

INTEGRATION OF MULTICULTURAL VALUES THROUGH RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN NGABANG ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of multicultural education in a Public Elementary School in Ngabang District, which is characterized by cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. This study aims to investigate how multicultural education is implemented through cultural activities and religious holiday celebrations to enhance tolerance and appreciation for diversity among students. The method employed is a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data was collected through observation of cultural and religious activities, as well as semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, and students. The findings indicate that the school has successfully integrated multicultural values through the Celebration of Religious Holidays and Cultural Activities. Activities such as the celebrations of Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, and Chinese New Year, as well as art festivals and wearing traditional attire, not only foster a sense of pride in each student's cultural identity but also build attitudes of mutual respect, tolerance, and inclusivity. Students' positive attitudes towards diversity are reflected in harmonious social interactions and their enthusiasm for participating in these cultural and religious events. These findings suggest that multicultural education can be an effective tool for creating a peaceful learning environment and building a harmonious and socially just Indonesian society.

Keywords: Multicultural Education; Elementary School; Cultural Activities; Religious Holiday Celebrations; Tolerance; Cultural and Religious Diversity.

A. Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic country that has diversity of tribes, religions, races, languages, and customs. This diversity is a cultural wealth that is the identity of the nation, but also has the potential for conflict if not managed wisely. In the context of a pluralistic society like Indonesia, education is a primary need in improving and developing the quality of education. Education is the process of fostering relationships and learning that students expect in developing skills through learning to realize the development of higher quality students (Lasaiba et al., 2022). Therefore, multicultural education is one of the approaches that is very relevant and urgent to be implemented, especially in elementary school environments.

Multicultural education is a learning process that emphasizes the importance of respecting cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity and encourages the development of values of tolerance, social justice, and empathy between individuals. According to Banks (2009), multicultural education is an educational approach that seeks to reform educational institutions so that all students, regardless of cultural or social

background, have equal opportunities to learn and develop optimally. He also emphasized that multicultural education aims to help students develop mutual respect, critical thinking skills, and a commitment to social justice.

Through multicultural education, students will learn to appreciate the differences in culture, religion, language, and customs that exist around them (Ronny & Mahendra, 2023). This can help reduce social conflicts that often occur due to these differences. Multicultural education can provide benefits to us to instill an attitude of mutual respect and tolerance for every difference that exists, by implementing educational strategies and concepts based on diversity in the community such as diversity of religion, language, culture, social status, gender, age, skills and race (Oktia et al., 2023). Creating an inclusive learning environment that respects diversity. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role as key agents in the internalization of multicultural values within the school environment. Their active involvement in instilling tolerance, justice, and respect for differences has proven effective in building an inclusive educational ecosystem. A primary strategy involves serving as role models (*uswatun hasanah*) in their daily conduct (Supriyatno, 2020; Hakim, 2022; Burhanuddin et al., 2025). Furthermore, teachers proactively integrate these values into the curriculum, the school's vision and mission, and social activities such as community service (Mustamir & Tang, 2025; Ok et al., 2023). Through active dialogue, collaboration, and the habituation of positive traits such as the "3S" (*Senyum, Salam, Sapa – Smile, Greet, Salute*), PAI teachers facilitate the development of open-minded and harmonious student character (Supian, 2023; Umar, 2024).

The internalization of values such as tolerance, justice, fellowship, and democracy is a primary focus in PAI instruction (Dumilah et al., 2025; Widodo et al., 2019). These values are not only taught in the classroom but are also implemented through religious activities like communal prayers, congregational prayers (*shalat berjamaah*), and daily social interactions to cultivate good habits (Mustamir & Tang, 2025; Fausi, 2020). Nevertheless, implementation faces challenges such as religious fanaticism and varying levels of student awareness (Supian, 2023; Ulfa et al., 2021). Therefore, the success of this program is highly dependent on supporting factors, particularly school support, an inclusive curriculum, and the enhancement of teachers' multicultural competence through ongoing professional development (Halim, 2024; Wargo et al., 2024). Shabilla & Suryarini (2023) explained that multicultural education has a very important role in basic education, because through this education students can understand diversity and learn to appreciate differences as a real form of love for this diverse Indonesian nation. Moreover, multicultural education also provides opportunities for students to understand differences as a gift from God Almighty that should be appreciated. By understanding and internalizing the values of multiculturalism from an early age, elementary school students will be better prepared to implement these values in their daily lives, both in the school environment, family, and society at large. This is in line with Tilaar's view (2004), which states that multicultural education basically aims to create harmony in a pluralistic society by instilling the values of diversity and mutual respect from an early age.

One concrete strategy to implement multicultural education in elementary schools is through cultural activities and celebrations of religious holidays. These activities include the introduction of local and national cultures, traditional art performances, traditional clothing displays, and celebrations of religious holidays recognized in Indonesia, such as Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, Waisak, and Nyepi. Through active participation in these activities, students can learn about the symbolic meaning and moral values contained in different traditions and beliefs. Celebrating religious holidays in schools not only introduces diverse religious values, but also becomes an effective means of cross-cultural learning. As explained by Moleong (2007), a qualitative approach in multicultural education allows for deeper meaning to social and cultural experiences, including experiences of diversity. Thus, cultural activities and celebrations of religious holidays do not only function as entertainment or annual formalities, but also as educational instruments in forming tolerant, inclusive, and open-minded attitudes in students. However, the implementation of multicultural education through cultural and religious activities is not free from various challenges. Some of the obstacles that are often encountered include the lack of teacher understanding of the principles of multicultural education, limited resources and relevant learning media, and the absence of curriculum guidelines that explicitly integrate multicultural values in school activities. In addition, in some cases, there is still resistance from some communities or parents who do not fully understand the objectives of the multicultural approach. Given the importance of this issue, research on the implementation of multicultural education through cultural activities and religious holiday celebrations is very relevant. This study aims to examine how these activities are integrated into elementary school life, to what extent these activities are able to shape students' attitudes of tolerance, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation.

The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in the development of effective multicultural education strategies in elementary school environments. This study aims to determine the implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools through cultural activities and religious holiday celebrations in increasing attitudes of tolerance and appreciation for cultural and religious diversity among students. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide a positive contribution to the development of multicultural education practices at the elementary school level.

B. Method

This research employs a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative approach is used because this research aims to understand the phenomenon in depth, especially about how multicultural education is implemented in elementary schools through cultural activities and religious holiday celebrations. According to Moleong (2007), qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, and others, holistically and through descriptions in the form of words. This research does not use statistical data, but rather emphasizes the meaning and interpretation of data obtained in the field. This research was conducted at one of the State Elementary Schools. which is in Ngabang District, Landak Regency, West Kalimantan . The location selection was carried out purposively considering

that the school has a background of cultural and religious diversity, and is active in carrying out cultural activities and celebrating religious holidays.

The subjects in this study consisted of the Principal, Class Teachers and Religious Education teachers, and students in grades IV to VI. The subject determination technique was carried out using the purposive sampling method, namely the selection of subjects who were considered to best understand and were directly involved in the implementation of multicultural education in schools. Subjects were selected based on their involvement in the school's cultural and religious activities. To obtain valid and in-depth data, several data collection techniques were used, such as Observation, which was carried out to directly observe the implementation of cultural activities and celebrations of religious holidays in schools. Researchers recorded student activities, teacher roles, and the atmosphere of interaction between students from different backgrounds. Then semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and students. These interviews aimed to explore their understanding of multicultural education, the forms of cultural and religious activities carried out, and their impact on students' attitudes towards diversity.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman model (1994), which consists of three stages: Data is selected and summarized based on its relevance to the focus of the study, namely the implementation of cultural and religious activities that contain multicultural values, Data is arranged in the form of narratives, tables, and visual descriptions to facilitate understanding of the findings in the field. Following data analysis, the researcher validated the findings through source triangulation, which involved comparing observation data with interview results. Conclusions were then drawn from the emerging patterns to address the research questions.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Overview of Research Location

This research was conducted in one of the State Elementary Schools located in Ngabang District. This school has 420 students, with diverse backgrounds, both in terms of culture, religion, and ethnicity. The religions embraced by students include Islam, Christianity, Catholicism and Confucianism. Meanwhile, in terms of culture, students come from Malay, Dayak Java, Batak, and some ethnic Chinese backgrounds. This school is known to be active in activities that uphold the values of diversity, such as participating in cultural activities and celebrating religious holidays that involve all students regardless of religious background.

This diversity makes the school a miniature of a pluralistic Indonesia. The school is known to actively develop and implement the values of diversity in everyday life. Cultural activities and celebrations of religious holidays involving all students regardless of religious background, demonstrate the school's commitment to building social harmony in the educational environment. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, education is not only to educate the nation's life, but also to shape the character and nature of students so that they are able to live together in harmony. In this context, schools play an important role as a vehicle for multicultural education that educates students to respect and honor differences.

The application of multicultural insight through a series of activities and practices involving the entire school community to participate in religious holidays is a real example of the implementation of multicultural values. These activities are designed to instill a sense of mutual respect, responsibility, and cooperation among students from various cultural and religious backgrounds. Cultural diversity or progress will certainly affect the nature and character of the local population or the community living in the area (Shiama Varelaswi, 2022). Multicultural education aims to form more comprehensive attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts in students in viewing diversity, so that they can foster tolerance. Multicultural education can make students understand diversity and can foster a sense of tolerance (Latifah *et all*, 2021).

The activities carried out at the school are in line with this goal, because they provide space for students to get to know and appreciate other cultures and religions. Furthermore, James A. Banks also emphasized the importance of *content integration*, namely incorporating various cultural perspectives into learning materials (Ratna Purwasari, 2023) . Thus, diversity is not only celebrated in ceremonial events, but also internalized through daily learning. According to Tilaar (2004), multicultural education is the answer to the challenges of globalization and the heterogeneity of Indonesian society. Tilaar emphasized that schools should not be homogeneous and exclusive, but should be able to create an inclusive space that accepts differences as wealth, not threats.

The same thing was expressed by Mujiyanto (2020) who stated that in elementary schools, an attitude of tolerance can be said to be important, because an attitude of tolerance and openness has many benefits for students, where they can learn to respect each other's opinions and actions and respect differences between students, educators, and other communities. Concrete experiences such as participating in interfaith celebrations or working together in multiethnic groups will form positive habits in interacting. Thus, the elementary school that is the object of this research has provided a real example of how education can be a unifying tool in diversity. The values of tolerance, mutual cooperation, and mutual respect are not only taught in theory, but are also practiced directly in school activities that involve all elements of students.

2. Implementation of Multicultural Education Through Cultural Activities

Based on the results of observations and interviews with teachers and principals, cultural activities are one of the main media in instilling multicultural values. Routine activities include:

- a. Cultural Activities: Schools carry out local cultural activities, such as the robo-robo tradition. This shows that educational institutions play an important role in building multicultural awareness for participants through active participation in cultural activities. This effort encourages them to understand and appreciate cultural diversity in enriching their insights into local and national cultures, as well as developing an attitude of tolerance towards differences (Arief Sukino and Erwin, 2019).
- b. Participating in Local Arts Festival activities: Activeness in participating in cultural festival activities through participation in dances from the school studio. In multicultural education, students not only learn about their own culture, but also learn

about different cultures, and gain an understanding of the similarities and differences between these cultures (Sari et al., 2016).

- c. Wearing traditional clothes: Every student wears traditional Indonesian clothing when commemorating national holidays such as Independence Day which is celebrated every August 17, Youth Pledge Day every October 28 and National Education Day every May 2. Introducing cultural elements helps increase their awareness of Indonesia's cultural diversity. This fosters respect, appreciation for other cultures, and multicultural awareness (Tri Lailatul Q et al., 2023).

The class teacher said that this activity not only introduced culture, but also created a sense of pride in each other's identities. Students looked enthusiastic and supported each other when their friends performed, even though they were from different cultures. Class Teacher Interview Quote: "*The children are very enthusiastic about participating in cultural activities. They help each other practice dances or learn songs from other areas. This is good for forming an attitude of mutual respect.*"

The class teacher said that this activity not only introduced culture, but also created a sense of pride in each other's identities. In addition, the interactions that occurred during the activity showed a spirit of mutual support between students, even though they came from different cultural backgrounds. This shows that multicultural education is not only understood as a theoretical concept, but is also practiced concretely in school life. According to Nieto (2000), multicultural education is a profound process that involves the transformation of the curriculum, teaching practices, and the overall school culture. In this context, cultural activities such as those carried out by schools are part of the transformation of the school culture, where diversity is celebrated and made part of the collective identity. James A. Banks (2006) also emphasized that cultural integration in learning activities and daily school life can help students develop cross-cultural understanding and form inclusive attitudes. Activities that promote local and national culture can be an effective means to foster attitudes of tolerance and cooperation between students with different backgrounds.

Meanwhile, according to Koentjaraningrat (2009), culture is the entire system of ideas, actions, and human works in the life of society that are made human property by learning. Therefore, the introduction of culture through school activities can be an important form of learning in strengthening the cultural identity of students, as well as opening up insights into other cultures. Tilaar (2004) also stated that in a multicultural society like Indonesia, education must encourage intercultural dialogue to build togetherness in diversity. Activities that provide space for each culture to appear and be appreciated will create such a space for dialogue, and educate students to become open and tolerant individuals from an early age.

Thus, cultural activities in schools such as Cultural Week and Art Performance Competition are not only a means of entertainment or annual routine, but have high educational value in instilling the values of diversity. These activities are part of the learning process that enriches cultural insight, fosters empathy, and strengthens self-identity and social solidarity among students.

3. Implementation Through Celebration of Religious Holidays

The Public Elementary School in Ngabang District, the subject of this research, demonstrates a comprehensive and deeply integrated model of multicultural education within school life. With a highly diverse student background in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion encompassing Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, and Confucianism, as well as Malay, Dayak, Javanese, Batak, and Chinese ethnicities – the school consciously utilizes its diversity as a pedagogical asset. Instead of merely teaching diversity theoretically, it implements it through tangible practices that can be analyzed through three main pillars of values: tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility. This thematic mapping reveals how every activity, from the celebration of major religious holidays to cultural traditions, is strategically designed to build an inclusive and harmonious student character.

a. Building the Value of Tolerance: From Passive Acceptance to Active Appreciation

The value of tolerance in this school is not merely interpreted as a passive attitude of non-interference but as an active process of appreciating and respecting. This is realized through three main strategies. First, through cross-religious symbolic participation. The school encourages all students, regardless of their religious background, to take part in the celebrations of the Mawlid of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and Chinese New Year. This involvement can take the form of exchanging greetings, watching artistic performances, or sharing food. This practice effectively teaches a fundamental lesson: that respecting others' beliefs does not mean compromising one's own, but is rather a form of solidarity and recognition of equal existence.

Second, tolerance is reinforced through respect for religious practices. The most tangible example is during the welcoming of Ramadan, where Muslim and non-Muslim students collaborate to decorate classrooms with distinctive ornaments. A similar situation occurs leading up to Christmas, where all students are involved in preparing decorations in strategic areas of the school. This activity sends a powerful message that the religious times and symbols of a group are worthy of respect from the entire school community. It fosters a culture where religious expression is normal and valued, not something to be hidden or considered exclusive.

Third, the value of tolerance is institutionalized through mechanisms of reconciliation and the strengthening of fellowship, as seen in the Halalbihalal activity after Eid al-Fitr. This event, filled with moral messages about the importance of mutual forgiveness and maintaining brotherhood, becomes a communal ritual to strengthen social bonds. The mass handshake procession between teachers and students becomes a tangible symbol of conflict resolution and a commitment to continue living together peacefully – a practice of tolerance that is internalized into a habit.

b. Fostering the Value of Empathy: Understanding the World Through Others' Eyes

This school understands that empathy is not something to be merely taught, but must be experienced. The development of empathy is carried out by creating spaces for students to feel and understand the experiences of their peers. The main strategy is experiential learning through joint celebrations. When a non-Christian student participates in making greeting cards or putting up Christmas ornaments, they are not only learning about a

tradition but are also invited to understand the atmosphere of joy and the spiritual meaning felt by their friends. As emphasized by Nieto and Bode, this active participation encourages students to step out of their comfort zones to learn and understand the spiritual and social experiences of others.

Furthermore, empathy is cultivated through the building of solidarity and the expansion of cultural horizons. When students from various backgrounds help their friends of Chinese descent prepare lanterns and decorations for Chinese New Year, they are building bridges of understanding. They learn about a different cultural heritage, which ultimately broadens their horizons and strengthens mutual respect. This shared involvement transforms potential differences into a source of rich knowledge and experience, organically fostering solidarity and empathy across faiths and cultures (Khusnul Mufida, 2024). Finally, empathy is strengthened through emotional bonds in a familial atmosphere. The moment of sharing cakes and drinks during Halal bihalal is a perfect example. In a warm and affectionate atmosphere, students learn about the values of friendship, togetherness, and the importance of sharing. These positive experiences and pleasant emotions while interacting with friends from different backgrounds become a strong foundation for the growth of sincere empathy.

c. Developing Social Responsibility: Building Community Through Collective Action

The multicultural education in this school also explicitly instills the value of social responsibility, which is the awareness that each individual is part of a larger community and has a role to contribute. This is evident in the cultivation of the spirit of gotong royong (mutual cooperation). The collaborative process of decorating the school for Ramadan and Christmas is a tangible manifestation of this principle. Students learn that a beautiful and comfortable school environment is the result of working together and is a collective responsibility, not just the task of a specific individual or group.

Additionally, the school positions its various activities as an effective medium for social learning. The Halal bihalal tradition, for instance, not only strengthens emotional bonds but also teaches social skills that are crucial for living in a pluralistic society: sharing resources (food), maintaining social harmony (mutual forgiveness), and actively participating in community rituals (Nieto et al, 2012). Through practices like these, the school directly shapes students into responsible citizens who understand the importance of active contribution in building and maintaining social harmony in their environment.

4. Students' Attitudes Towards Diversity

The results of observations and interviews show a change in positive attitudes of students towards cultural and religious diversity in the school environment. Some indicators of change that are visible include:

- a. Students do not choose friends based on religious or ethnic background.
- b. In group learning and play activities, students demonstrate mutual respect and are open to discussing differences. The value of togetherness also teaches harmonious social interaction amidst differences. This togetherness can also increase solidarity among the differences that exist among students (Erawati & Fauziah, 2025)

- c. Strengthening the sense of togetherness, the value of togetherness creates a sense of family and togetherness in diversity. The value of togetherness also teaches harmonious social interaction amidst differences. This togetherness can also increase solidarity among the differences that exist among students (Erawati & Fauziah, 2025). A fifth grade student even said: "Christmas time is fun, we make greeting cards and exchange gifts. During Eid and Christmas we also bring cakes and drinks to eat together."

This statement reflects that students begin to understand diversity not as a boundary, but as a source of enjoyable and enriching experiences. They feel the benefits of direct cross-cultural and cross-religious interactions, which ultimately form an empathetic, inclusive, and tolerant attitude. According to Banks (2008), one of the main goals of multicultural education is to develop students' ability to interact harmoniously with people from various backgrounds. When students feel comfortable and interested in other cultures, it indicates that the multicultural learning process has gone well. Data showing that students no longer choose friends based on ethnicity or religion and are able to discuss differences openly indicates that this basic goal has been achieved. However, this finding becomes more profound when synthesized with the concept of transformative multicultural education.

Nieto & Bode (2012) emphasize the importance of transformative multicultural education—that is, education that not only teaches about diversity but also changes students' perspectives of themselves so they can recognize inequality and actively build a just society. When students do not choose friends based on religion or ethnicity, this reflects the values of social justice that have begun to be embedded. In the Indonesian context, this research reflects a deeper meaning of the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). This school not only celebrates "diversity" (*Bhinneka*) ceremonially but has moved towards a substantive "unity" (*Tunggal Ika*) a unity based on the principles of justice and social equality in daily interactions. Gorski (2010) states that an effective approach to multicultural education must include direct experience and critical reflection. By providing a space for students to experience diversity through tangible activities like making Christmas cards or sharing food during *Mawlid*, the school indirectly instills more meaningful values of diversity than can be achieved through mere theory in the classroom. The fifth-grade student's statement, "Christmas is fun; we make greeting cards and exchange gifts. During Eid al-Fitr and Christmas, we also bring cakes and drinks to eat together," is not merely an anecdote. It is empirical evidence that real interaction creating, sharing, and celebrating together—can change the perception of diversity from something abstract or potentially divisive into "a source of enjoyable and enriching experiences."

Meanwhile, Tilaar (2004) states that one indicator of successful multicultural education is when students can build equal and harmonious relationships without prejudice. The students' attitude of happily witnessing other religious celebrations and trying new cultures shows the growth of a strong spirit of togetherness and social solidarity. By providing space for positive "direct experiences," the school effectively breaks down that distance. The sense of fun and comfort that students feel when interacting with other cultures, as expressed in the quote, becomes a strong emotional foundation for building sincere harmonious relationships, not a forced harmony. In the Indonesian context, which

prioritizes social harmony (*kerukunan*), this experience-based approach proves to be far more impactful than doctrinal teaching about tolerance.

5. The Contribution of Islamic Education Teachers in Multicultural Education

Islamic Education (PAI) teachers play a central role in multicultural education in schools. Their role extends beyond merely teaching religious doctrine; they are the main drivers in instilling attitudes of tolerance, justice, and appreciation for diversity. In an increasingly heterogeneous educational environment, PAI teachers are at the forefront of shaping students' inclusive and open-minded character. This strategic contribution is crucial for building the foundation of a harmonious society, where differences are seen as a source of richness, not as a source of division in the future. One of the main contributions of PAI teachers is through the systematic integration of multicultural values into the curriculum. They consciously design Lesson Plans (RPP) and syllabi that explicitly emphasize universal values such as justice, tolerance, and equality (Padil et al., 2021; Anas et al., 2021; Irham, 2018). Thus, multicultural education does not become a separate subject but is integrated into every discussion of PAI material, ensuring the message of diversity is conveyed consistently and profoundly to students (Halim, 2024; Mukarom et al., 2024; Sechandini et al., 2023).

The role of PAI teachers as role models (*uswatun hasanah*) is the most impactful educational method. Their attitudes, words, and ways of interacting with students and colleagues from various backgrounds become a powerful hidden curriculum. PAI teachers actively exemplify inclusive attitudes, prioritize dialogue, and build humanistic interactions that respect differences (Irsyaad et al., 2025; Anas et al., 2021; Solihin, 2022; Irham, 2018). This modeling shows students how the values of tolerance can be realized in daily life (Umar, 2024; Lestari, 2024; Ulfa et al., 2021; Sechandini et al., 2023). In addition to classroom learning, PAI teachers also utilize social and religious activities as a means of internalizing multicultural values. Through activities such as communal prayers, community service, and celebrations of religious holidays, they effectively instill the values of brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), solidarity, and empathy (Irsyaad et al., 2025; Ok et al., 2023). These activities provide students with direct experience in cooperating and interacting positively with peers from diverse backgrounds, thereby strengthening social bonds and cross-cultural understanding within the school environment.

To carry out this complex role, strengthening the multicultural competence of PAI teachers is a necessity. PAI teachers are required to continuously develop their pedagogical and social competencies to be able to design and implement multicultural learning effectively (Halim, 2024; Dina & Mustafida, 2021). Professional training and development focused on diversity insights are essential so that they are always ready to face the social dynamics in the classroom and can become reliable and wise facilitators of dialogue among students (Pratiwi et al., 2024). In its implementation, PAI teachers apply various active learning strategies such as group discussions, sociological approaches, and dialogical methods to stimulate students' critical thinking (Irsyaad et al., 2025; Padil et al., 2021; Lestari,

2024). However, these efforts are not without challenges, such as time constraints, a lack of relevant specialized training, and even resistance from some parties (Irsyaad et al., 2025; Umar, 2024). Furthermore, varying levels of student awareness and understanding of diversity issues also pose an obstacle that needs to be overcome with a patient and continuous approach (Ulfa et al., 2021). Despite facing various challenges, the positive impact of PAI teachers' contributions is very real. Their efforts have been proven to successfully improve attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and cooperation among students from different backgrounds (Irsyaad et al., 2025; Irham, 2018; Mukarom et al., 2024). Ultimately, this strategic role helps create a much more harmonious, safe, and inclusive school environment for all students, which is an invaluable social capital for building a future generation of Indonesia that values diversity (Lestari, 2024; Sechandini et al., 2023).

E. Conclusion

Research at the Ngabang Public Elementary School shows the successful implementation of multicultural education in a highly diverse environment. Through cultural activities such as local traditions and the wearing of traditional attire, as well as cross-faith religious holiday celebrations like Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, and Chinese New Year, the school has successfully transformed diversity into a pedagogical asset. This method has proven effective in practically instilling the values of tolerance and mutual cooperation (gotong royong), not just theoretically. The results are evident in the positive change in student attitudes, as they no longer choose friends based on identity and view differences as an enriching source of experience, not as a limitation. This success aligns with various theories of multicultural education that emphasize the importance of direct experience in shaping social harmony without prejudice. In this research, the contribution of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers is central and inseparable from this achievement. PAI teachers act as the main drivers, extending beyond doctrinal teaching by systematically integrating universal values like justice and tolerance into the curriculum and lesson plans (RPP). Furthermore, their role as role models (*uswatun hasanah*) in daily interactions becomes a powerful hidden curriculum in shaping students' inclusive character. Furthermore, the contribution of PAI teachers is also realized through the utilization of social and religious activities, such as community service, to instill the values of empathy and solidarity. Despite facing challenges like time constraints or resistance, their efforts through active learning strategies have been proven to tangibly improve cooperation and empathy among students. Ultimately, this strategic role of PAI teachers is crucial in creating a harmonious, safe, and inclusive school environment, which is an invaluable social capital for building a future generation of Indonesia that values diversity.

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