

Multicultural Education in Shaping the National Character through Social Studies Learning

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ABSTRACT: Indonesia has diverse religious landscape necessitates multicultural education for students to foster tolerance towards differences. Therefore, researchers should incorporate multicultural education into students' enrolled subjects. This study examined how multicultural education shaped the national character through social studies learning among students. The research methodology employed was qualitative, emphasizing the social reality as a whole, complex, dynamic, and interactive entity to investigate the natural object. The results of this study included: 1) Multicultural education in shaping the national character through social studies learning among students was conducted by adapting the curriculum for students in grades 1 to 6, focusing on multicultural aspects. 2) Multicultural education in addressing differences, social structure, and equal or fair education in shaping the national character through social studies learning was implemented by applying the 5S approach: smile, greet, salute, polite, and courteous behavior. There was no discrimination in schools, and all students received equal treatment regardless of their different cultures, races, or ethnicities. 3) Multicultural education was evaluated in terms of solidarity, cooperation, and tolerance in shaping the national character through social studies learning the national character through social studies learning the national character through social studies learning the national character through social studies in shaping the national character through social studies in shaping the national character through social studies learning was implemented by applying the 5S approach: smile, greet, salute, polite, and courteous behavior. There was no discrimination in schools, and all students received equal treatment regardless of their different cultures, races, or ethnicities. 3) Multicultural education was evaluated in terms of solidarity, cooperation, and tolerance in shaping the national character through social studies learning.

KEYWORDS: Multicultural Education, National Character, and Social Studies Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has diverse ethnicities, cultures, customs, religions, and races, which constitute the invaluable richness of the Indonesian nation. Indonesia is a unitary state known as the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), consisting of many islands totaling 17,677. Its population is approximately 210 million people, comprised of 350 ethnic groups with distinct customs and traditions and nearly 200 different local languages and dialects (Mahdayeni dkk., 2019). From a religious standpoint, they practice different religions, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism as a belief system. Indonesia is often called a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country due to its large population, diverse ethnicities, tribes, religions, customs, regional languages, and numerous islands (Budiono, 2021). Due to the beautiful diversity of the Indonesian nation, Indonesia has been given nicknames such as "Ratna Mutu Manikam" (a pearl of great value) and "Zamrut Khatulistiwa" (an emerald at the equator). Besides its beauty and pride in its diversity, Indonesia also has the potential for conflicts to arise (Nukman, 2022). From several conflicts that have occurred in Indonesia, it can be observed that the society struggles with critical thinking when resolving issues. People tend to have closed attitudes and harbor suspicion towards differences, such as religious, cultural, and linguistic distinctions, which have the potential to lead to conflicts (Lutfi & Lestari, 2021). For example, conflicts have arisen between the Madurese and Dayak ethnic groups in Sambas, Central Kalimantan. There have been conflicts related to religious issues in Poso and Maluku. Additionally, separatist movements in Aceh have been triggered, in part, by a perceived injustice stemming from knowledge of differences (Idi, M.Ed, 2018). The lack of appreciation for human values, shallow understanding of religious matters, and insufficient appreciation for local wisdom can also trigger conflicts and violence.

Given the pluralistic nature of Indonesian society, it is crucial to foster mutual respect and appreciation for the existing differences, including cultural diversity. Therefore, Indonesian society needs to cultivate attitudes and behaviors that embody good national character, enabling them to respect the cultures of other ethnic groups while remaining rooted in their cultural heritage (Lintang & Najicha, 2022). In shaping the national character of the society, to foster appreciation for cultural differences, customs, religions, languages, and other aspects, one way to address these issues is through education in educational institutions. Education aims to enhance learners' competence in terms of affective, cognitive, and psychomotor skills. Through these competencies, it is expected that learners will be able to improve their critical thinking abilities and their actions and behaviors in community life (Fithriyah dkk., 2022). This condition aligns with the characteristics of social sciences, which are closely related to everyday social phenomena. In practice, current education exhibits declining potential development, primarily due to a focus on the teacher during the learning process (Ahmadi & Syahrani, 2022). Social Studies

education is a subject taught in schools that supports students' everyday lives. Educators, including teachers, are expected to be creative in finding ways to provide learning experiences that align with the realities of Indonesia, which includes addressing the issues occurring in the country, particularly conflicts related to differences (Djollong & Akbar, 2019). To shape the character of students who are nationalistic and capable of appreciating and respecting differences, one of the ways teachers can do so is by providing multicultural education. Multicultural education concerns cultural diversity in response to demographic and cultural changes in a specific community or world (Permana & Ahyani, 2020). Multicultural education is essential to be provided to students. It is necessary to ensure that students understand their environment is characterized by cultural diversity. Cultural diversity can influence behavior, attitudes, thought patterns, human practices, habits (folkways), rules (mores), and customs, which can vary among different cultural groups (Rohmah & Fanani, 2021). Multicultural education is one way to minimize the occurrence of conflicts. Multicultural education has been implemented in several countries, including the United States, Germany, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Malaysia, Taiwan, and others (Bidarti, 2020).

Multicultural education is crucial in minimizing and preventing conflicts arising from differences, such as student conflicts. In any school, students come from diverse backgrounds, including differences in ethnicity, culture, language, religion, and more. By implementing multicultural education with a vision and mission that upholds and values pluralism, democracy, and humanism, it is hoped that students will become a generation that upholds high moral values, discipline, humanistic care, and honesty in their daily behavior. Ultimately, the nation's problems are expected to be minimized gradually. The future generation should be multicultural, respect differences, and uphold the values of democracy, justice, and humanity. Multicultural education is essential for students to foster a sense of tolerance among themselves and instill pride in their own culture. It is important because many students today are heavily influenced by foreign cultures, as seen in their preference for foreign products over local ones. If such trends persist among students, they will erode the cultural heritage of the Indonesian nation.

Multicultural education is an approach to education that recognizes and values cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity among students. Multicultural education can shape national character in social studies (IPS) learning by teaching students to appreciate cultural diversity and understand social differences. Through multicultural IPS learning, students better understand Indonesia's history, culture, and social life. It helps students appreciate the differences among ethnic groups, religions, and cultures while understanding the importance of tolerance and harmony among individuals. Moreover, multicultural education in IPS learning also contributes to shaping the national character by teaching students to become responsible and good citizens. In IPS classes, students learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and the importance of participating in social and political activities within society. To shape the national character through multicultural IPS learning, teachers can utilize various methods and techniques suitable for the student's needs. For example, teachers can use stories, songs, and traditional games as tools in IPS learning. Additionally, teachers can guide students to research and observe their local community's social and cultural aspects. In this regard, it is essential for teachers to have a deep understanding of Indonesia's cultural and social diversity and to teach students in an enjoyable and effective manner. Furthermore, multicultural education in IPS learning should be supported by a conducive school environment and the support of families and the local community.

II. THEORY :

Education is the guidance or assistance provided by adults to support the development of children towards maturity to enable them to become capable of fulfilling their responsibilities. It is a conscious and systematic effort to achieve a better quality of life or progress (Nasution, 2017). Multiculturalism refers to a society that consists of various elements, including different ethnicities, races, religions, education levels, economic backgrounds, political beliefs, languages, and more, living within a single governance structure. However, within such a society, some segments cannot be unified. Fundamentally, multiculturalism is an ideology that emphasizes recognizing and appreciating the equality of cultural differences (Dewi, 2020). Multicultural education promotes freedom and the dissemination of inclusive movements aimed at strengthening relationships among individuals. Therefore, multicultural education is anti-racist, fundamental, meaningful, and beneficial for all students. It permeates and penetrates society, promoting social justice. It is a process and a critical pedagogy (Masbur, 2016). Character refers to an individual's traits, habits, morals, or personality that are formed through the internalization of various virtues believed in and used as a foundation for one's perspective, thinking, attitude, and actions (Hasanah dkk., 2022). The national character refers to a nation's distinctive collective behavioral qualities, which are reflected in the awareness, understanding, feelings, aspirations, and behaviors of individuals or groups of people concerning their nationality and statehood. The national character of Indonesia

will determine the distinctive collective behavior of the Indonesian nation, which is reflected in the awareness, understanding, feelings, aspirations, and behaviors of being a nation and a state of Indonesia. It is based on the values of Pancasila, the norms of the 1945 Constitution, the diversity with the principle of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity), and a commitment to the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) (Ryantini dkk., 2022). Social Studies learning is an educational system that consists of students, learning media, learning facilities, and learning resources to help students understand various aspects of the social sciences. Social Studies learning actively involves students. In this context, the role of the teacher is crucial in selecting learning media, facilitating students, and utilizing diverse learning resources available within and outside the school environment. Social Studies learning prioritizes students to immerse themselves in situations that construct their thinking and enable them to express themselves appropriately in their respective environments. Social Studies learning plays a vital role in shaping the national character. It is because Social Studies learning shares similarities with values education or character education, both of which aim to make students good citizens and concerned about social issues and their environment, as well as fostering a strong sense of national identity. It involves four key elements to shape students' character through Social Studies learning in schools: curriculum, content, teachers, and the learning process. The curriculum in schools should develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and morals. Social Studies content is designed to introduce concepts related to community life and develop knowledge, understanding, and the ability to analyze social conditions. Social Studies teachers should follow the five principles of meaningful, integrative, challenging, active, and value-based learning. It creates a conducive and productive learning environment that engages students actively and interactively in the classroom and beyond. Students are given meaningful learning experiences to shape and develop their character (Nur, 2023).

III. METHODS

This study utilized a qualitative approach, where the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of students and educators regarding multicultural education and Social Studies learning at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga. The research employed observation, interviews, and document analysis as data collection techniques. Observations were conducted to observe Social Studies lessons that incorporated a multicultural approach. Interviews were conducted with students, educators, and school staff better to understand their experiences with multicultural Social Studies learning. Document analysis was conducted on Social Studies instructional materials, school curriculum, and educational policies related to multicultural education. The research was conducted at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga. This location was chosen because the school implemented a multicultural education program in their Social Studies learning. The main participants of this research were students from grades VII, VIII, and IX at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga. They were involved in observing Social Studies lessons and interviews regarding their experiences with multicultural learning. The Social Studies teachers at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga also participated in the research.

Interviews were conducted with them to explore their perspectives on multicultural education and its implementation in Social Studies learning. Some school staff members involved in planning and implementing the multicultural education program at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga were also interviewed. The researchers observed several Social Studies lessons incorporating a multicultural approach in classes VII, VIII, and IX at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga. Observations involved noting interactions between educators and students and essential aspects of multicultural learning. Interviews were conducted with students, educators, and school staff. Questions related to their experiences with multicultural learning, perceptions of the importance of multicultural education, challenges faced, and perceived benefits were asked. Interviews were conducted faceto-face as well as through telephone/video calls. Data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis were thematically analyzed. The thematic analysis involved identifying thematic or emerging patterns from the collected data. The data were grouped into relevant themes related to multicultural education and Social Studies learning at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga. To ensure the validity of the research, several steps were taken. First, data triangulation was employed by combining observations, interviews, and document analysis results. Second, the researchers employed member-checking techniques by involving participants in the data interpretation to ensure accurate understanding. Third, the researchers' reflexivity was documented in the research notes to consider the researchers' influence on data interpretation and analysis.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Perception and Understanding of the Multicultural Approach in Social Studies Learning : At SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga, most students demonstrate a good understanding of multiculturalism and recognize the importance of respecting cultural differences. They understand that multicultural education plays a

significant role in shaping an inclusive and tolerant national character. Students are aware that learning about different cultures and traditions can broaden their understanding of the diversity in the world around them. Students at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga see the multicultural approach in Social Studies learning as a golden opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of various cultures. They realize that understanding other cultures helps them learn Social Studies and opens their eyes to the differences present in the real world. By studying other cultures' traditions, customs, and cultural values, students at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga can build tolerance and mutual respect among their peers.

Students strong perception and understanding regarding the multicultural approach in Social Studies learning are tangible evidence of the effectiveness of multicultural education at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga. This solid understanding provides a strong foundation for students to develop inclusive attitudes, tolerance, and appreciation for cultural differences. They recognize that differences are assets, not barriers, and they learn to see the uniqueness of each culture as something valuable.SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga has created an environment that supports multicultural learning. The school has created an inclusive and tolerant atmosphere by encouraging open discussions, exchange of opinions, and collaboration among students from different cultural backgrounds. Students can share their experiences and learn new perspectives from their peers. Through effective multicultural education, SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga has produced students who have a good understanding of cultural diversity and can apply inclusive and tolerant values in their daily lives. These students are ready to become responsible citizens, respect differences, and contribute positively to a multicultural society.In conclusion, it can be stated that multicultural education at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga has succeeded in shaping critical understandings, attitudes, and values in appreciating cultural differences. Students at this school have a solid foundation to become individuals who are inclusive, tolerant, and appreciate diversity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Implementation of the Multicultural Approach in Social Studies Learning : During the learning process, Social Studies teachers at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga actively introduce the concept of multiculturalism to students. They ensure that every aspect related to cultural, religious, and traditional diversity is introduced in a detailed and objective manner. Teachers use various sources of information, such as textbooks, online materials, and primary sources, to comprehensively understand different cultures worldwide. Moreover, teachers utilize teaching methods that encourage active participation from students. They often organize group discussions where students can share their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on different cultures. These group discussions enhance students' understanding and promote cooperation, appreciation for different viewpoints, and practical communication skills. Social Studies teachers at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga also implement collaborative assignments that involve students working in groups of members with diverse cultural backgrounds. In these assignments, students are encouraged to collaborate in finding solutions to problems related to multicultural issues. It enhances students' teamwork and problem-solving skills and helps them gain a deeper understanding of different perspectives.

Furthermore, IPS teachers also use relevant case studies related to students' lives as a learning tool. These case studies allow students to connect the concept of multiculturalism with real-life situations. For example, they may study cases of intercultural conflicts, immigrant integration, or the influence of globalization on local cultures. In this process, students can analyze, understand, and respond to these issues, enhancing their understanding of cultural diversity and its implications in their lives.With a well-integrated multicultural approach to Social Studies learning, SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga provides its students with a rich and engaging learning experience. Students acquire knowledge about different cultures and develop inclusive attitudes, tolerance, and appreciation for differences. They learn to view diversity as a valuable asset to be cherished rather than a source of conflict. In the long run, the multicultural approach to Social Studies learning at SMP Santo Borromeus purbalingg a younger generation capable of living harmoniously in an increasingly multicultural society.

The Impact of the Multicultural Approach in IPS Learning on the Character of the Nation's Students : The SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga students express that they are more open to different ideas and perspectives after participating in multicultural IPS learning. They feel more comfortable interacting with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds and can better understand and respect these differences. The students also report seeking commonalities and shared values with others rather than emphasizing their differences. Furthermore, through collaboration in group projects involving students from diverse cultural backgrounds, the students develop inclusive attitudes, tolerance, and cooperation. They learn to appreciate the different contributions of each group member and work together to achieve common goals. The students also learn to address differences of opinion constructively, considering others' perspectives and reaching mutually beneficial agreements. Multicultural IPS learning has also helped the students at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga to develop an awareness of human rights, social justice, and the importance of peace in society. By studying cases involving human rights violations, social injustice, or intercultural conflicts, the students become more sensitive to these issues and can see their impacts in everyday life. They feel compelled to actively promote human rights, address social injustices, and build peace in their community. In conclusion, it can be inferred that the multicultural approach in IPS learning at SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga significantly impacts the students. The observed attitude changes, including openness to differences, the development of inclusive attitudes, tolerance, and cooperation, as well as the awareness of human rights, social justice, and peace, demonstrate the effectiveness of multicultural education in the school. The SMP Santo Borromeus Purbalingga students have a solid foundation to become open-minded citizens who respect differences and actively contribute to building an inclusive and harmonious society.

Multicultural Education in Empowering School Culture, Social Structure, and Equal Education in Shaping the Character of the Nation through IPS Learning. : Empowerment of culture in multicultural education through IPS learning to shape students' character is also through the school culture where the teachers welcome the arriving students, shake hands, adjust the students' uniforms, and tidy their hair every morning. Greetings, smiles, and polite manners are always practiced, making the students happy and familiar with the teachers, thus facilitating the formation of their character. Every day at 6:30 AM, the teachers on duty are ready to welcome the children warmly. The children always shake hands when they first meet the teacher in the morning. Before the learning begins, the students pray using a universal prayer, which is in English, because there are various religions in one class. The social structure will be formed through IPS learning, allowing children to make appropriate choices and decisions. Students will learn how to understand social issues, especially in school. There are various ethnicities, races, religions, customs, and cultures. Therefore, social structure will be formed through IPS learning. With the formation of social structure in the classroom, there will also be interactions between teachers and students and among students. Social interactions create a good school environment, as seen by how the students interact both in and outside the classroom. The school wishes to have students from diverse religious backgrounds interact without awkwardness, following the school's desire for students with different religious beliefs.

Equal education means education carried out regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or customs and per the 1945 Constitution. During IPS lessons, the teacher asks questions to the students without discriminating against them, whether they are Christian, Muslim, or Confucianist. Justice in the classroom creates a positive atmosphere, which can be seen in the students' social interactions in and outside the classroom. Equal education in the classroom dramatically supports character formation. Therefore, students learn to respect others. There are no complaints from parents regarding religious activities, such as iftar (breaking fast) with the teachers at the school. For example, non-Muslim students participate in the iftar event and patiently wait to eat until the Maghrib calls to prayer, respecting the orderly prayer of their fellow students. As shown by the research conducted by Putri and Djatmika (2020), IPS learning that integrates multicultural and problem-based learning approaches can help students develop critical and creative thinking skills and shape a more independent and responsible national character. Furthermore, Lestari and Indrivanti (2019) conducted research showing that using culturally based instructional media can help students gain a deeper understanding of cultural diversity in Indonesia and shape a national character that appreciates the cultural heritage and the environment. Both studies show that multicultural education in empowering school culture, social structure, and equal education in IPS learning can shape a more tolerant, open-minded, independent, responsible, and culturally appreciative national character. IPS educators must utilize various resources and approaches to strengthen multicultural education, benefitting students and society more significantly.

Multicultural Education in Schools Viewed from Solidarity and Tolerance as Aspects for Character Formation : From the perspective of solidarity and tolerance, multicultural education in character formation is a social activity within the school environment, such as the annual Expo event held during the second semester. This event aims to foster brotherhood among students each semester or at each level. Consequently, relationships among students develop through interactions that support camaraderie. This activity strengthens students' friendship and sense of belonging, enhancing a sense of togetherness and solidarity among classes, despite their diverse backgrounds, customs, languages, and traditions. Multicultural education is fundamentally important when viewed from the aspect of tolerance. Students should learn to appreciate others' opinions and respect diverse perspectives as part of their obligation to coexist. The tolerant attitudes displayed by students when making decisions through democratic means contribute to collective decision-making. Prior to reaching a

consensus, differing opinions are taken into account, exemplifying one of the principles of democracy. This research's findings are as follows: 1) Multicultural education in shaping national character through Social Studies (IPS) learning is achieved by adapting the curriculum to incorporate multicultural aspects. 2) Multicultural education in empowering schools and social structures and providing equitable education to shape national character through IPS learning is implemented by applying the 5S approach: smile, greet, salute, polite, and courteous. There is no discrimination within the school, and all students receive equal treatment regardless of their different cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. 3) when considered in terms of solidarity, cooperation, and tolerance, multicultural education plays a role in shaping national character through IPS learning. Cooperation between peers, teachers, and staff within and outside the classroom is promoted to blur cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences and maintain group cohesion within and outside the classroom. In terms of solidarity, students interact with peers from other schools, playing together without distinguishing differences in origin, culture, and customs.

In line with a study conducted by Perdana (2019), multicultural education in schools helps students better understand cultural and religious diversity in society. It, in turn, fosters a higher level of tolerance towards differences and strengthens solidarity and unity in the community. Another study by Anggraeni (2019) indicates that multicultural education in schools helps students develop critical and creative thinking skills to solve complex problems related to cultural and religious diversity. It strengthens solidarity, tolerance, and a respectful attitude towards differences. In conclusion, multicultural education in schools plays a vital role in shaping students' characters, emphasizing values of solidarity and tolerance. Through this approach, students better understand cultural diversity, religion, and social backgrounds in society and develop higher levels of tolerance, respect, and social awareness. Integrating multicultural education into the school curriculum is essential to reinforce students' characters and promote creating a more harmonious and inclusive society.

V. CONCLUSION

The research findings reveal that multicultural education in shaping national character through Social Studies (IPS) learning is achieved by adapting materials related to multiculturalism. Multicultural education in empowering schools and social structures and providing equal education to shape national character through IPS learning is implemented by applying the 5S approach: smile, greet, salute, polite, and courteous. In particular, the school has no differentiation, and all students receive equal treatment regardless of their cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. When considered in terms of solidarity, cooperation, and tolerance, multicultural education plays a role in shaping national character through IPS learning. Cooperation among students, as well as with teachers and staff, is fostered both inside and outside the classroom to ensure that cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences are not visible and to maintain group cohesion within and outside the classroom. In terms of solidarity, students interact and play together with their peers from other schools without distinguishing differences in origin, culture, and customs.

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