Research Paper

Implementation of Multicultural Values and the Formation of Students' Social Character

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural education is a concept developed to address difficulties and inequalities arising from cultural differences. The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of multicultural values and students' social character in fostering multicultural attitudes in the formation of social character among high school students in South Tangerang City. This study employed a qualitative approach, with research conducted at three high schools in South Tangerang City. Data sources included informants consisting of teachers, students, and principals. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, documentation, and observation. The findings show that the inculcation of multicultural values is carried out through various approaches implemented by teachers, the values exemplified to students, as well as teachers' role modeling for learners. Students' social character solidarity, tolerance, caring, and communicative attitudes has developed and been practiced in daily social life.

Keywords: Multicultural values, social character

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation characterized by a high degree of diversity, encompassing ethnicity, race, religion, language, and culture. Within the framework of multiculturalism, the most appropriate expression to represent Indonesia's diversity is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). The formation of a unified society that maintains its unique characteristics is the ultimate goal of establishing Indonesia as a unitary state. However, in practice, the implementation of multiculturalism often faces challenges arising from social conflicts. These conflicts may occur due to the diverse backgrounds of Indonesian society (Hakim & Darojat, 2023). Moreover, a sense of superiority held by individuals toward their own ethnic, racial, religious, or linguistic group can also trigger tensions and disputes among citizens. A lack of mutual respect and tolerance further contributes to the emergence of conflicts and social divisions.

Such conflicts are not only experienced in society at large but are also evident among students, as reflected in media reports of brawls, bullying, and school violence. Immaturity in critical thinking among students often leads to a lack of tolerance. Feelings of superiority whether toward friends, groups, gangs, or schools become major factors behind these conflicts. Differences in culture and ways of evaluating ethnic identity can be a blessing of multicultural social dynamics. However, when members of each group perceive their own culture as superior to others, inevitable conflicts may emerge (Muhammad & Suhardini, 2025). Therefore, education that instills multicultural values from an early

age is needed to help students develop respect for diversity, control group-based egos, and build awareness that differences are a unifying strength and a foundation for social harmony.

In fostering multicultural awareness, multicultural education is a concept developed to overcome inequalities arising from cultural diversity. James Banks (2019) defines multicultural education as education about "people of color." In essence, multicultural education is education about diversity, emphasizing tolerance and equality in addressing differences. The goal of multicultural education is to create a democratic learning environment where every student has equal opportunities to grow, while also raising awareness of cultural issues in diverse societies (Alanay & Aydin, 2016). Through multicultural education, students are expected to understand the importance of diversity so that they can appreciate differences in culture, religion, ethnicity, and worldview, as well as develop tolerance, empathy, and cooperation in building harmonious social life.

The implementation of multicultural values in education plays an important role in fostering tolerance and respect for differences. Multicultural education also helps students realize that differences are not threats but sources of enrichment that broaden perspectives and strengthen social relationships (Hakim & Darojat, 2023). Furthermore, multicultural education can shape students' social character by fostering respect, empathy, and cooperation, enabling them to interact harmoniously both in schools and in society (Atmaja, 2024). Building students' social character through multicultural education serves as a foundation for shaping open-mindedness, adaptability to diverse environments, and awareness to maintain unity amidst cultural, religious, and social differences.

According to Farhani (2019), character refers to attitudes and behaviors carried out in good and proper ways. Character encompasses positive values such as virtue, good deeds, and the pursuit of a good life, which are instilled in individuals and reflected in their actions. Character is also the way of thinking and behaving that defines human identity, enabling them to live and work together within families, social communities, and the state. A person of good character can make decisions and take responsibility for them (Fadilah, Zumrudian, Lestari, Baidawi, & Elisanti, 2021). In cultivating multicultural values among students, teachers seek to instill democratic, humanist, and pluralist principles. Multicultural education thus becomes a process of fostering sincerity and tolerance toward cultural diversity in society. Moreover, multicultural education can shape students' social character by embedding positive and commendable values, reflected in students' consistent good behavior regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, or culture. In this way, multicultural education becomes an effort to develop students' social character so they can interact and socialize within Indonesia's multicultural and multiethnic society.

Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*, IPS) serves as an appropriate medium for instilling multicultural values and shaping students' social character in diverse communities. Social Studies explores human relationships and cultural interactions, considering past, present, and future aspects (Febriani, 2021). Its objectives include equipping students with relevant knowledge and understanding of social issues, fostering critical and reflective thinking skills, and encouraging appreciation of multiple perspectives (Social Studies Teaching and Learning Syllabus Primary, 2024). These goals align with the cultivation of multicultural values, preparing students to understand issues of diversity and intolerance, develop social skills for building harmonious relationships, respect differences, and contribute to inclusive and democratic environments. Such efforts can minimize conflicts such as brawls, bullying, and violence among students.

As educational institutions, schools aim to enhance and develop students' abilities, skills, attitudes, and values. Schools are ecosystems where children interact with one another. Their role is to facilitate communication and collaboration among students, teachers, principals, and staff, forming a community within the school environment. Senior high schools (SMA) in South Tangerang City accommodate students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, though most are influenced by Betawi and Sundanese Banten cultures. South Tangerang, as a suburban area of Jakarta in the Jabodetabek region, attracts students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Student interactions in this urban environment are characterized by open communication styles, dynamism, and egalitarian relationships that transcend cultural and social differences.

Senior high schools in South Tangerang apply multicultural values such as tolerance, togetherness, care, and communicative attitudes in students' daily lives. These values are instilled not only through classroom learning but also through school activities. In this way, students not only understand multicultural concepts theoretically but also practice them in daily interactions. Through extracurricular activities, religious celebrations, and collaborative projects, students learn to appreciate differences and uphold mutual respect. This process gradually shapes inclusive social character, open-mindedness, and the ability to live harmoniously in diversity. Based on this background, the present study is titled *"The Implementation of Multicultural Education and the Formation of Social Character."* The research was conducted in three schools with distinct characteristics SMAN 12, MAN 1 Tangerang Selatan, and MA Manbaul Ulum each of which demonstrates how multicultural values are instilled in students and how social character is shaped in secondary education settings.

MATERIALS & METHODS
This study employed a qualitative approach. Through a qualitative approach, the research was intended to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions. The research was conducted at three secondary schools in South Tangerang City: SMAN 2, MAN 1 South Tangerang City, and MA Manbaul Ulum. These schools were purposively selected because each has a different background and environmental context, thereby offering diverse perspectives on the implementation of multicultural values in schools. The sources of data in this study included principals, vice principals for student affairs, teachers (including guidance and counseling teachers), and representatives of students at the secondary level. The events studied focused on the cultivation of multicultural values in classroom settings. Data collection techniques consisted of observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out as a systematic process of organizing and interpreting data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. The analytical procedures involved four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

RESULT & DISCUSSION
Implementation of Multicultural Values in Shaping the Social Character of High School Students in South Tangerang City
The implementation of multicultural values and the formation of students' social character are highly effective when carried out in schools with diverse student backgrounds, such as senior high schools in South Tangerang City. Based on interview results, there are three main indicators that serve as the focus of this study: (1) approaches or methods used in the learning process and school activities, (2) values directly instilled in students, and (3) role modeling or exemplary behavior demonstrated by teachers. These three indicators explain how approaches,

methods, and teacher role modeling contribute to fostering multicultural values among students in schools.

First, the approach applied by teachers in schools is multicultural learning, which essentially educates students to develop awareness and understanding in responding to diversity positively (Hakim & Darojat, 2023). According to Salim, the purpose of multicultural education is to build an inclusive and harmonious social environment for diverse students (Salim, 2015). Therefore, teachers are not only knowledge transmitters but also facilitators of healthy social interactions, enforcers of tolerance, and role models in respecting differences. Through the internalization of multicultural values, the school environment becomes a safe space for all students to grow without discrimination, while simultaneously shaping social character that is adaptive to diversity.

Multicultural-based learning aims to empower students to appreciate cultural differences and provide opportunities for collaboration with peers from different ethnic or racial backgrounds. Banks (2019) emphasizes that multicultural education also requires diverse teaching strategies to develop awareness, attitudes, and skills necessary for living in a pluralistic society. The approaches and methods used by schools in South Tangerang City to instill multicultural values are highly varied, as they are adapted to the characteristics of each school, its students, and the institution's vision. In this regard, each school may integrate multicultural values not only into classroom learning but also through extracurricular activities, school regulations, as well as organizational and cultural practices.

The inculcation of multicultural values in schools is carried out through approaches and methods adapted to the characteristics of each institution. At SMAN 12 South Tangerang, approaches such as direct observation, interactive lectures, visual media, and role play are employed to build empathy and an understanding of diversity, particularly through sociology lessons. The method used at SMAN 12 South Tangerang is the enrichment method, which is a learning approach that broadens students' insights by providing additional material beyond the core curriculum. In the enrichment method, teachers present literature, discussions, and case examples drawn from various cultural and religious backgrounds, enabling students not only to understand diversity theoretically but also to appreciate different worldviews without abandoning their personal identities (Sipuan et al., 2022).

Another method that can be used to instill multicultural values in schools is the contribution method. In this approach, students are actively engaged in understanding and appreciating other cultures, for instance through shared readings, collaborative activities, and exposure to religious and cultural celebrations in society. Nevertheless, attention to ethnic groups as well as cultural and historical events is often still limited and insufficiently explored (Sipuan et al., 2022). MAN 1 South Tangerang applies the integration of multicultural values into lessons, a moderate religious approach, open dialogue, and contextual learning to foster tolerance and solidarity. Meanwhile, MA Manbaul Ulum also employs the contribution method, such as culture-based approaches through the P5RA program (Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students and Rahmatan Lil Alamin), embedding multicultural values in contextual and creative ways by involving students in the exploration of local culture as well as cultures across Indonesia to instill values of togetherness, openness, and national identity.

The approaches and methods applied at SMAN 12, MAN 1, and MA Manbaul Ulum demonstrate varied strategies in inculcating multicultural values, tailored to the context and characteristics of each educational institution. These differences highlight that the inculcation of multicultural values cannot be carried out in a uniform manner

but must be adapted to the social, cultural, and religious environments of the school. However, all three schools share the same goal: to foster multicultural awareness in students so they can live harmoniously amidst diversity. Through enrichment methods, students are directed to broaden their perspectives and appreciate various viewpoints, while contribution methods provide opportunities for them to engage directly in concrete cultural activities.

Second, the core values instilled by teachers include tolerance, respect for ethno-cultural and religious differences, anti-discrimination, conflict resolution and mediation skills, respect for human rights, democratization, plurality, and universal humanity. These values are introduced not only through classroom learning materials but also through practical experiences in daily interactions within the school environment. In this regard, teachers and schools play a vital role in building multicultural values among students. Teachers act as key figures in guiding and delivering accurate information to help students understand the concept of multicultural education.

Teachers play an important role in applying multicultural education in schools. They are required to act fairly toward all students, regardless of religious or personal backgrounds. When there are students with different beliefs, teachers are obliged to ensure that the learning environment remains inclusive and free from discriminatory behavior (Muhammad & Suhardini, 2025). Thus, the internalization of multicultural values is a strategic step in fostering an inclusive generation that respects differences and contributes to creating a peaceful and harmonious school environment.

The inculcation of multicultural values in schools is a strategic effort to shape students' character so they can live harmoniously amid diversity. At SMAN 12 South Tangerang, the principles of tolerance and equality are applied through fair treatment of all students, regardless of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. School life is built in an inclusive atmosphere with full respect for freedom of worship. This aligns with Banks' (2019) view that multicultural education must emphasize justice and inclusivity in the learning process. MAN 1 South Tangerang prioritizes the habituation of mutual cooperation, tolerance, empathy, and politeness in daily interactions, functioning as a preventive measure against the emergence of exclusive groups among students. Meanwhile, MA Manbaul Ulum, operating under a pesantren framework, integrates religious values with equality, solidarity, and togetherness through classroom and dormitory activities, turning differences into a source of fraternity. The inculcation of multicultural values at MAN 1 South Tangerang and MA Manbaul Ulum align with the concept of togetherness, emphasizing respect and cooperation within diversity. Teachers actively guide students in understanding the meaning of togetherness, linking it to Indonesian culture as a collective national identity. The value of mutual cooperation instilled in students serves as a means to strengthen solidarity, prevent exclusivism, and foster awareness that religious and cultural diversity is a social asset that must be preserved.

The efforts to instill multicultural values in these three schools show that diversity is viewed not as an obstacle but as a social learning space enriching students' experience. Teachers act as facilitators guiding students to understand differences proportionally and instilling awareness that togetherness can be achieved through mutual respect. Furthermore, the implementation of multicultural values in education plays a crucial role in fostering tolerance and respect for differences. Tolerance built in this context is not merely a passive attitude of accepting diversity but a conscious effort to value it as wealth and an integral part of the nation's identity (Izzati, 2021). In this sense, the implementation of multicultural education does not only teach cognitive knowledge but also shapes social character that is

democratic, inclusive, and respectful of diversity as a collective national identity. This practice forms an important foundation for students to coexist harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

Third, in instilling multicultural values in students, teachers also serve as figures to be imitated and followed, enabling students to internalize these values through real behavior in daily life. Teachers' role modeling in shaping students' character is reflected in their ability and attitude to influence and guide students toward building good and positive character (Sutrisno & Wahyudi, 2022). Teachers' consistent behavior in showing fairness, respecting differences, and openness to diversity conveys a strong moral message for students, which they then emulate in their social lives at school and in society. Suryana (2019) explains that in implementing multicultural values, teachers must set an example for students by behaving equitably and justly toward them, regardless of their backgrounds. Through such role modeling, students learn not only from the theories taught but also from real-life examples they observe daily. Teachers' roles extend beyond knowledge transmission; they also serve as moral guides who play a crucial role in shaping a generation of tolerant students capable of living harmoniously within diversity.

Role modeling becomes an important method in instilling multicultural values in schools, as through teachers' attitudes and behavior, students directly learn about equality, tolerance, and respect for diversity in South Tangerang's senior high schools. At SMAN 12 South Tangerang, equality is demonstrated by not discriminating against students based on religion or ethnicity and by granting freedom of worship, while teachers also support and guide this diversity. At MAN 1 South Tangerang, teacher role modeling is reflected in their fairness regardless of students' ethnic background, gender, or appearance, ensuring equal attention to all students and establishing teachers as ideal figures to be

emulated in daily life. Meanwhile, at MA Manbaul Ulum, teacher role modeling is applied both in school and dormitory settings, through non-discriminatory attitudes toward social, economic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds, while emphasizing politeness, respect, and humility as Islamic values shaping students' character to respect others and maintain order in both school and pesantren life.

In fostering students' multicultural values in South Tangerang's senior high schools, teachers strive for self-improvement by setting examples through actions and attitudes so they may be emulated as good role models by students. Teachers' role modeling is demonstrated through behavior reflecting equality, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Teachers' fairness, non-discrimination, and consistency in upholding these values significantly influence the development of students' social character. This aligns with Suryana's (2019) assertion that teachers are the main figures in implementing multicultural education, as their role modeling is more easily internalized by students. Similarly, Banks (2019) emphasizes that multicultural education requires role models who display justice, equality, and respect for differences in real practice. Thus, teacher role modeling functions as a key instrument in creating an inclusive school culture while equipping students with the ability to live harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

Students' Social Characteristics in Fostering Multiculturalismisme

Multicultural education aims to shape students' character toward diversity as a source of learning in promoting respect for equality, social justice, and eliminating discrimination (Agustian, 2019). The implementation of multicultural education is carried out through the integration of values of diversity into the learning process for students. The purpose of implementing multicultural education is to build students' social character that fosters an inclusive attitude, namely developing awareness and

appreciation of cultural, racial, religious, and social differences among fellow students in the school environment. Students are taught to respect every human being, because differences are considered a richness that broadens knowledge based on individual experiences and perspectives. In addition, the goal of multicultural education is to cultivate students' tolerance across individuals and groups (Rudianto, 2023). Therefore, the implementation of multicultural education is directed toward fostering awareness, mutual respect, and the ability to interact harmoniously amid differences, so that students can become fair, open-minded individuals who contribute positively to creating a peaceful and equal school life.

The character required in a multicultural society includes values such as solidarity, which serves as a foundation for individuals to develop creatively, understand themselves deeply, and live in harmony with sincere and noble values. Respecting differences and cultural similarities play a role in fostering awareness to act tolerantly in social life (Tetep, 2017). Furthermore, being communicative is an attitude and behavior that encourages individuals to actively contribute to producing something beneficial for society. This attitude reflects openness in interaction and the ability to establish positive relationships with others. Next, social care is an attitude and behavior of helping others and communities in need (Baginda, 2016). Several social characters required in community life include solidarity, tolerance, communicativeness, and social care. These four values are essential foundations for shaping individuals who can coexist harmoniously, contribute positively, and be sensitive to the needs and diversity of society.

First, solidarity. Solidarity is described as an attitude of mutual care, helping, and maintaining togetherness in school life. According to Rainer Forst (2024), solidarity is the sense of mutual trust between individuals or groups. With solidarity, people can more easily solve various problems they face collectively, while fostering togetherness that strengthens social relationships among members. At SMAN 12, students from various religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds are well-accepted; adaptation runs inclusively, and positive interaction is established through group work, conversations, and personal approaches outside the classroom. At MAN 1, solidarity is reflected in concrete actions such as helping friends in need, visiting the sick, and raising funds to support peers' participation in school activities. Meanwhile, at MA Manbaul Ulum, collective life in the Islamic boarding school naturally fosters empathy and a spirit of mutual assistance, where students are accustomed to helping one another, supporting those facing difficulties, and creating comfort for each other, including new students who are still adapting. Solidarity observed in the three schools shows that the value of togetherness is not only formal but is also practiced in students' daily lives. Through direct experience, students learn that differences in background do not hinder building harmonious social relationships. In fact, diversity becomes a space for broadening insights, training empathy, and strengthening bonds among students.

Second, tolerance. Tolerance refers to mutual respect and openness to differences. According to Hasyim in Effendi et al. (2021), tolerance is the attitude of granting freedom to everyone, regardless of background, so they may practice their beliefs and manage their lives according to their choices and responsibilities. At SMAN 12, diversity provides opportunities for students to learn about other cultures and religions through cross-background dialogues, though challenges such as prejudice or offensive jokes remain, requiring self-awareness and open communication. At MAN 1, tolerance grows through empathy, acceptance of differing opinions, and collective awareness of the importance of maintaining harmony. Meanwhile, at MA Manbaul Ulum,

although the environment is religiously homogeneous, cultural and social diversity is still appreciated through mutual acceptance and respect. The tolerance nurtured in these schools shows that diversity is not a source of division but a potential to strengthen social bonds. Practicing tolerance in daily life guides students to manage differences maturely, both in academic and non-academic interactions. Tolerance also fosters a shared responsibility to create a harmonious school environment, minimizing conflicts and enhancing student cooperation.

Third, social care. Care is shown through attentiveness, sympathy, empathy, and concrete actions toward conditions in the surrounding environment. According to Emanuel (2024), care is an individual's or group's attitude or action manifested in attention, empathy, and assistance to others in need. This attitude is born from fundamental human values and reflects awareness that humans cannot live alone but are always connected to others and their environment. At SMAN 12, social care is reflected in students' awareness to resolve conflicts peacefully, protect victims of bullying, and provide emotional support. At MAN 1, care is realized through solidarity, conflict resolution, and protection for victims of bullying—though most bullying is in the form of jokes, it is still handled wisely. Meanwhile, at MA Manbaul Ulum, collective life in the boarding school fosters empathy and cooperation through habits of mutual assistance, advice-giving, and gradual, persuasive conflict resolution. These practices teach students not only to think individualistically but also to take social responsibility for the well-being of their peers. Through care, students learn to prioritize collective peace and welfare, both within the school and the broader community.

Fourth, communicativeness. In the multicultural context, communicativeness derives from communication, which means the process of delivering messages, information, ideas, or feelings from one party to another. According to Brown and Levinson in Nuraini (2021), politeness in communication often serves as a goal for evaluating others, since politeness is a universal value in every culture. Each culture has a different degree of need for politeness and distinct methods of expressing it; in this sense, every individual has the right and need to be respected and protected. From this definition, it can be understood that communication is not only the process of conveying messages, information, ideas, and feelings to others but also involves ethics that emphasize politeness, respect for others' rights, and protection of individual dignity. Communicative interaction at SMAN 12 Tangerang Selatan shows that student relationships can be harmonious through joint activities. Although seniority and racism still exist, efforts to respect one another, use proper language, and foster mutual understanding are prioritized, creating an atmosphere of togetherness, solidarity, and appreciation for diversity. At MAN 1, open and polite communication helps resolve differences of opinion, curb racist remarks, and make use of online platforms to maintain harmony. Meanwhile, at MA Manbaul Ulum, communication naturally develops through communal life, though challenges such as disrespectful attitudes from some senior students still occur, yet are addressed through persuasive approaches. Overall, communicativeness effectively shapes students' attitudes to respect one another, understand differences, and prioritize dialogue in resolving conflicts. With good communication, multicultural values can be genuinely instilled in school life, so that students not only learn to accept diversity but also use it as a strength to strengthen solidarity, build harmony, and create an inclusive and harmonious learning environment.

CONCLUSION
The implementation of multicultural values in shaping the social character of high school students in South Tangerang City

shows that multicultural education is not merely a theoretical discourse but is also manifested in learning approaches, value cultivation, and teachers' role modeling. First, the approaches and methods used at SMAN 12, MAN 1, and MA Manbaul Ulum differ according to each school's characteristics but share the same goal: to build students' multicultural awareness. Enrichment methods, contribution-based learning, contextual learning, and reinforcement through local cultural values provide opportunities for students to both understand and experience diversity in real-life practice. Second, the values instilled include tolerance, respect for differences, anti-discrimination, conflict resolution skills, respect for human rights, solidarity, and togetherness. These values are not only taught cognitively but also internalized through habituation and daily school life practices. Third, teachers' role modeling is the most significant factor in instilling multiculturalism. Through fairness, inclusiveness, and respect for differences, teachers become key figures whom students emulate in their social lives, both at school and in society. Meanwhile, the formation of students' social character is reflected in four main attitudes: solidarity, tolerance, social care, and communicativeness. These four values serve as the foundation for students to live harmoniously, inclusively, and contribute positively within a pluralistic society. The implementation of multicultural education in high schools in South Tangerang City has proven effective in shaping students' social character. Diversity is not seen as an obstacle but as a strength that enriches experience, strengthens brotherhood, and builds a peaceful, democratic, and inclusive school culture.

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