Engineering/*Pengembangan Perangkat Lunak dan Gim* (PPLG) program. The data collected in this study consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained through direct interactions with the research subjects, such as interviews, observations, and questionnaires. Meanwhile, secondary data includes supporting information, such as recorded interviews and observations conducted at the research location. The data collection instrument is a tool chosen and used by the researcher to gather data in a systematic and efficient manner (Saaf & Mania, 2020). In qualitative research, the researcher themselves plays the role of the primary instrument. However, once the focus of the research is clearly defined, additional research instruments are developed to support data collection.

The relevant data collection instruments for this study are obtained through: (a) Interviews with 10 students, to delve deeper into students' perceptions of contemporary

issues (such as multiculturalism) (Table 1); (b) Observation, used to observe physical conditions, interactions between teachers and students, as well as among students, and the learning process conducted in the classroom, which serves as a supporting and reinforcing data source; (c) Documentation, used to uncover and understand information regarding the history and realities that have occurred at the research site (Alkhofifah et al., 2022).

Table 1. Questions on tolerance, respect, and bullying

Category	Question
Tolerance and diversity	What is the meaning of tolerance to you? Have you shown tolerance towards friends, teachers, or the surrounding community who are of different races, ethnicities, or religions?
Friendship and diversity	How would you feel if you were friends with someone of a different race, ethnicity or religion?
Respect for differences	Around you, there are surely differences such as religion, race, and ethnicity. How do you show respect for these differences?
Tolerance in school	What are your thoughts on tolerance among students at school?
Bullying and culture	In your opinion, what is the meaning of bullying? Have you ever bullied a friend of a different religion or culture at school?
Respect for opinions	If a friend does not respect your opinions or beliefs, what would you do?

3. Results and Discussion

Religious education is a means of transforming knowledge through religious aspects (cognitive aspects), norms, and moral values to foster attitudes (affective aspects), which function to regulate behavior and cultivate a true human personality. Through religious education, it is hoped that individuals will be shaped to strengthen their faith, devotion, and noble character, which include morals, ethics, or morality. This type of education is expected to address the challenges, obstacles, and changes that arise in social interactions at local, national, regional, and global levels (Dwiyani, 2023)

Multicultural education is a challenge for the future in the transformation of national education systems worldwide. Nata explains the characteristics of the global society that influence present and future life, including globalization, the enthusiasm for integration in economic life, and the tendency toward division; third, advancements in science and technology that can drastically change the labor market; and fourth, industrialization with rapid technological developments that can change the way people earn a living (Bahrudin et al., 2018).

Multicultural education aims to instill a sense of responsibility toward the global community, demonstrate attitudes of environmental stewardship, recognize and appreciate diverse cultures, and respect human dignity. The second goal is to enhance cultural awareness and intercultural competence, while the third goal is to combat discrimination, racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice. Lastly, it seeks to increase awareness of global conditions and their dynamics (Camelia & Suryandari, 2021)

Among the important reasons for the significance of multicultural education are the following: first, multicultural education helps address conflicts; second, it encourages students to stay connected to their own cultures; and third, multicultural education is well-suited to the current era of democracy (Izzah, 2020).

Openness, identity, cultural diversity, and social change are key structures in the discussion of multicultural education. In the educational process, the element of identity identifies students and teachers as a group that represents the cultures present in the environment. Based on the focus of multicultural education, Cahyono states that multicultural education programs do not focus on mainstream culturalism or religious social groups. Multicultural education is defined as caring for and acknowledging the differences of others. It views society broadly within this context. It is based on the fundamental view that feelings of being unaccepted and unrecognized are not only the result of opposing racial structures. Instead, the multicultural education model

encompasses subjects about oppression, injustice, and the background of minority groups in various fields from the perspectives of educators, economics, and socio-cultural aspects (Nawangsih et al., 2022).

Howard states that multicultural skills are acquired through multicultural education. By providing multicultural education from an early age, it is hoped that children can understand and accept different cultures caused by variations in behavior, folkways (community customs), mores (social behavior norms), and traditions. Multicultural education teaches students to be empathetic, accept diversity, think critically, and be tolerant of others regardless of their status, gender, social class, or academic abilities (Abdiyah, 2021).

Based on the results of the interviews conducted with students, focusing on two aspects of the research regarding multicultural education, namely: (1) students' perceptions of multicultural education on an individual level, and (2) students' perceptions of the multicultural education implemented by teachers. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with students from the Software and Game Development Department at SMK Negeri 1 Purwokerto, who were selected as samples for this study. In-depth interviews were conducted to develop a description of how multicultural education is applied as perceived by the students. The results of the interviews with the students are as follows Table 2.

It can be concluded that the majority of students at SMK Negeri 1 Purwokerto, based on the first question, have already implemented a tolerant attitude at school. As stated by Alan Primadhani, "I have been tolerant because I have a classmate who is non-Muslim, and I respect them." Similarly, Laras Faustina shared that she has also practiced tolerance because she has encountered various differences in her environment.

Table 2. The meaning of tolerance and its practice towards friends, teachers, and the community of different races, ethnicities, or religions

Informant's name	Answers
Student 1	Tolerance is about respecting all differences, including race, ethnicity, religion, and others. I have practiced tolerance because there are classmates who follow different religions, and I respect them.
Student 2	Respecting and valuing people of different religions and humanity. Yes, I do this with friends who follow different religions.
Student 3	The meaning of tolerance for me is allowing the differences that exist. Yes, I have.
Student 4	I respect friends who have different religions. Yes, I have.
Student 5	Tolerance means respecting others without looking at differences. Yes, I have done it.
Student 6	Respecting all kinds of differences. Yes, I have done it, because in my environment, I encounter various kinds of differences.
Student 7	Tolerance means respecting and honoring differences. Yes, I have done it with my classmates by allowing them to worship according to their beliefs.
Student 8	Tolerance is the attitude of respecting others who are of different races, ethnicities, or religions (not mocking people). Yes, I have done it.
Student 9	Tolerance, in my opinion, is the attitude of respecting, accepting, and honoring the differences that exist among human beings. YES, OF COURSE!
Student 10	A form of mutual respect for differences, whether religious, ethnic or racial

In the second question, several students expressed happiness about having friends from different races, ethnicities, and religions. Additionally, they feel happy because they gain new knowledge and experiences regarding these differences, and they also feel a sense of belonging in a new environment. As one student mentioned, "Each of us has different traits and habits compared to them." (Table 3).

Table 3. Feelings towards friendship with someone of a different race, ethnicity, or religion

Informant's name	Answers
Student 1	Respecting and being happy because you can learn something new about religion, race, or ethnicity.
Student 2	I feel happy because I can learn more about diversity.
Student 3	I feel happy because I can socialize and learn about their culture.
Student 4	I feel happy because I have friends from different religions.
Student 5	It's enjoyable because friendships with differences make the bond even stronger.
Student 6	I'm happy because it expands my network and allows me to share experiences about the differences we face.
Student 7	I'm happy because I can learn tolerance.
Student 8	My feelings when befriending people of different races, ethnicities, and religions are happy, because I get to make new friends and feel like I have a new environment. This is because each of us has different character traits and habits.
Student 9	My feelings when befriending people of different races, ethnicities, and religions are happiness because I gain new friends and feel like I have a new environment. This is because each of us has different personalities and habits compared to one another.
Student 10	Not discriminating just because they are different from us, but befriending them well.

In the third question, where the researcher asked, "In your surroundings, there must be differences such as religion, race, and ethnicity. How do you appreciate these differences?" The majority of responses reflected that they value and respect these differences. The students in the PPLG program answered that they show respect by allowing their friends from different religions to worship, refraining from mocking or belittling differences, letting others exercise their rights and duties, making an effort to understand one another, and not bringing up differences in inappropriate contexts (Table 4).

Table 4. Showing respect for religious, racial, and ethnic differences in the surrounding environment

Informant's name	Answers
Student 1	Don't judge people by their outward appearance.
Student 2	My way of respecting the differences that exist is by allowing my friends who have different religions to pray when we are hanging out together and playing without discriminating against race, ethnicity, religion, or anything else.
Student 3	By allowing them to do what is their right and duty.
Student 4	By allowing them to do what is their right and responsibility.
Student 5	Not belittling that person because of their differences.
Student 6	By not mentioning those differences in any context.
Student 7	Allowing them to worship, not mocking differences, and being a good friend.
Student 8	The way I respect differences is by not mocking those who are different from us (for example, when my friend and I have different religions, we should respect them when they are worshiping according to their beliefs).
Student 9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be open-minded and accept differences. 2. Respect and appreciate their traditions. 3. Strive to understand and value their culture.
Student 10	Without making any distinctions

The researcher also inquired about the students' views on tolerance in school. The majority of them answered that it is "already good" or "quite good." According to Hasna Nur Asih Pramusita, "Overall, tolerance among students in school is an important foundation for building a generation that is more open, mutually respectful, and able to live together in diversity. This will have a positive impact on the development of individuals and the progress of the nation." (Table 5).

Table 5. Thoughts on tolerance among students at school

Informant's name	Answers
Student 1	Very good
Student 2	I am very happy because tolerance is crucial for the formation of unity and solidarity.
Student 3	I feel happy because I can socialize and learn about their culture.
Student 4	Students should practice tolerance because tolerance can strengthen friendships.
Student 5	Tolerance among students is an attitude that should be appreciated and maintained, as it can create peace.
Student 6	It is already good, but it needs to be improved to make it even better.
Student 7	Tolerance must always be practiced; if not, the students may feel unwelcome or oppressed.
Student 8	My opinion about tolerance among students in school is quite good because we all care for and respect each other, being very friendly and not engaging in bullying.
Student 9	Overall, tolerance among students in school is an essential foundation for building a generation that is more open, respectful, and capable of living harmoniously in diversity. This will have a positive impact on the development of individuals and the progress of the nation.
Student 10	Tolerance is crucial for maintaining harmony and unity.

With the presence of differences in one place, there are bound to be issues, such as bullying. Therefore, the researcher also asked the students about the meaning of bullying and whether they had ever engaged in such behavior. Based on their responses, the conclusion is that bullying is an undesirable action that can hurt others both verbally and non-verbally. One of the sources had personally experienced bullying, which is why they emphasized that they would never engage in such behavior, nor should it be done to anyone else (Table 6).

Table 6. The meaning of bullying and personal experiences with bullying someone of a different religion or culture at school

Informant's name	Answers
Student 1	Bullying is the act of insulting or hurting someone, both physically and mentally.
Student 2	Bullying is a very bad act, where such actions can harm the victim both physically and non-physically. I have never engaged in such despicable behavior because it can also violate religious principles.
Student 3	The meaning of bullying, according to me, is not respecting or allowing differences to exist. I have experienced it before.
Student 4	I have never bullied my friends at school or at home because it is an improper behavior.
Student 5	Bullying is a behavior that belittles and oppresses someone. No, I have never bullied a friend who has a different religion or culture.
Student 6	Bullying is an act of harassment that occurs between individuals or between an individual and a group, or even between groups. Alhamdulillah, I have never engaged in such behavior and hope never to do so, as I have personally experienced it before.
Student 7	Bullying is oppression or threats through physical or non-physical actions and words. I have never engaged in such behavior.
Student 8	Bullying is the act of mocking friends who are different from us.
Student 9	Bullying is an inappropriate behavior that should not be imitated. I have never.
Student 10	Bullying is an act of violence or oppression carried out by someone against a weaker individual.

In the final question, the researcher asked how the sources would respond if they encountered a friend who did not respect their opinions or beliefs. Some chose to appreciate the differences, while others preferred to let it be, respond wisely, and offer advice. In terms

of religion, the majority of students at SMK Negeri 1 Purwokerto are Muslim. However, there are also students who practice Christianity and Hinduism (Table 7). The school is fair in accommodating the needs of students in the teaching and learning process. For instance, if there is only one Hindu student, the school will still provide a teacher to teach Hindu religious studies. If the school organizes activities for Muslim students, students of Christian or Hindu faith are also welcome to participate, albeit in different locations or rooms. Moreover, if any student chooses to join and listen to a religious lesson different from their own, they are also permitted to do so.

Table 7. Handling situations when a friend does not respect your opinions or beliefs

Informant's name	Answers
Student 1	I will respect those differing opinions.
Student 2	I will explain it calmly and gently, without resorting to any form of aggression.
Student 3	I will give them advice.
Student 4	That's okay, as everyone has their own opinions and beliefs. We just need to respect each other's opinions.
Student 5	I would let it be, but if it becomes excessive, I would advise them.
Student 6	I don't mind, because what I believe remains my belief, not theirs. However, if my belief or opinion is wrong and a friend offers criticism or suggestions politely, I will reconsider it.
Student 7	I will respect it and not retaliate against my friend.
Student 8	If a friend of mine doesn't respect my opinion, I get angry, but I also forgive them.
Student 9	I will respond wisely and try to build mutual understanding.
Student 10	I will explain the reasons behind my opinion and ask them to try to understand my point of view.

The values of Multicultural Education emphasize that Allah SWT has created differences in religion, ethnicity, language, race, culture, and belief among all people, which highlights the importance of tolerance. Every individual has unique characteristics, such as differences in ethnicity, language, skin color, culture, and religion, and while differing opinions or arguments may arise regarding these diversities, it is essential to respect and support those differing views. It is important to communicate carefully with others to avoid causing offense, while also contributing one's opinions in discussions, regardless of one's background. In addition, participating in positive activities with friends from different religions is encouraged. Diversity in ethnicity and culture should not be an obstacle to engaging in community activities, and one must demonstrate a positive attitude and refrain from betraying others in daily life, regardless of differing backgrounds. Respecting others is crucial, and no one should belittle others, either publicly or privately, even if they have friends from various ethnic or religious backgrounds. Appreciating and maintaining the feelings of others in friendships with diverse religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds is vital. One's own culture, language, and religion should never cause harm to friendships with people of different faiths or cultures, and it's important to manage oneself in a way that avoids hurting others in daily interactions, even in a diverse environment. With regard to cultural differences, it's essential to avoid intentionally or unintentionally degrading others. As religion is a belief system given by God, respect for other religions and beliefs should be upheld. Muslims are encouraged to avoid disrupting the worship practices of others and should refrain from imposing their beliefs or religion on others. The principle of loving others as one loves themselves should be upheld, even when there are religious differences. Hatred or jealousy should not be felt because of differing religious beliefs, and when offering help, one should not consider someone's ethnicity, religion, race, or beliefs. Sharing in both joyous and sorrowful times should be done without regard to cultural differences, and the priority of needs should transcend religious and cultural distinctions.

The implementation of multicultural values in education can be carried out through various strategic efforts. One approach is through a multicultural-based curriculum, where the curriculum is designed to include diverse perspectives, ensuring it is not limited to a

single historical or cultural narrative. In addition, extracurricular activities such as cultural festivals, group discussions, and community projects can serve as platforms to reinforce multicultural values outside the classroom. These activities provide students with hands-on experiences to understand diversity and cultivate attitudes of mutual respect.

Equally important, teacher training is necessary to enable educators to integrate multicultural values into the learning process. Teachers are also expected to serve as role models by demonstrating tolerance and cooperation in their daily interactions (Hikmah, 2024; Melinda et al., 2024; Wahyuni & Dafit, 2024). By instilling these values from an early age, multicultural education plays a crucial role in shaping a generation that not only respects diversity but also contributes to a more just and harmonious society.

Multicultural education can also help children understand their own cultural identity and values, as well as how these values influence the way they view individuals from different cultures. By gaining multicultural understanding, students can learn to appreciate differences, which can lead to the formation of cross-cultural interdependence. This understanding fosters respect and acceptance, allowing individuals from diverse backgrounds to work together harmoniously and contribute to a more inclusive society (Nur et al., 2022).

The main goal of the idea of multicultural education is to help students gain the knowledge, perspectives, and skills necessary to fulfill effective roles in a global democratic society. Additionally, they are required to interact, negotiate, and communicate with people from different groups to build a moral social order that works for the common good (Suarlin et al., 2022). Essentially, multicultural education is an effort to offer an alternative form of education by applying an approach and concept based on the diversity present in society, especially diversity in ethnicity, culture, language, religion, social status, gender, ability, age, and race.

Essentially, multicultural education is an effort to incorporate global and multicultural perspectives into the theory and practice of education. According to Baidhaw, the multicultural curriculum differs from traditional curricula and programs by attempting to present multiple perspectives on historical events or cultural phenomena. Multicultural educators argue that multicultural education essentially elaborates on the existing curriculum in response to criticisms that pluralism in education may undermine the existing curriculum (Hawi & Khoiri, 2017).

The educational environment consists of many important components and variables, such as politics, culture, school policies, as well as the formation of the curriculum and formal fields of study. Changes in these issues should focus on the creation and regulation of a multicultural school environment. Every child should be encouraged to adjust to the school setting, where there are many people from various cultures. Multicultural education has an important goal of transforming teaching and learning methods so that the system can provide equal opportunities for every student. Therefore, no one should be left out of the pursuit of unity. To achieve unity, groups must understand each other, coexist peacefully, and end differences while preserving existing values. Lateral thinking, diversity, and the specific values of academic institutions play a crucial role in this process (Abdiyah, 2021).

The goal of multicultural education is to shape students with the attitudes and abilities needed in their cultural, national, and global environments. Multicultural education is a process of instilling a lifestyle that respects, is sincere, and tolerant of cultural diversity in a pluralistic environment, according to Musa Asy'arie (Na'im, 2021). Therefore, providing multicultural education can help students understand, accept, and appreciate people from different cultures, ethnicities, and values (Ningsih et al., 2022).

3.1 Discussion

This research shows that multicultural education needs to be implemented in school environments. At SMK Negeri 1 Purwokerto, this school has already applied multicultural education and religious moderation. The interaction between educators and students is also

a supportive factor in the implementation of multicultural education. The school is also supported by the government and even the Ministry of Education to implement religious moderation in the school environment.

Despite the differences in religion, ethnicity, race, and culture among students and teachers, these differences serve as a gateway for the implementation of multicultural education within the school and the inclusion of a multicultural-based curriculum to complement other curricula. Multicultural education, with its specific goals for educational institutions, also has key aspects that serve as a roadmap to success. Bank defines multicultural education in five main dimensions. These dimensions are expected to help teachers develop programs that address student diversity. These dimensions include content integration, equality pedagogy, strengthening culture and social structure in schools, bias reduction, and knowledge-building processes. If one of these dimensions is not realized, it could lead to social conflicts.

The findings of the research conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Purwokerto suggest that multicultural education should be incorporated into the curriculum so that students can better understand and apply what they have learned at school, especially when they engage with a diverse society. Given the existing curriculum, which is already supported by the Ministry of Education, it is advisable to maintain or even enhance it. There is a need for a new perspective on the importance of multicultural education for students, both in school and outside the school environment.

4. Conclusions

In general, schools typically only provide prayer rooms for Muslim students. However, SMK Negeri 1 Purwokerto stands out by providing dedicated spaces for each religion within the school community. Additionally, the school organizes a monthly "Jum'at Religi" event to strengthen the spiritual well-being of both students and teachers. During this event, the school invites religious leaders to share their knowledge. Although not all students are Muslim, the school strives to be fair by ensuring that Christian students can attend church services and participate in the Jum'at Religi event. If there is only one student practicing Hinduism, Confucianism, or another religion, the school will still invite a religious leader to speak to them. SMK Negeri 1 Purwokerto is truly committed to implementing a multicultural-based education curriculum. The use of students' perceptions of multicultural education has allowed this research to explore how students view this concept. It also provides insight into the core multicultural values such as adopting a positive attitude towards differences, avoiding discrimination when interacting with others, and paying careful attention when encountering individuals with different perspectives.

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