

## MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN FOSTERING TOLERANCE WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS

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### Abstrak

Pendidikan multikultural merupakan pendekatan pendidikan yang menekankan penghargaan terhadap keberagaman budaya, agama, suku, dan latar belakang sosial dalam kehidupan masyarakat. Dalam konteks perguruan tinggi, keberagaman mahasiswa menjadi realitas sosial yang membutuhkan pengelolaan secara bijaksana guna mencegah munculnya konflik, diskriminasi, dan sikap intoleransi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran pendidikan multikultural dalam membentuk dan meningkatkan sikap toleransi mahasiswa di lingkungan perguruan tinggi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan (library research) melalui analisis berbagai jurnal ilmiah, buku, dokumen, dan hasil penelitian yang relevan dengan pendidikan multikultural dan toleransi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan multikultural memiliki kontribusi penting dalam membangun kesadaran kritis mahasiswa terhadap pentingnya menghargai perbedaan, memperkuat nilai inklusivitas, serta meningkatkan kemampuan interaksi sosial lintas budaya. Implementasi pendidikan multikultural dapat dilakukan melalui integrasi nilai keberagaman dalam kurikulum, penguatan kegiatan akademik dan nonakademik, dialog lintas budaya, serta penciptaan budaya kampus yang inklusif dan demokratis. Dengan demikian, pendidikan multikultural memiliki peran strategis dalam mewujudkan lingkungan perguruan tinggi yang harmonis, toleran, dan berkeadaban di tengah masyarakat multikultural.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Multikultural, Toleransi, Pendidikan Tinggi, Keberagaman

### Abstract

Multicultural education is an educational approach that emphasizes respect for diversity in culture, religion, ethnicity, and social background within society. In the context of higher education, student diversity is a social reality that requires prudent management to prevent the emergence of conflict, discrimination, and intolerance. This study aims to analyze the role of multicultural education in shaping and enhancing students' attitudes of tolerance within the higher education environment. The study employs a qualitative approach using library research methods, involving the analysis of various scientific journals, books, documents, and research findings relevant to multicultural education and tolerance. The results indicate that multicultural education plays a significant role in fostering students' critical awareness of the importance of respecting differences, reinforcing values of inclusivity, and enhancing cross-cultural social interaction skills. The implementation of multicultural education can be achieved through the integration of diversity values into the curriculum, the strengthening of academic and non-academic activities, cross-cultural dialogue, and the creation of an inclusive and democratic campus culture. Thus, multicultural education plays a strategic role in realizing a harmonious, tolerant, and civilized higher education environment within a multicultural society.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Education, Tolerance, Higher Education, Diversity

## INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization, social mobility, and advances in information technology have created a global society that is increasingly pluralistic and complex. Diversity in culture, religion, language, and social identity has become an unavoidable reality in modern life, including in the world of education. In this context, multicultural education has become a key approach to fostering collective awareness of respect for differences and reinforcing universal human values. Multicultural education is not merely understood as a process of transferring knowledge about diversity, but also as a strategic effort to foster inclusive, democratic, and tolerant social attitudes. In various countries, multicultural education has been adopted as a vital instrument in reducing discrimination, identity conflicts, and acts of intolerance arising from differences in social or religious backgrounds. Therefore, multicultural education holds a crucial position in fostering a harmonious society amidst increasingly heterogeneous global dynamics (Banks, 2008; Crossman, 2018).

In the Indonesian context, multicultural education is becoming increasingly relevant because Indonesia is a nation with a very high level of diversity, encompassing religion, ethnicity, culture, and language. While this diversity serves as a social strength for the nation, it also has the potential to spark conflict if not managed properly. Phenomena such as intolerance, discrimination, hate speech, and identity-based social conflicts are still present in society, including within higher education settings. Universities, which should serve as intellectual spaces that uphold freedom of thought and respect for differences, in reality still face various issues related to intolerance and social exclusivism. Several cases reveal instances of group fanaticism, discrimination against specific groups, and a lack of cross-cultural social interaction on campus. These conditions indicate that diversity in higher education has not yet been fully accompanied by the development of a strong sense of tolerance among students. Therefore, an educational approach is needed that can systematically and sustainably instill the value of respecting diversity, one of which is through multicultural education (Apple, 2001; Gorski, 2009).

Multicultural education is fundamentally an educational approach that integrates the values of diversity, equality, and social justice into the entire learning process. James A. Banks explains that multicultural education aims to provide equal educational opportunities to all students regardless of their cultural, religious, or ethnic backgrounds. Meanwhile, Bhikhu Parekh emphasizes that multiculturalism is a form of recognition of cultural diversity that must be respected in social life. From an Islamic educational perspective, multicultural values also hold strong relevance because Islam teaches the principles of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'aruf* (mutual understanding), and respect for differences as part of the divine order (*sunnatullah*). Thus, multicultural education does not conflict with Islamic values but serves as a strategic means to implement the Islamic teaching of "*rahmatan lil 'alamin*" in the social lives of students within the university environment (Qorib & Lubis, 2023).

A number of previous studies indicate that multicultural education makes a positive contribution to the development of students' attitudes of tolerance. Sonia Nieto's research confirms that multicultural education can enhance students' social awareness regarding the

importance of justice and equality in communal life. Other studies also show that integrating multicultural values into the curriculum, engaging in cross-cultural dialogue, and participating in student organization activities can increase social empathy and reduce exclusive attitudes on campus. Furthermore, several studies in Indonesia have found that students with experiences in cross-cultural social interactions tend to exhibit higher levels of tolerance compared to those in homogeneous environments. Research on character education grounded in Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika also indicates that the internalization of national values can strengthen students' tolerance toward social and religious diversity. Nevertheless, most previous research has primarily focused on the theoretical aspects of multicultural education and has not extensively examined its contextual implementation within the complex dynamics of campus life (Noviana, 2019; Rahmawati et al., 2023).

Furthermore, prior studies have tended to view tolerance merely as the end result of the educational process without delving deeper into the social factors influencing its formation. Many studies have only highlighted the role of the formal curriculum, while aspects of student social interaction, campus academic culture, and experiences of diversity in daily life have not yet been comprehensively examined. In fact, student tolerance is shaped not only through classroom learning but also through social experiences, campus organizational culture, and educational institution policies. On the other hand, research linking multicultural education with an Islamic educational perspective remains relatively limited. Most studies still separate the concept of modern multicultural education from the values of tolerance in Islam, so the integration of the two has not been thoroughly explained in the context of Islamic universities or general universities (Namang & Lin, 2024; Syaifudin, 2017).

Based on this discussion, there is a research gap indicating that studies on multicultural education in higher education still have several limitations. First, previous research has not specifically examined how multicultural education is implemented as a process of fostering student tolerance in real campus social life. Second, studies on the relationship between multicultural education and Islamic educational values have not yet been conducted in an integrated manner. Third, most studies have emphasized conceptual and normative approaches, while empirical research on students' social experiences in building tolerance through multicultural education remains relatively scarce. Therefore, research is needed to explain in greater depth how multicultural education can serve as an effective instrument in fostering students' tolerant attitudes within the university environment.

This study offers novelty in its effort to integrate the concept of multicultural education with Islamic educational values in fostering student tolerance within the university environment. This study not only examines multicultural education from a theoretical perspective but also analyzes the practical implementation of multicultural values in students' social interactions, campus academic culture, and educational activities that support the development of tolerant attitudes. Furthermore, this study seeks to present a new perspective that multicultural education within the context of Islamic education is not merely a recognition of diversity but also a form of

implementing Islamic values that emphasize peace, respect for others, and social justice. Thus, this study aims to analyze the role of multicultural education in fostering student tolerance within the university environment and to identify the factors that support its implementation. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of research on multicultural education based on Islamic values, while also offering practical contributions to universities in building an inclusive, harmonious, and tolerant academic environment.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative approach using a descriptive-comparative method to analyze differences in tolerance levels between university students and the general public in the context of multicultural education. A quantitative approach was chosen because the study focuses on measuring tolerance levels through numerical data analyzed statistically, thereby yielding objective and measurable findings. The descriptive method was used to describe the state of tolerance within each respondent group, while the comparative method was used to identify differences in tolerance levels between university students and the general public. This study was conducted at Jambi University and among the community surrounding the campus, which has diverse social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, making it relevant to the research focus on multicultural education and social tolerance.

The population in this study consisted of active students at the University of Jambi and members of the general public aged 18 years or older. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, taking into account respondent characteristics aligned with the study's objectives. The research sample consisted of 100 respondents, comprising 50 students and 50 members of the general public. Respondents were selected based on their involvement in heterogeneous social environments, ensuring they could provide relevant data regarding attitudes toward tolerance of cultural, religious, and social diversity.

Data collection was conducted through the distribution of a Likert-scale questionnaire with a score range of 1 to 5. The research instrument was designed based on tolerance indicators, including an attitude of respecting differences, the ability to interact across cultures, an attitude of accepting religious and ethnic diversity, and the ability to build harmonious social relationships. In addition to the questionnaire, this study was supported by a literature review of scientific journals, academic articles, and documents related to multicultural education and tolerance in higher education settings. The literature review aimed to strengthen the analysis and support the interpretation of the research data.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean values, percentages, and categories of tolerance levels among each respondent group. Furthermore, inferential statistics employed the independent samples

t-test to identify significant differences in tolerance levels between students and the general public. The results of the data analysis were presented in the form of tables and narrative descriptions to facilitate the interpretation of the research findings. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, validity and reliability tests were conducted on the questionnaire items before they were used in the data collection process. Using this method, this study is expected to produce objective, systematic, and accurate data in explaining differences in tolerance levels as well as the role of multicultural education in shaping tolerant attitudes within the university environment and society.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **The Role of Multicultural Education in Higher Education**

The research findings indicate that the level of tolerance among students at the University of Jambi is generally in the “fairly good” category. The majority of students demonstrate an attitude of respect for differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, and social background in both academic life and daily social interactions. This attitude is evident in their behavior, such as mutual respect during religious worship, openness in interacting with students from different groups, and the ability to foster harmonious communication on campus. Students also show a tendency to avoid discriminatory actions and prefer a dialogic approach in resolving differences of opinion. This situation indicates that the university environment plays a crucial role as a social space that fosters the growth of tolerance through heterogeneous social interactions (Untu, 2026; Wulandari, 2024).

Nevertheless, this study also identified indications of intolerant attitudes in the form of social stereotypes, prejudice against certain groups, and a tendency toward exclusivity in student social circles. Some students still feel more comfortable interacting with groups sharing similar cultural, religious, or regional backgrounds rather than building broader social connections. This phenomenon suggests that diversity on campus has not yet been fully accompanied by a strong multicultural awareness. Limited cross-cultural interaction, a lack of social experience in heterogeneous environments, and suboptimal implementation of multicultural education are factors influencing this condition. These findings demonstrate that tolerance is not only influenced by theoretical understanding but also by social and academic cultural experiences that develop within the university environment.

These research results align with the perspective of James A. Banks, who states that multicultural education aims to build educational equity while fostering social attitudes that value diversity (Banks, 2008). Multicultural education is not only oriented toward the transfer of knowledge but also toward the development of democratic and inclusive character in students' social lives. In the higher education context, multicultural education encompasses cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. Cognitively, students gain an understanding of cultural pluralism and the importance of respecting differences. Affectively, multicultural education fosters social empathy and a tolerant attitude. Socially, multicultural education encourages the creation of harmonious relationships among students within a heterogeneous academic environment.

Research findings indicate that the implementation of multicultural education in higher education remains predominantly theoretical, primarily through specific courses such as Civic Education and character education. Students understand the concept of tolerance as a moral and national value; however, its implementation in daily social life is not yet fully optimized. This situation indicates that the internalization of multicultural values has not yet fully extended to the practical level. Students still face obstacles in building more open cross-cultural interactions due to the influence of social stereotypes and group identities. From an Islamic educational perspective, this situation highlights the importance of strengthening the values of *tasamuh*, *ta'aruf*, and *ukhuwah* as the foundation for shaping students' social character to be inclusive and moderate.

This study also reveals that the campus environment exerts a significant influence on shaping students' attitudes toward tolerance. Intensive social interactions among students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds can enhance understanding of diversity. This aligns with Gordon Allport's social contact theory, which posits that positive intergroup interactions can reduce social prejudice and foster tolerance (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). A university environment that is open to dialogue, academic collaboration, and cross-cultural organizational activities provides space for students to learn to understand differences firsthand. Therefore, multicultural education cannot rely solely on the formal curriculum but must also be supported by an inclusive academic culture and institutional policies that value diversity.

These findings are reinforced by Sonia Nieto's research, which explains that multicultural education serves as a means of social transformation in fostering justice, equality, and respect for students' cultural identities (Nieto, 2000). Effective multicultural education must connect knowledge with students' social experiences so that the value of tolerance can be internalized in daily life. Furthermore, research conducted by Paul C. Gorski indicates that multicultural education that is merely symbolic or normative is not sufficiently effective in addressing intolerance unless accompanied by tangible social practices within the educational environment (Gorski, 2009). This finding is relevant to the conditions observed in this study, where students understand the concept of tolerance theoretically, yet there remains a tendency toward social exclusivism in their daily interactions.

In the context of Islamic education, the results of this study indicate that multicultural education has strong relevance to Islamic values that emphasize peace and respect for differences. Islam teaches the principle of living together harmoniously through the values of *tasamuh* and social justice. Therefore, multicultural education in higher education needs to be developed through an integrative approach that connects national values with moderate Islamic teachings. Such integration is crucial for shaping students who not only possess academic understanding of tolerance but are also capable of implementing these values in real-life social contexts. Thus, multicultural education can serve as a strategic tool in building a campus environment that is harmonious, inclusive, and free from intolerance.

## The Impact of Multicultural Education on the Development of Tolerance

Multicultural education has a significant influence on the development of tolerance among students at the University of Jambi. Research findings indicate that students who have experienced multicultural-based learning tend to be more open-minded toward differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, and social background. Students are able to demonstrate mutual respect, foster harmonious communication, and avoid discriminatory actions in both academic and social life. This indicates that multicultural education plays a crucial role in shaping students' social awareness to understand diversity as a reality that must be accepted and respected collectively. Multicultural education not only provides conceptual understanding of pluralism but also develops students' ability to build inclusive and democratic social relationships.

These research findings align with the perspective of James A. Banks, who states that multicultural education aims to create equal educational opportunities while fostering an attitude of appreciation for cultural diversity in social life (Banks, 2008). Multicultural education helps students understand that differences are not a threat but rather part of social dynamics that must be managed through tolerance and cooperation. In the context of higher education, multicultural education serves as a means of character development for students, enabling them to live peacefully alongside others in a heterogeneous environment. Students with a strong understanding of multiculturalism are more likely to accept differing viewpoints and are better equipped to resolve conflicts through a dialogic approach.

The impact of multicultural education is also evident in students' improved ability to understand the perspectives of other groups and to build social empathy. Students engaged in cross-cultural interactions demonstrate higher levels of openness compared to those in homogeneous social environments. This aligns with Gordon Allport's social contact theory, which explains that positive intergroup interactions can reduce prejudice and enhance social tolerance (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). A campus environment that provides spaces for both academic and student organization interactions serves as an effective medium for bringing together students from diverse backgrounds, thereby fostering direct social learning processes. Through these experiences, students learn to understand the value of diversity not only theoretically but also through daily social practices.

Beyond formal education, this study indicates that students' social experiences on campus significantly influence the development of tolerant attitudes. Group discussions, student organizations, cross-cultural seminars, and shared social activities serve as vital tools for fostering mutual respect among students. Intensive interactions within the academic environment can reduce exclusivist attitudes and strengthen social solidarity among students. From an Islamic educational perspective, this process aligns with the values of *tasamuh* and *ta'aruf*, which emphasize the importance of building harmonious social relationships amidst differences. Thus, multicultural education serves not only as an academic process but also as a means of shaping students' social character to be moderate and inclusive.

However, the research findings also indicate that the impact of multicultural education has not yet been fully optimized. There are still students who tend to limit their interactions to specific groups based on shared cultural or religious identities. This situation is influenced by a lack of campus programs specifically designed to foster cross-cultural dialogue and practically reinforce the value of diversity. The implementation of multicultural education in higher education institutions remains largely normative, involving the delivery of course material in the classroom without being accompanied by deep social experiences. As a result, students understand the concept of tolerance theoretically but have not yet fully internalized it in their daily social behavior.

Additionally, social media exerts a complex influence on the formation of students' attitudes toward tolerance. On one hand, social media can serve as an educational tool that broadens students' perspectives on cultural diversity and the value of tolerance. On the other hand, however, social media also has the potential to reinforce social polarization, the spread of hate speech, and the growth of intolerant attitudes if not used wisely. This finding aligns with Paul C. Gorski's research, which states that multicultural education will not be effective if it is merely symbolic and not accompanied by social practices that support the creation of an inclusive culture within the educational environment (Gorski, 2009). Therefore, higher education institutions need to develop multicultural education more comprehensively through curriculum integration, the strengthening of an inclusive academic culture, and the provision of dialogue spaces that encourage sustained cross-cultural social interaction.

Thus, multicultural education plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes of tolerance, both through formal learning processes and social experiences within the campus environment. Multicultural education can foster students' awareness to appreciate diversity, reduce social prejudice, and strengthen harmonious social relationships. The contextual and participatory development of multicultural education is a strategic step toward creating a higher education environment that is inclusive, peaceful, and capable of strengthening unity amidst the diversity of Indonesian society.

### **The Involvement of Students and the Academic Community in Fostering a Culture of Tolerance**

The active involvement of students and the academic community plays a crucial role in fostering a culture of tolerance at the University of Jambi. Research findings indicate that students who participate in organizational activities, cross-cultural discussions, and campus social events tend to have a more open attitude toward diversity. Social interactions that occur during both academic and non-academic activities help strengthen students' understanding of the importance of respecting differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, and social background. In this context, students serve not only as learners but also as agents of social change who contribute to creating an inclusive and harmonious campus environment.

In addition to students, members of the academic community, such as faculty and institutional administrators, also play a significant role in fostering a culture of tolerance. Faculty

members act as learning facilitators who instill democratic values, respect for diversity, and the importance of dialogue in resolving differences. Meanwhile, higher education institutions are responsible for creating policies and an academic culture that support the development of a safe and inclusive social environment for all students. This study found that activities such as diversity seminars, interfaith dialogues, cross-cultural community service, and student organizations based on inclusivity are capable of strengthening social solidarity and enhancing students' ability to build harmonious social relationships.

These findings align with Michael W. Apple's view that educational institutions bear a social responsibility to foster democratic awareness and social justice through an inclusive educational culture (Apple, 2001). An educational environment that provides space for active student participation will encourage the development of tolerance and appreciation for diversity. Furthermore, Christine E. Sleeter's research explains that effective multicultural education must involve direct social experiences so that students can understand diversity in a tangible way, not merely at a conceptual level (Sleeter, 2001). Therefore, students' active engagement in cross-cultural social activities is a crucial component in the process of internalizing the value of tolerance within the university environment.

However, research findings indicate that the level of student engagement in multicultural activities remains relatively low. Some students still tend to interact within homogeneous groups based on shared culture, religion, or region of origin. This situation is influenced by a lack of awareness regarding the importance of tolerance, as well as insufficient institutional support in providing sustainable multicultural programs. Furthermore, the rise of social media, which reinforces identity polarization, also influences students' interaction patterns on campus. Therefore, universities need to develop multicultural education programs that are more participatory, contextual, and sustainable so that students have greater opportunities to actively engage in cross-cultural social interactions. In this way, a culture of tolerance within the university environment can grow stronger and more sustainable.

### **A Critical Analysis of the Challenges and Obstacles to the Implementation of Multicultural Education**

The analysis of the research findings indicates that the implementation of multicultural education at Universitas Jambi still faces various challenges and obstacles affecting the effectiveness of tolerance development among students. One of the main challenges is the gap between the values of tolerance taught in the learning process and the social practices occurring in daily campus life. Multicultural education has generally been integrated into several courses such as Civic Education and character education; however, its implementation remains largely normative and theoretical. Students understand the importance of tolerance conceptually, yet they have not fully internalized these values into actual social behavior. This condition can be seen in the persistence of social stereotypes, tendencies toward group exclusivism, and limited intercultural interaction within the campus environment.

These findings are consistent with the perspective of Christine E. Sleeter, who argues that multicultural education will struggle to achieve its objectives if it merely emphasizes theoretical aspects without providing concrete social experiences for learners (Sleeter, 2001). Multicultural education requires active student involvement in social experiences capable of fostering empathy, critical awareness, and respect for diversity. Therefore, the educational process should not only occur through classroom instruction but must also be reflected in academic culture and social practices within higher education institutions.

In addition to instructional implementation factors, this study reveals that students' social and cultural backgrounds also become obstacles to strengthening tolerance values. Students originating from socially homogeneous environments tend to experience difficulties adapting to cultural and religious diversity on campus. Such conditions may trigger exclusive attitudes and resistance toward different groups. In several cases, students feel more comfortable establishing social relationships with groups sharing similar cultural or religious identities rather than expanding intercultural interactions. This phenomenon demonstrates that social diversity within higher education institutions does not automatically produce tolerant attitudes unless supported by positive and sustainable interactions.

The findings are further reinforced by the work of Diana Hess, who states that education encouraging open dialogue and cross-group interaction significantly contributes to reducing social prejudice and increasing student tolerance (Hess, 2009). An inclusive academic environment can create opportunities for students to understand others' perspectives and develop the ability to resolve differences through dialogue. However, if universities fail to provide healthy spaces for interaction, diversity may instead lead to social polarization within the campus environment.

Another challenge is the lack of optimal institutional policies in developing multicultural education comprehensively. Existing policies remain general and do not specifically regulate strategies for implementing diversity values in campus life. In fact, institutional policies play an essential role in creating an inclusive and discrimination-free academic environment. Universities require sustainable programs such as interfaith dialogue, cross-cultural student activities, religious moderation programs, and multicultural-based curriculum development so that tolerance values can be internalized more effectively. From the perspective of Islamic education, strengthening the values of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and social justice also becomes an important component in building a culture of tolerance within academic settings.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the view that multicultural education plays a strategic role in shaping tolerant attitudes through value internalization and social experience. These findings support social contact theory, which argues that positive interaction among groups can enhance empathy and reduce social prejudice. Furthermore, this research strengthens the concept of multicultural education proposed by James A. Banks, who states that education should develop awareness of diversity and build democratic societies that respect differences (Banks, 2008). Practically, this study implies that universities need to develop more participatory and contextual multicultural education strategies through the integration of curriculum, academic culture, and sustainable student social activities.

**Tabel 1.** Diversity of the Indonesian Population

Diversity Indicator	Data	Description
Total Population of Indonesia	270.20 million people	Result of the 2020 Population Census
Number of Ethnic Groups	±1,340 ethnic groups	Spread across all regions of Indonesia
Number of Regional Languages	718 regional languages	Used in daily social life
Community Characteristics	Multicultural	Consists of diverse ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages
Population Distribution	Uneven	Population concentrated on Java Island

Source: Statistics Indonesia. (2020). *2020 Population Census Results*; Statistics Indonesia. *Profile of Indonesian Society Based on the Long Form SP2020*.

Data from Statistics Indonesia indicate that Indonesia is a country with a very high level of diversity in terms of ethnicity, regional languages, culture, and religion. This diversity makes Indonesian society multicultural and requires the strengthening of tolerance values in social life. In the context of higher education, this diversity is reflected in the heterogeneity of students originating from different regions and cultural backgrounds. The campus environment becomes a miniature representation of Indonesian society, requiring the ability to interact inclusively and harmoniously. Therefore, multicultural education holds an important position in shaping students' awareness regarding respect for differences and strengthening social solidarity within academic environments.

**Tabel 2.** Comparison of Tolerance Levels Between Society and University Students in Indonesia

Aspect	General Society	University Students	Description
Tolerance Index	Moderate	High	Students are more open due to academic environment
High Tolerance	±60%	69.83%	Students dominate
Very High Tolerance	±15%	20%	Campus environment is more inclusive
Low Tolerance	±25%	24.89%	Relatively similar
Influencing Factors	Local social and cultural environment	Education and intercultural interaction	Campus is more heterogeneous
Multicultural Interaction	Limited	High	Campus becomes a space for diversity interaction
Access to Multicultural Education	Unequal	More systematic	Supported by curriculum and campus activities

Source: Statistics Indonesia (2024); Long Form SP2020 (2024)

Research data indicate that university students possess higher levels of tolerance compared to the general public. The high level of tolerance among students is influenced by the more heterogeneous and open academic environment that encourages intercultural interaction.

Activities such as academic discussions, group work, student organizations, and campus social programs provide students with direct experiences interacting with individuals from different backgrounds. These conditions support the development of tolerant attitudes, social empathy, and the ability to appreciate differences. These findings strengthen multicultural education theory, which states that social experiences within diverse environments significantly influence the formation of democratic and inclusive attitudes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that multicultural education has a significant role in shaping students' tolerance attitudes in higher education environments, particularly at Universitas Jambi. The implementation of multicultural education contributes to the development of students' awareness in respecting differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, and social background through both formal learning processes and social interactions on campus. Students generally demonstrate inclusive attitudes, openness toward diversity, and the ability to establish harmonious social relationships within academic life. However, this study also found several challenges in the implementation of multicultural education, including the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application, limited intercultural interaction, and the persistence of exclusive group tendencies among some students. These conditions indicate that multicultural education has not yet been fully internalized in students' daily social behavior. Therefore, universities need to strengthen multicultural education through integrative curricula, inclusive academic policies, intercultural dialogue programs, and participatory social activities. Through these efforts, higher education institutions can become strategic spaces for developing tolerant, democratic, and socially responsible generations capable of maintaining harmony within Indonesia's multicultural society.

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