

Building a Diversity-Friendly School Culture to Reduce Intolerance: A School-Based Educational Intervention Among Elementary School Students in Cimahi

Yosi Oktri¹, Ika Suhartati¹, Diva Maulida Putri¹, Fatimah Riadus Sholihah¹, Metina Hati Laian¹, Hera Azahra Nurfarida¹, Ima Hani Yunita¹

¹STIKes Budi Luhur Cimahi, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Intolerance among elementary school students may appear through mocking behavior, refusal to cooperate in group activities, selective friendship, and discriminatory attitudes toward peers from different backgrounds. These behaviors can disrupt classroom interaction and weaken students' social-emotional development. This community service-based study aimed to promote a diversity-friendly school culture as an effort to reduce intolerance among fifth-grade students at SD Budi Luhur Cimahi. This study used a one-group pretest-posttest educational intervention design with descriptive quantitative evaluation and supporting behavioral observation. A total of 27 fifth-grade students participated in the program. The intervention consisted of tolerance education, interactive discussion, role-playing, and collaborative learning activities. Evaluation was conducted using a 10-item tolerance questionnaire and observation of students' social behaviors. The results showed an increase in the high tolerance-understanding category from 4 students (14.8%) before the intervention to 17 students (63.0%) after the intervention. Behavioral observation also indicated reduced mocking behavior and refusal to cooperate, along with improved empathy, respect, and cross-group collaboration. The findings suggest that participatory and experience-based tolerance education can support the development of inclusive social behavior in elementary school settings. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the small sample size, absence of a control group, and short-term evaluation period.

Keywords: school culture; diversity; tolerance; intolerance; elementary school; educational intervention

Corresponding Author

Yosi Oktri

Diploma of Midwifery Program, STIKes Budi Luhur Cimahi, Indonesia

yosioktri@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is characterized by rich diversity in ethnicity, religion, culture, language, and social background. This diversity is an important national strength, but it also requires continuous educational efforts to ensure that students learn to respect differences from an early age. Elementary education is a strategic stage for strengthening tolerance because children begin to develop social identity, peer relationships, empathy, and moral reasoning during this period (Lickona, 2013; UNESCO, 2023).

In school settings, intolerance may appear in everyday interactions such as mocking peers, excluding classmates from group activities, refusing to cooperate with students from different backgrounds, or using disrespectful language. Although these behaviors may seem minor, repeated intolerance can affect classroom climate,

students' psychological safety, and the development of inclusive social attitudes. Therefore, schools need to address intolerance not only through cognitive instruction, but also through habituation, teacher role modeling, and participatory activities that allow students to practice tolerance directly (Banks, 2015; OECD, 2024).

School culture plays an important role in shaping students' values and behavior. A diversity-friendly school culture encourages respect, empathy, cooperation, and fairness in daily interactions. Recent studies indicate that social tolerance among elementary school students can be strengthened through teacher strategies, collaborative learning, multicultural education, and structured social interaction (Zakiah, Sarkadi, & Marini, 2023; Irayanti, 2025). These findings suggest that tolerance education is more effective when students are actively involved in meaningful learning experiences rather than only receiving theoretical explanations.

Based on preliminary observations at SD Budi Luhur Cimahi, several students still showed behaviors indicating low tolerance, including mocking peers, selective friendship, and reluctance to cooperate in heterogeneous groups. Therefore, this activity was designed to build a diversity-friendly school culture through tolerance education, interactive discussion, role-playing, and collaborative activities among fifth-grade students. The aim of this study was to describe changes in students' tolerance understanding and social behavior before and after the school-based educational intervention.

METHODS

This community service-based study employed a one-group pretest-posttest educational intervention design with descriptive quantitative evaluation supported by behavioral observation. The design was selected because the activity aimed to describe changes in students' tolerance understanding and social behavior before and after the intervention. Therefore, the study was not categorized as purely qualitative.

The activity was conducted on December 4, 2025, among fifth-grade students at SD Budi Luhur Cimahi. A total of 27 students participated in the program. The participants were selected using total sampling because all students in the class were involved in the school-based activity.

The intervention consisted of four main activities: tolerance education, interactive discussion, role-playing, and collaborative learning. The tolerance education session introduced the meaning of diversity, examples of tolerant and intolerant behavior, and the importance of respect in peer interaction. Interactive discussion allowed students to express their experiences and opinions about differences. Role-playing was used to simulate classroom situations involving cooperation, empathy, and respectful communication. Collaborative learning activities encouraged students to work in mixed groups to practice inclusive behavior directly.

The evaluation instrument consisted of a 10-item tolerance questionnaire developed based on five dimensions: respect for differences, acceptance of diversity, cooperation, empathy, and non-discriminatory behavior. Each item used a

dichotomous scoring format, with correct or tolerant responses scored as 1 and incorrect or intolerant responses scored as 0. The total score ranged from 0 to 10 and was categorized into three levels: low (0-3), moderate (4-6), and high (7-10).

Content validity was assessed through expert review by lecturers with experience in education and character development. The review focused on item relevance, clarity, language suitability for elementary students, and alignment with tolerance indicators. The instrument was also checked for readability to ensure that the students could understand each item. Because the activity was conducted as a small-scale community service evaluation, formal psychometric testing was limited and should be strengthened in future studies.

Data were collected through pretest and posttest questionnaires. The pretest was administered before the educational intervention, while the posttest was administered after the completion of the activity. In addition, behavioral observations were conducted during the intervention to document students' social behavior, including mocking behavior, willingness to cooperate, cross-group interaction, empathy, and respect.

Data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. The results were presented by comparing students' tolerance-understanding categories before and after the intervention. Behavioral observation data were summarized narratively to support interpretation of the quantitative findings. Inferential statistical testing was not performed because the activity used a small one-group community service evaluation design and did not collect individual paired score data suitable for paired statistical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 27 fifth-grade students participated in the activity. The results showed an improvement in students' understanding of tolerance after the intervention. Before the activity, 13 students (48.1%) were in the low understanding category, while only 4 students (14.8%) were in the high category. After the intervention, the number of students in the high category increased to 17 students (63.0%), while the low category decreased to 3 students (11.1%).

Table 1. Comparison of Students' Tolerance Understanding Before and After the Intervention

Understanding Level	Pre-test n (%)	Post-test n (%)
Low	13 (48.1)	3 (11.1)
Moderate	10 (37.0)	7 (25.9)
High	4 (14.8)	17 (63.0)
Total	27 (100.0)	27 (100.0)

Table 1 indicates a shift from low and moderate understanding categories toward the high understanding category after the intervention. This suggests that the combination of tolerance education, discussion, role-playing, and collaborative learning

was associated with improved student understanding of tolerance and diversity.

Table 2. Observed Changes in Students' Social Behavior Before and After the Intervention

Behavioral Indicator	Before Intervention	After Intervention
Mocking peers	Frequently observed	Rarely observed
Refusal to work in groups	Frequently observed	Almost not observed
Cross-group cooperation	Low	Improved
Empathy and respect	Limited	Increased

Observation results showed positive changes in students' social behavior. Before the activity, several students still showed mocking behavior, selective friendship, and reluctance to cooperate in mixed groups. After the intervention, students were more willing to work with different peers, showed more respectful communication, and demonstrated greater empathy during group activities.

The increase in students' tolerance understanding after the intervention can be explained through experiential learning. Students were not only introduced to the concept of tolerance but were also given opportunities to experience and practice tolerant behavior through role-playing and collaborative tasks. This approach helped transform tolerance from an abstract moral concept into concrete classroom behavior. Such findings are consistent with studies emphasizing that social tolerance among elementary students is strengthened when teachers use interactive, contextual, and participatory strategies (Zakiah et al., 2023).

The improvement in students' social behavior also reflects the importance of school culture as an informal curriculum. A diversity-friendly school culture reinforces tolerance through repeated interaction, teacher modeling, classroom norms, and peer collaboration. When students are placed in heterogeneous groups and guided to solve tasks together, they learn to negotiate differences, listen to others, and respect diverse opinions. This is aligned with multicultural education theory, which argues that schools should create learning environments where diversity is recognized, respected, and integrated into daily educational practice (Banks, 2015).

The observed reduction in mocking behavior and refusal to cooperate suggests that tolerance education should address cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains simultaneously. Cognitive understanding alone may not be sufficient to change behavior. Students need structured opportunities to practice empathy, perspective-taking, and cooperative interaction. The OECD also emphasizes that empathy, cooperation, tolerance, and emotional regulation are important social-emotional skills that support students' well-being and learning outcomes (OECD, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, tolerance education is particularly relevant because students grow within diverse religious, cultural, linguistic, and social environments.

Elementary schools serve as early social spaces where children learn how to interact with differences. Therefore, integrating tolerance values into school culture may help prevent prejudice, exclusion, and discriminatory behavior at later educational stages. Recent Indonesian studies also show that social interaction and inclusive classroom practices contribute to the development of tolerance among elementary school students (Irayanti, 2025; Rajaloo, 2025).

Despite these positive findings, the results should be interpreted cautiously. The intervention was implemented in a single class with a small number of students, and there was no control group. Therefore, the observed changes cannot be attributed solely to the intervention. Nevertheless, the findings provide practical evidence that participatory, school-based tolerance education can be a promising strategy for strengthening diversity-friendly school culture in elementary education.

This study has several limitations. First, the activity involved only 27 students from one elementary school, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study used a one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group, making it difficult to determine whether the changes were caused only by the intervention. Third, the evaluation was conducted shortly after the activity, so the sustainability of students' tolerant behavior over time could not be assessed. Fourth, the instrument was reviewed for content and readability, but formal validity and reliability testing were limited due to the small-scale nature of the activity.

Future studies should involve larger samples, multiple schools, control or comparison groups, validated instruments, and longer follow-up periods. Inferential statistical analysis, such as paired-sample testing, should also be applied when individual pretest and posttest scores are available.

CONCLUSION

The school-based educational intervention to build a diversity-friendly school culture was associated with improved tolerance understanding and positive changes in social behavior among fifth-grade students at SD Budi Luhur Cimahi. The proportion of students in the high understanding category increased after the intervention, while observed intolerant behaviors such as mocking and refusal to cooperate decreased.

The findings suggest that tolerance education delivered through interactive discussion, role-playing, and collaborative learning can support the development of empathy, respect, and cooperation among elementary school students. However, because the study used a small one-group design without a control group, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary and descriptive rather than conclusive evidence of effectiveness.

Schools are encouraged to integrate tolerance values into daily classroom activities, teacher role modeling, and school culture. Continuous and structured implementation is needed to sustain inclusive behavior and strengthen students' character development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their gratitude to SD Budi Luhur Cimahi for the cooperation and support provided during the implementation of this community service activity. Appreciation is also extended to the teachers and fifth-grade students who actively participated in the program.

REFERENCES

- Banks, J. A. (2015). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Irayanti, I. (2025). The role of social interaction in shaping tolerance character among elementary school students in Indonesia. *Journal of Civic and Character Education*, 5(1), 1–10.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2014). Cooperative learning in the 21st century. *Anales de Psicología*, 30(3), 841–851.
- Lickona, T. (2013). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- OECD. (2024). *Social and emotional skills for better lives: Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023*. OECD Publishing.
- Rajaloa, N. I. (2025). Building tolerance among elementary school students in multicultural education. *Mimbar Sekolah Dasar*, 12(1), 1–12.
- UNESCO. (2023). *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives for peace, human rights, and sustainable development*. UNESCO.
- Zakiah, L., Sarkadi, & Marini, A. (2023). Teachers' strategies in teaching social tolerance to elementary school students in Jakarta, Indonesia. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(2), 839–858.