



The Role of the School Community in Encouraging Student Multiculturalism Through Islamic Religious Education

Henny Sartika¹, Rizka Harfiani², Widy Masitah³

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

sartikahenny99@gmail.com, rizkaharfiani@umsu.ac.id, widyamasitah@umsu.ac.id

Abstract: This research aims to determine the role of the school community in fostering students' multicultural awareness through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin, Serdang Bedagai Regency. The research approach used in this study is qualitative research with a case study method. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving the school principal, teachers, students, and parents. The data were then analyzed using the steps of data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The qualitative data analysis technique was applied with the aid of NVivo software. The results of this study show that the school community plays an active role in creating an inclusive and harmonious learning environment. This is reflected in the integration of multicultural values into both intracurricular and extracurricular activities, as well as the habituation of tolerance and appreciation for differences. This is achieved through their educative role, exemplary role, collaborative role, and facilitator role. The Islamic Religious Education teacher is the primary agent for internalizing

Keywords: Effectiveness, School Community, Multicultural Education, Islamic Religious Education

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran komunitas sekolah dalam menumbuhkan kesadaran multikultural siswa melalui pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin, Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan metode kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi kepala sekolah, guru, siswa dan orang tua. Kemudian dianalisis dengan langkah yaitu pengumpulan data, kondensasi data, penyajian data dan kesimpulan. Teknik analisis data kualitatif diaplikasikan dengan menggunakan bantuan software NVivo. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa komunitas sekolah berperan aktif dalam menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang inklusif dan harmonis, yang tercermin dalam integrasi nilai-nilai multikultural dalam kegiatan intrakurikuler dan ekstrakurikuler, serta pembiasaan sikap toleransi dan penghargaan terhadap perbedaan. Melalui peran edukatif, peran keteladanan, peran kolaboratif, peran fasilitator. Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam menjadi agen utama penanaman nilai, didukung oleh kepala sekolah dan partisipasi orang tua.

Kata kunci : Komunitas Sekolah, Pendidikan Multikultural, Pendidikan Agama Islam

Corresponding Author:

Henny Sartika

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; sartikahenny99@gmail.com

Introduction

The school community, consisting of students, educators, education staff, principals, parents, and the surrounding community, has an important role in creating a conducive and holistic learning environment (Basri et al., 2024). These stakeholder interactions collectively influence the educational experience, student learning outcomes, and the overall well-being of the school. Therefore, schools cannot be understood only as academic spaces, but as social ecosystems that are interconnected and influence each other (Maier et al., 2017).

Understanding and leveraging the potential of the school community is key to creating an educational ecosystem that supports students' academic, social, and emotional development. Community involvement fosters a sense of belonging that contributes to student performance and learning enjoyment. Integrated and reciprocal relationships between students, teachers, parents, and the community encourage the creation of a healthy and sustainable school environment (Kirkpatrick, 2020).

Synergy between schools, parents, and the community also plays a crucial role in fostering multicultural awareness in students. When the needs and roles of parents and the community are neglected, their involvement in the school tends to decline (Azizah et al., 2025; Hasan & Aziz, 2023; Kholik et al., 2024; Masrufa, 2024). Conversely, harmonious collaboration can improve the overall quality of the school environment (Nazmi et al., 2023). In this context, the school community becomes a strategic space to instill the values of tolerance and respect for diversity from an early age.

Cultural diversity influences the way individuals think, behave, and communicate (Indra Suardi, et al., 2025). Differences in background, age, personality, and even nonverbal expression can potentially lead to misunderstandings in social interactions. Therefore, intercultural communication skills are a crucial requirement in education to prevent differences from escalating into conflict and instead become a means of learning and cultural transformation for students (Mavianti et al., 2020).

The role of the school community in instilling multicultural awareness is in line with the goals of Islamic Religious Education which not only regulates human relations with God, but also with other human beings. Human diversity is understood as the sunnatullah, as emphasized in Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 13. PAI functions as a systematic effort to guide students to understand, internalize, and practice Islamic values in daily life, including the values of justice, brotherhood, and tolerance (Fahrurrozi et al., 2025 ; Effendi, 2020).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a central role in transforming multicultural values through learning. Teachers not only convey religious material

but also relate it to universal Islamic values such as justice, equality, brotherhood, and tolerance. The exemplary work of educators and the leadership of principals are crucial factors in building an inclusive and humanistic school culture (Sirait et al., 2024).

Meaningful learning must be responsive to the diverse backgrounds of students. Each student brings a unique cultural identity, language, values, and experiences to the classroom. The Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach offers a learning framework that makes students' cultures a key resource in the learning process. This approach not only emphasizes academic achievement, but also social, cultural development and mutual respect within the learning community (Dewi, 2025).

In Indonesia's multicultural context, multicultural education is a fundamental need to strengthen national unity. Multicultural education is defined as education that values all students regardless of cultural background, ethnicity, religion, gender, or social status. Instilling multicultural values in schools encourages students to accept differences and live peacefully together in a diverse society (Hanafi Pasaribu & Robiyanti, 2022); (Rachmadtullah et al., 2020).

Elementary School No. 101953 Pantai Cermin is a public school with a culturally and socially heterogeneous student body. The school has consistently maintained a harmonious social climate without significant ethnic conflict. Through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction and intracurricular and extracurricular activities, the school community actively instills multicultural values such as mutual trust, respect, and living with diversity. The novelty of this research lies in the collaborative approach based on the school community as a whole, involving teachers, principals, students, parents, and the community, in building multicultural awareness through Islamic Religious Education as a school culture, not just a learning activity in the classroom.

Methods

The method used in this study was a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The research was conducted at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin, Serdang Bedagai Regency, during the odd semester of the 2025–2026 academic year, specifically in July 2025. This school was chosen as the research location because it has a socially and culturally heterogeneous student population and demonstrates relatively harmonious school life practices within a diverse context. These conditions make the school relevant for study as a model for instilling multicultural values through Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level.

The subjects in this study included the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, students, and school committee representatives. Subjects were selected purposively, considering their active involvement in the educational process and the

formation of school culture. This diverse selection of subjects was intended to obtain a comprehensive perspective on the role of the school community in fostering students' multicultural attitudes.

Data collection techniques in this study included interviews, observation, and documentation. Observations were conducted directly within the school environment, specifically during Islamic Religious Education learning activities and intracurricular and extracurricular activities related to instilling values of tolerance and diversity. Through observations, researchers recorded interactions among school members, patterns of behavior, and social atmospheres reflecting multicultural practices.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, Islamic Education teachers, students, and the school committee. Interviews with the principal focused on the school's policies, vision, and strategies for building a multicultural culture. Interviews with Islamic Education teachers focused on exploring their roles in integrating multicultural values into the learning process. Interviews with students and the school committee were used to understand their experiences, perceptions, and forms of involvement in supporting a tolerant and inclusive school environment.

Documentation was used as supporting data, including school documents, teacher learning materials, religious activity programs, and other archives relevant to the research focus. In addition to primary data, this study also utilized secondary data obtained from books, scientific journal articles, and theoretical studies related to multicultural education, school communities, and Islamic religious education.

The data analysis in this study used the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes the stages of data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data analysis process was carried out continuously from the beginning of data collection until the study was completed (Sugiyono, 2019).

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and technique triangulation, comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Furthermore, the researcher conducted member checks, requesting confirmation from informants regarding the research findings to ensure alignment between the researcher's interpretation and the reality experienced by the research subjects. With these steps, it is hoped that the research findings will have a high level of validity and be scientifically accountable.

Results And Discussion

Results

The Role of Class Teachers in Instilling Multicultural Values in Students

The results of the study indicate that classroom teachers at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin play a crucial role in instilling multicultural values through behavioral habits, classroom management, and daily interactions with students. Classroom teachers utilize learning opportunities and informal activities as a means of fostering mutual respect and acceptance of differences.

The first-grade teacher explained that instilling multicultural values starts from simple habits when students first enter school:

"First-grade children are still innocent, so from the start, we teach them to respect each other. If someone doesn't want to play with a friend because they have different habits, we immediately emphasize that all friends are equal and should love each other."

The second-grade teacher added that small conflicts between students are often used as a medium for learning the value of tolerance:

"If a child is fighting or doesn't want to be in a group, I don't immediately scold them. I talk to them about why they have to be friends with everyone and why they shouldn't be picky about their friends."

In the middle grades, teachers begin to instill multicultural values through collaborative learning strategies. A third-grade teacher stated:

"I deliberately divided the groups randomly so the children get used to working with everyone. From there, they learn to respect each other's opinions and not assume they're always right."

A fourth-grade teacher emphasized that differences of opinion in the classroom are part of the social learning process:

"If there are differences of opinion, I emphasize that it's normal. The important thing is that the children learn to listen and not to ridicule their peers who differ."

Meanwhile, upper-grade teachers instill multicultural values through reflection and fostering social responsibility. A fifth-grade teacher said:

"Fifth-graders are already capable of thinking. I often explain the consequences of not respecting others, such as hurting a friend's feelings."

The sixth-grade teacher added that social behavior is a key focus alongside academics:

"We don't just assess grades, but also students' attitudes. If someone tries to belittle their friends, we immediately address them."

Based on interviews with teachers from grades 1 to 6, it can be concluded that the instillation of multicultural values in schools is carried out gradually and continuously according to the age and characteristics of the students. In lower grades (grades 1 and 2), the internalization of multicultural values focuses on cultivating attitudes of mutual respect, compassion, and acceptance of differences through simple interactions in play and friendship activities. Small conflicts between students

are actually used as a learning medium to instill the value of tolerance from an early age.

Entering the middle grades (grades 3 and 4), teachers begin integrating multicultural values into collaborative learning strategies, such as random group assignments and class discussions. Through these activities, students learn to collaborate with diverse peers, respect others' opinions, and accept differences of opinion as a natural part of the social learning process.

Meanwhile, in the upper grades (grades 5 and 6), multicultural values are instilled through a reflective approach and fostering social responsibility. Teachers emphasize not only cognitive aspects but also pay close attention to students' social attitudes and behaviors. Attitude evaluations, guidance on demeaning behavior, and explanations of the social impact of intolerant actions demonstrate that multicultural values are positioned as an integral part of students' character development.

Thus, the practice of multicultural education in this school takes place systematically, contextually, and is oriented towards the formation of tolerant attitudes and appreciation for diversity from an early age until the end of elementary school.

The Role of Principal Leadership and School Community Support in Strengthening Multicultural Culture

The research results show that the strengthening of multicultural values at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin is inseparable from the strategic role of the principal as a key actor in building an inclusive, humanistic, and equitable school climate. The principal functions not only as an administrator, but also as a value leader who instills the principles of tolerance, togetherness, and respect for differences in all school members. These values are then translated into school policies, teacher-student interaction patterns, and daily culture within the school environment.

The principal emphasized that the diversity of students' backgrounds, whether religious, cultural, or social, must be understood as a social reality that should not be a source of discrimination. In an interview, the principal stated:

"We recognize that students come from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, from the beginning, we emphasize to teachers that they must treat all children equally. There should be no differential treatment based solely on family background, religion, or home customs."

The principal further explained that efforts to build a multicultural culture are carried out through strengthening the school's vision, fostering mutual respect, and integrating the value of tolerance into learning activities, particularly Islamic Religious Education. This is reaffirmed in the following statement:

"In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, we direct teachers to not only teach religious material, but also social values such as respecting differences, working together, and not putting down friends."

In addition to the principal's leadership, the role of the school committee and parents is also crucial in supporting the success of multicultural education at the school. The school committee serves as a strategic partner, bridging communication between the school and parents, while ensuring that the values instilled in the school align with the educational practices at home.

The head of the school committee stated that parental involvement in school programs is a shared responsibility in shaping children's character. He said:

"We on the committee always support school programs, especially those related to character development in children. Tolerance and mutual respect cannot only be taught in school; they must also be practiced at home."

Similarly, one parent also revealed that communication between the school and parents is quite intense, particularly regarding fostering their child's attitudes and behavior. The parent stated:

"The school often reminds us to model good behavior at home. If we're taught mutual respect at school, we should do the same at home."

From the students' perspective, the multicultural culture fostered by the school is palpable in daily interactions. Students demonstrate a fairly good understanding of the importance of respecting differences and living in harmony with their peers. One student described her experience as follows:

"At school, we're taught to respect each other. If a friend has different habits, we're not allowed to tease them. Teachers always remind us to get along."

Another student also added that the teachers set a direct example of being fair and non-discriminatory. This was reflected in their statement:

"The teachers here are all kind. When they give assignments or grades, they don't discriminate. We are treated equally."

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the multicultural culture at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin is formed through strong collaboration between the principal, teachers, school committee, parents, and students. The principal's leadership is the main foundation in creating inclusive school policies and climate, while the support of parents and the school committee strengthens the internalization of multicultural values outside the school environment. Meanwhile, students are the subjects who directly experience the impact of an educational environment that values diversity and fosters tolerance from an early age.

Discussion

The school community at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin demonstrates a strategic role in fostering multicultural awareness starting in elementary school. Multicultural education at the elementary school level is crucial because students are in the process of forming social values and character (Derson & Gunawan, 2021). Schools are not only a space for transmitting knowledge, but also a vehicle for internalizing social and humanitarian values (Basri et al., 2024). Besides that, Basri (2023) emphasizes that schools have a responsibility to foster awareness of diversity through a just and civilized curriculum. The findings of this study indicate that multicultural education has been implemented systematically through the involvement of all elements of the school community.

The educational role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers is a central element in fostering students' multicultural attitudes (Basri & Hasibuan, 2024). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin integrate the values of tolerance (*tasamuh*), equality (*musawah*), and brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*) into their teaching. This integration of values aligns with the view of Suardi et al. (2025), who stated that Islamic education essentially aims to build individual and social piety. Quraish Shihab also emphasized that Islam theologically rejects discrimination and recognizes diversity as the law of Allah. (Daimah, 2018). Therefore, Islamic religious education is a strategic tool in building multicultural awareness based on Islamic values.

The application of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach strengthens the effectiveness of multicultural learning. This approach allows teachers to design learning based on students' cultural experiences (Bahari dkk., 2025). Teachers not only introduce the concept of diversity, but also relate it to students' cultural backgrounds through discussions, reflections, and social projects. This is in line with the findings Lusia Mumtahan, (2025) which states that inclusive Islamic religious education can increase students' tolerance and open-mindedness. With CRT, the learning process is no longer homogeneous but adaptive to student diversity.

The role of the principal and teachers as role models functions as an indirect learning medium in multicultural education (Lestari & Sunarto, 2023). Exemplary attitudes of fairness, politeness, and respect for differences are concrete examples that students imitate. Lira Syahfitri Sirega dkk., (2025) emphasizes that teachers in elementary schools not only act as instructors but also as moral figures for students. From a character education perspective, role models are the most effective method because students learn from what they see, not just from what they hear (Basri & Hasibuan, 2024). The results of this study show that exemplary practices have formed a humanistic and inclusive school culture.

The collaborative role of schools with parents and the community is a crucial factor in the success of multicultural education. Schools cannot stand alone in

instilling social values, as the family and community environment are the primary spaces for character formation in students (Chairany et al., 2025). Joint activities such as religious celebrations and cooperation strengthen the values of solidarity and tolerance. This finding is supported by Sari Mahfiroh dkk. (2025), which explains that school community involvement has a positive impact on the social climate and the quality of relationships between individuals at school.

This cross-stakeholder collaboration also strengthens the continuity of values between home and school. When tolerance is taught at school and practiced at home, the internalization process is consistent. Epstein emphasized that the school-family-community relationship forms a mutually reinforcing educational ecosystem. In the context of SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin, this collaboration creates an educational climate conducive to the growth of mutual respect and social empathy.

The school's facilitative role through extracurricular activities with a tolerance nuance serves as a contextual learning tool. Activities such as cultural performances, discussions on humanitarian values, and religious competitions bring students into contact with the realities of diversity. Extracurricular activities are a strategic medium for shaping social character because students learn through direct experience (Basri, 2023). This aligns with Kolb (2015), who emphasized the importance of experiential learning in building students' social awareness and attitudes.

Overall, the implementation of the four roles of the school community forms a sustainable multicultural education system. Multicultural education at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin goes beyond symbolism and is manifested in school policies, learning practices, and social interactions. Banks (2015) emphasized that effective multicultural education must be integrated into the overall school structure. Thus, this school can serve as a model for elementary school-based multicultural education that is relevant for implementation in Indonesia's diverse society.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin, Serdang Bedagai Regency, it can be concluded that the school community, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers, plays a central role in instilling multicultural values in the school environment. Through the integration of universal Islamic values such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), equality (*musawah*), and brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*), teachers are able to become social actors who foster awareness of diversity among students. Furthermore, the principal's support, parental involvement, and community engagement foster an inclusive and contextual educational ecosystem. Obstacles such as students' limited understanding of diversity, lack of cultural representation in learning, and limited space for intercultural expression have been addressed through collaborative learning approaches, teacher role models, and cross-cultural school activities.

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