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The Role of Social Interaction in Shaping Tolerance Character Among Elementary School Students: Insights from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of social interaction in fostering tolerance among elementary school students in Indonesia. Grounded in social constructivist theory, it explores how collaborative and interactive experiences within schools' shape students' character, particularly their ability to accept and respect differences. Employing a quantitative explanatory survey design, data were collected from 1,209 students in grades 4 to 6 across elementary schools and madrasah ibtidaiyah nationwide using structured questionnaires. Linear regression analysis assessed the relationship between social interaction (independent variable) and tolerance (dependent variable). The findings indicate a significant positive relationship, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.330 and a coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.109. This suggests that social interaction accounts for 10.9% of the variance in tolerance, while the remaining 89.1% is influenced by factors such as family environment, cultural values, and educational approaches. The regression model $Y = 27.225 + 0.597X$ indicates that a one-unit increase in social interaction results in a 0.597-unit increase in tolerance. Although social interaction's contribution is modest, the study highlights its essential role in fostering tolerance through peer interactions, group activities, and collaborative learning. These findings emphasize the need to integrate social interaction into school programs to promote inclusivity and empathy.

ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengkaji peran interaksi sosial dalam menumbuhkan toleransi di kalangan siswa sekolah dasar di Indonesia. Berdasarkan teori konstruktivisme sosial, studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana pengalaman kolaboratif dan interaktif di sekolah membentuk karakter siswa, khususnya kemampuan mereka untuk menerima dan menghormati perbedaan. Dengan menggunakan desain survei penjelasan kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan dari 1.209 siswa di kelas 4 hingga 6 di seluruh sekolah dasar dan madrasah ibtidaiyah di seluruh negeri menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur. Analisis regresi linier menilai hubungan antara interaksi sosial (variabel independen) dan toleransi (variabel dependen). Temuan menunjukkan hubungan positif yang signifikan, dengan koefisien korelasi (R) sebesar 0,330 dan koefisien determinasi (R²) sebesar 0,109. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa interaksi sosial menyumbang 10,9% dari varians toleransi, sedangkan 89,1% sisanya dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor seperti lingkungan keluarga, nilai-nilai budaya, dan pendekatan pendidikan. Model regresi $Y = 27,225 + 0,597X$ menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan satu unit interaksi sosial menghasilkan peningkatan toleransi sebesar 0,597 unit. Meskipun kontribusi interaksi sosial relatif kecil, studi ini menyoroti peran pentingnya dalam menumbuhkan toleransi melalui interaksi antarteman, aktivitas kelompok, dan pembelajaran kolaboratif. Temuan ini menekankan perlunya mengintegrasikan interaksi sosial ke dalam program sekolah untuk mendorong inklusivitas dan empati.

INTRODUCTION

Character education, particularly in fostering tolerance, has become an essential aspect of primary education in Indonesia. Given the nation's social, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, elementary schools serve as strategic venues for instilling values of tolerance through social interaction. Social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping character, especially tolerance, which serves as a fundamental basis for coexistence in a pluralistic society (Winataputra, 2012). The ability to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds fosters an inclusive mindset and reduces biases, making it an essential component of character formation (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). However, while studies have explored the role of social interaction in general character development, limited empirical research has specifically examined the extent to which social interaction quantitatively influences tolerance in Indonesian elementary schools. Most studies emphasize general character education but fail to provide a rigorous statistical evaluation of its direct impact on tolerance formation, especially within culturally diverse educational environments (Sorokin et al., 2021).

Recent advancements in educational psychology highlight the importance of peer interaction and collaborative learning in promoting tolerance and reducing prejudice among students (Piaget, 1987). Studies suggest that structured interactions among students from different backgrounds contribute to mutual understanding, empathy, and respect (Bruner, 1990). The process of social learning allows students to model behaviors of acceptance and cooperation, reinforcing pro-social attitudes (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). Moreover, exposure to diversity through social interactions allows students to internalize values of acceptance and inclusion (Winataputra, 2012). Classroom interactions, when structured effectively, provide students with opportunities to engage in meaningful discourse, which helps in conflict resolution and the appreciation of multiple perspectives (Gultom, 2022; Winataputra, 2012).

In addition, research shows that social interactions enhance cognitive flexibility, allowing students to adapt to different social and cultural settings (Soykurt & Uzunboylu, 2018). This adaptability is crucial in fostering tolerance, as it enables individuals to understand and appreciate differences in values and traditions (Buvabaevna, 2021). Studies further highlight that peer discussions that challenge stereotypes contribute to breaking down barriers and promoting a culture of acceptance (Atmojo et al., 2021; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). While such methods have been widely studied in Western educational contexts, there remains a gap in empirical analysis regarding their quantitative effects on tolerance development in young learners within the Indonesian educational system (Ramirez & Lepez, 2023).

Based on the issues identified above, this study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) Is there a significant influence of social interaction on the tolerance character of elementary school students in Indonesia? (2) How much does social interaction contribute to explaining the variation in students' tolerance character? (3) How can a model be formulated to describe the relationship between social interaction and tolerance character among elementary school students? Answering these questions is expected to provide empirical evidence that supports educational interventions aimed at fostering tolerance through structured social engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Interaction in Character Development

Social interaction plays a pivotal role in character formation, particularly in developing values such as tolerance. Tolerance is not merely about accepting differences but actively engaging in meaningful interactions that reinforce respect for diversity (Jowett, 1888; Plato. & Grube, 1981). Exposure to diverse perspectives through social interactions can significantly shape students' ability to appreciate social diversity and build inclusive attitudes (Winataputra, 2012; Schiavo, 2020). Research suggests that tolerance is fostered through habitual engagement

in social interactions where students actively listen, express their thoughts, and work collaboratively to resolve differences (Ramirez & Lepez, 2023).

The link between social interaction and character formation has been extensively discussed in social cognitive theory, which emphasizes that students acquire values, beliefs, and attitudes through observation and modeling within social contexts (Bandura, 1991; Schunk & Usher, 2012). In a classroom setting, peer interactions provide a medium for students to experience diverse viewpoints, resolve conflicts, and negotiate meanings, all of which contribute to the development of tolerance (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). The role of peer collaboration in tolerance development is also supported by studies indicating that positive interpersonal relationships enhance social cohesion and empathy (Sorokin et al., 2021; Gultom, 2022). Studies further highlight that structured group activities and cooperative learning techniques in schools encourage students to understand different perspectives, fostering higher levels of empathy and reducing prejudices (Atmojo et al., 2021; Buvabaevna, 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of metacognitive strategies within social interaction models has been found to improve moral reasoning and ethical decision-making (Soykurt & Uzunboylu, 2018). These strategies encourage students to reflect on their biases, consider alternative perspectives, and engage in discourse that strengthens their ability to understand and respect cultural and ideological differences (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). This is in line with findings indicating that students exposed to diverse discussions are more likely to develop cognitive flexibility, which helps them adapt to different cultural settings and develop a mindset of inclusivity (Sorokin et al., 2021; Gultom, 2022). Additionally, classroom environments that promote positive peer interactions through discussion-based learning have been linked to reduced intergroup bias and higher cooperation among students from different backgrounds (Craig & Kuykendall, 2020).

The impact of social interaction on character development is also supported by sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that learning is inherently social and occurs through participation in cultural and communal activities (Vygotsky & Cole, 1997; Ernest, 1999). Students who engage in meaningful peer-to-peer discussions and cooperative tasks often develop stronger social-emotional competencies, which are foundational to fostering mutual respect and understanding (Schunk & Usher, 2012; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). Research has further shown that when students engage in collaborative learning in diverse environments, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward social differences and embrace inclusivity in their interactions (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015; Schiavo, 2020).

Building on these theoretical perspectives, this study aims to empirically assess how social interaction contributes to the formation of tolerance among elementary school students in Indonesia. By integrating insights from social constructivist theory and social learning perspectives, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the role of interaction in shaping inclusive attitudes. The findings from this study can contribute to educational policies aimed at enhancing character education through collaborative learning and structured social interactions. Understanding the mechanisms through which social interactions influence character formation can inform educators on effective strategies to foster tolerance and equip students with essential interpersonal skills needed in a pluralistic society.

The Influence of Social Interaction on Tolerance Character

Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of tolerance among students. According to social learning theory, individuals acquire values, behaviors, and attitudes by observing and interacting with their social environment (Bandura, 1991; Schunk & Usher, 2012). Within the educational setting, students learn tolerance through repeated social engagement, communication, and cooperation with peers and educators (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). Interactions within diverse social settings provide opportunities for students

to experience different viewpoints, leading to increased acceptance of differences and reduced prejudice (Schiavo, 2020; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory further emphasizes that learning occurs within a social context, where individuals internalize norms and values through meaningful interactions (Vygotsky & Cole, 1997; Ernest, 1999). In the case of tolerance development, students exposed to diverse interactions in school are more likely to adopt inclusive behaviors and attitudes (Sorokin et al., 2021; Gultom, 2022). A study by Gultom (2022) and Winataputra (2012) demonstrated that students who engaged in structured peer interactions showed higher levels of tolerance and open-mindedness, highlighting the importance of collaborative learning in fostering social harmony.

Research also suggests that the frequency and quality of social interactions influence students' ability to develop tolerance (Winataputra, 2012; Buvabaevna, 2021). When students are consistently exposed to positive social interactions, they learn to respect differing opinions, negotiate conflicts, and engage in constructive dialogue (Fosnot & Perry, 1996; Soykurt & Uzunboylu, 2018). Conversely, limited exposure to diverse social settings can reinforce biases and hinder the development of inclusive attitudes (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015; Schiavo, 2020).

Empirical studies have provided strong evidence of the link between social interaction and tolerance. A large-scale study by Ramirez & Lepez (2023) analyzed the impact of intergroup contact among students in multicultural classrooms and found that increased peer interaction significantly enhanced students' tolerance levels. Similarly, Atmojo et al. (2021) reported that schools implementing cooperative learning strategies observed greater social cohesion and mutual respect among students. These findings align with the contact hypothesis, which posits that structured and meaningful interactions between individuals from different backgrounds reduce prejudice and increase mutual understanding (Allport et al., 1954).

Furthermore, social identity theory explains that individuals tend to categorize themselves and others into social groups, which can lead to in-group favoritism and out-group bias (Tajfel & Turner, 2019). However, educational interventions that promote inclusive social interactions can mitigate these biases and encourage students to develop a shared identity that transcends ethnic, religious, and cultural differences (Gultom, 2022; Sorokin et al., 2021). Classroom discussions, group projects, and extracurricular activities that involve collaborative problem-solving can serve as effective platforms for fostering tolerance through social interaction (Gultom, 2022; Winataputra, 2012).

The influence of social interaction on tolerance character is well-supported by theoretical frameworks and empirical research. Students who engage in meaningful social interactions are more likely to develop inclusive attitudes, empathy, and respect for diversity. Schools play a crucial role in providing structured opportunities for students to interact across differences, ultimately shaping a more tolerant and cohesive society (Ramirez & Lepez, 2023; Winataputra, 2012).

The Contribution of Social Interaction in Explaining Tolerance Character Variation

While the influence of social interaction on tolerance development has been established, it is equally important to assess the extent of its contribution in explaining variations in students' tolerance levels. The degree to which social interaction shapes tolerance may differ depending on several factors, including social background, classroom environment, and personal experiences (Winataputra, 2012; Sorokin et al., 2021). Research indicates that students from schools with more diverse peer groups tend to develop higher levels of tolerance compared to those in homogenous environments (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015; Schiavo, 2020). This suggests that social interaction is not a uniform factor but one that varies in impact depending on contextual elements.

Quantitative studies have attempted to measure the contribution of social interaction in predicting tolerance development. Ramirez & Lepez (2023) found that social interaction explained approximately 35% of the variance in tolerance levels among students in a multicultural educational setting. Similarly, Atmojo et al. (2021) used regression analysis and determined that social interaction significantly predicted tolerance scores, accounting for nearly 30% of the observed variation. These findings highlight that while social interaction is a key determinant, additional variables, such as family influence and media exposure, also contribute to the formation of tolerance character (Gultom, 2022; Winataputra, 2012).

Another important aspect of this discussion is the role of structured versus unstructured social interactions. Structured interactions, such as cooperative learning activities and guided peer discussions, have been found to exert a more substantial effect on tolerance compared to informal interactions (Buvabaevna, 2021; Soykurt & Uzunboylu, 2018). Schools that integrate structured collaborative activities into their curricula tend to foster stronger tolerance outcomes in students (Fosnot & Perry, 1996; Ernest, 1999). This further underscores the need for educational institutions to facilitate intentional, meaningful interactions that expose students to diverse perspectives in a positive and constructive manner.

Additionally, variations in social interaction's impact on tolerance may be influenced by cultural and regional differences. In some societies, traditional norms and values may either reinforce or hinder the acceptance of diversity (Schiavo, 2020; Sorokin et al., 2021). Empirical studies comparing different cultural contexts suggest that students in urban settings, where exposure to multiculturalism is higher, exhibit greater tolerance than those in rural environments (Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). This indicates that while social interaction plays a significant role, its effectiveness in shaping tolerance also depends on external factors that shape students' worldview and social experiences.

Social interaction is a crucial factor in explaining variations in students' tolerance character, but its impact is not absolute. The degree of influence depends on multiple elements, including diversity in peer interactions, structured engagement, and cultural contexts. Future research should explore the interplay between social interaction and other determinants of tolerance to develop more comprehensive educational strategies that foster inclusivity and mutual understanding (Winataputra, 2012; Gultom, 2022).

Conceptualizing the Relationship Model Between Social Interaction and Tolerance Character

Building upon the established relationship between social interaction and tolerance, it is essential to develop a conceptual framework that explains the mechanisms through which social interaction fosters tolerance. A theoretical model is necessary to illustrate how various dimensions of social interaction—such as peer engagement, teacher-student relationships, and community participation—contribute to the formation of tolerant attitudes (Winataputra, 2012). Studies suggest that tolerance is influenced not only by direct interactions but also by the broader social environment, which shapes the ways in which students perceive and respond to diversity (Sorokin et al., 2021).

The social constructivist approach emphasizes that values, including tolerance, are acquired through social interaction, dialogue, and shared experiences (Piaget, 1987). Piaget supports this view, suggesting that cognitive and moral development is accelerated through meaningful peer interaction, as students negotiate differing perspectives and develop an understanding of social norms (Bruner, 1990). Bruner further argues that individuals learn to interpret experiences through cultural and social narratives, shaping their attitudes toward various aspects of life (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015).

The role of peer engagement is particularly critical in shaping tolerance. When students interact with diverse peers, they learn to appreciate different viewpoints, which fosters empathy and acceptance (Gultom, 2022; Winataputra, 2012). Research has shown that schools that facilitate structured peer discussions and cooperative learning projects observe higher levels of

tolerance among students (Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). Moreover, the presence of multicultural and inclusive school environments enhances students' ability to respect and coexist with individuals from different backgrounds (Gultom, 2022).

Another critical factor influencing the relationship between social interaction and tolerance is the role of institutional and familial support. The family, as the first socializing agent, plays a key role in instilling values of acceptance and respect (Winataputra, 2012). Schools, on the other hand, serve as reinforcement structures where these values are either strengthened or challenged through formal and informal interactions (Sorokin et al., 2021). According to Luszczynska & Schwarzer (2015), tolerance education should not be confined to academic settings but should also be integrated into students' broader social experiences, including extracurricular activities and community engagement (Atmojo et al., 2021).

Cultural influences further shape how tolerance is conceptualized and practiced. In Indonesia, the national philosophy of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) underscores the importance of intergroup harmony. However, variations in local cultural norms and traditions can either facilitate or hinder the development of a tolerant mindset (Gultom, 2022). Research indicates that in some regions, deeply ingrained social prejudices pose challenges to tolerance education, necessitating more proactive and structured approaches within school curricula (Gultom, 2022; Winataputra, 2012).

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach with an explanatory survey design, aimed at examining the causal relationship between social interaction (independent variable) and tolerance character (dependent variable) among elementary school students. The survey method allows for a systematic collection of data and statistical analysis to test the formulated hypotheses.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study consists of elementary school students in grades 4 to 6 from various regions across Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants based on the study's objectives, ensuring that the sample represents diverse social and cultural backgrounds. The total sample size includes 1,209 students from both public elementary schools and elementary school with a religious-based curriculum (madrasah ibtidaiyah/MI), who voluntarily participated in the study.

Data Collection

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, facilitated by teachers and school administrators. To ensure validity and comprehension, detailed instructions were provided to students before they completed the questionnaire (Assingily, 2021). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a structured questionnaire designed to measure the two key variables: (1) Social Interaction (X): Assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, covering indicators such as frequency of interaction, communication quality, and group collaboration. (2) Tolerance Character (Y): Measured with a 5-point Likert scale, including indicators such as respect for differences, cooperation skills, and conflict resolution abilities.

Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test construct validity and Cronbach's Alpha reliability testing, with all items scoring above 0.70, indicating high reliability.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 through the following steps: (1) Descriptive Analysis: Used to summarize sample characteristics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. (2) Simple Linear Regression Analysis: Applied to examine the relationship between social interaction and tolerance character by determining the statistical significance and strength of the association between the independent and dependent variables. The regression model was used to predict how changes in social interaction influence students' tolerance character. (3) Hypothesis Testing: (a) F-test: Used to assess the overall significance of the regression model. (b) t-test: Used to examine the partial effect of social interaction on tolerance character. (c) R^2 Coefficient of Determination: Indicates the proportion of variance in tolerance character explained by social interaction. The study found an R^2 value of 0.109, meaning that social interaction accounts for 10.9% of the variance in students' tolerance levels.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research principles, obtaining formal approval from school administrators, parental consent, and voluntary participation from students. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were maintained throughout the research process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Based on data collected from 1,209 students across public elementary schools and religious-based elementary schools (madrasah ibtidaiyah/MI), the analysis reveals a statistically significant positive relationship between social interaction and tolerance development.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis indicates that students with higher levels of social interaction tend to exhibit greater tolerance. The mean scores for social interaction and tolerance character show a positive trend, suggesting that students who engage more frequently in peer interactions and collaborative activities have a stronger disposition toward tolerance.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Social Interaction	3.85	0.74	1209
Tolerance Character	4.12	0.68	1209

Regression Analysis

The results from the simple linear regression analysis demonstrate a significant but moderate correlation between social interaction (independent variable) and tolerance character (dependent variable), with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.330. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.109, indicating that 10.9% of the variance in students' tolerance character can be explained by social interaction, while the remaining 89.1% is influenced by other factors beyond social interaction.

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate
Social Interaction → Tolerance Character	0.330	0.109	0.108	4.52326

ANOVA Results

The ANOVA test confirms the overall significance of the regression model ($F = 147.254$, $p < 0.05$), demonstrating that social interaction has a statistically significant impact on students' tolerance character.

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3012,797	1	3012,797	147,254	,000 ^b
	Residual	24613,220	1203	20,460		
	Total	27626,017	1204			

a. Dependent Variable: *Tolerance Character*

b. Predictors: (Constant), *Social Interaction*

Regression Coefficients

Based on the regression analysis, the equation for the regression model is as follows:

$$Y = 27.225 + 0.597X$$

Where:

- Y: Tolerance Character
- X: Social Interaction

This model indicates that for every one-unit increase in social interaction, tolerance character increases by 0.597 units. The constant value of 27.225 is not interpreted directly, as the data represents perceptions rather than absolute values.

The standardized regression coefficient (Beta) for social interaction is 0.330, while the unstandardized coefficient (B) is 0.597. This means that every one-unit increase in social interaction corresponds to a 0.597-unit increase in tolerance character. The p-value (0.000) confirms that this relationship is highly significant, reinforcing the hypothesis that social interaction plays an essential role in shaping tolerance in students.

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	27,225	,909		29,953	,000
	<i>Social Interaction</i>	,597	,049	,330	12,135	,000

a. Dependent Variable: *Tolerance Character*

Although social interaction has a significant impact on tolerance character, its contribution remains moderate, suggesting that tolerance development is influenced by additional unexamined factors. The regression results indicate that while social interaction plays a role, other variables outside the scope of this study may have a greater influence on shaping students' tolerance character.

These findings highlight the importance of fostering structured and meaningful social interactions in schools to reinforce tolerance education. Strategies such as cooperative learning, multicultural programs, and teacher-facilitated discussions can enhance students' ability to understand and appreciate diversity. Additionally, incorporating family and community engagement initiatives can further strengthen tolerance development among students.

Discussion

This study aligns with the social constructivist approach, which emphasizes that character values, including tolerance, are cultivated through social interaction, dialogue, and shared experiences (Ernest, 1999; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). The significant yet moderate effect

of social interaction on tolerance character, as indicated by the R^2 value of 0.109, suggests that while interactions among students play a role in tolerance development, other variables also contribute significantly (Piaget, 1987; Bruner, 1990). This corroborates Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that learning occurs within a social context where knowledge and values are internalized through meaningful interactions with peers and educators (Vygotsky & Cole, 1997).

Previous research has shown that peer engagement and cooperative learning enhance tolerance by fostering empathy and respect among students (Winataputra, 2012). When students engage in meaningful social interactions, they learn to navigate differences and develop mutual understanding, which is essential in a multicultural society (Fielding, 2018). The relatively low R^2 value in this study supports findings by (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015), who suggested that tolerance development is multifaceted and influenced by external factors such as family upbringing, school culture, and community involvement. This perspective aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (McCreary, 1950), which emphasizes the role of multiple social layers—family, peers, school environment, and societal norms—in shaping an individual's development, including tolerance (Kohlberg, 1981).

Furthermore, this study reinforces the importance of structured social interactions in education. Findings support the contact hypothesis, which posits that interactions under cooperative and equal-status conditions help reduce intergroup biases and increase mutual understanding (Allport et al., 1954). Schools that implement cooperative learning models have been shown to foster higher tolerance levels among students (Gultom, 2022; Winataputra, 2012). The structured and guided social interactions in classrooms, particularly those that encourage dialogic engagement, contribute significantly to students' ability to appreciate diverse perspectives (Atmojo et al., 2021). Research on inclusive education suggests that structured interactions in mixed-background classrooms foster not only cognitive flexibility but also emotional resilience and cultural sensitivity (Banks, 2015). This reinforces the importance of multicultural curricula that expose students to diverse worldviews (Splitter, 2011).

Despite its significance, the moderate explanatory power of social interaction in predicting tolerance suggests that additional factors such as family values, social media exposure, and religious teachings might also shape students' tolerance character (Sorokin et al., 2021). In particular, exposure to diverse perspectives within family environments has been shown to play a critical role in shaping open-mindedness and respect for different beliefs (Gultom, 2022). Additionally, studies indicate that media consumption, particularly social media interactions, can influence students' perceptions of diversity and intergroup relations (Buvabaevna, 2021; Schiavo, 2020). The role of digital literacy in fostering critical thinking and reducing susceptibility to misinformation is thus crucial in contemporary discussions on tolerance education (UNESCO, 2019). Empirical research by Martin (2008) suggests that students with higher digital literacy skills are more adept at discerning biased narratives and engaging in respectful discourse, further underscoring the role of media in shaping tolerance.

These findings highlight the necessity for a multi-faceted approach to tolerance education. Schools should integrate structured peer interactions with teacher-led discussions, community engagement, and parental involvement to create a more comprehensive framework for character development. Structured interventions, such as cooperative learning models and intergroup exchange programs, have been found to strengthen students' ability to engage in constructive dialogue and resolve conflicts effectively (Gultom, 2022; Winataputra, 2012). The implementation of civic education programs that emphasize ethical reasoning, democratic values, and active citizenship is essential in reinforcing the role of social interaction in shaping tolerance (Banks, 2009). Furthermore, studies indicate that interventions focused on perspective-taking and role-playing exercises can significantly enhance students' ability to empathize with individuals from diverse backgrounds (Vorauer & Petsnik, 2023).

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, while the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Additionally, cultural variations across different regions in Indonesia may influence the generalizability of these findings. Future research should explore longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches to gain a deeper understanding of how social interaction influences tolerance over time and across diverse educational settings. Comparative studies that assess the impact of different educational policies and cultural contexts on tolerance development would also provide valuable insights. Moreover, integrating qualitative approaches, such as ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews, could provide a more nuanced understanding of how social interactions shape students' perceptions of diversity and inclusion (Miller, 2024).

Overall, while social interaction significantly contributes to tolerance character development, it is most effective when complemented by supportive family environments, inclusive school policies, and structured civic education programs. A holistic approach that integrates these elements will be essential in fostering a more tolerant and cohesive society. These findings support the argument that education must be proactive in creating environments where meaningful social interactions cultivate inclusive attitudes and mutual respect among (Freire, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that social interaction plays a significant role in shaping tolerance character among elementary school students in Indonesia. While the findings confirm a positive relationship between social interaction and tolerance, the moderate explanatory power suggests that other factors, including family environment, cultural norms, and educational strategies, contribute to tolerance development. The study underscores the necessity of structured peer interactions, cooperative learning, and school-based programs that foster meaningful engagement among students. The integration of civic literacy education into curricula may further strengthen students' capacity for critical thinking, empathy, and respect for diversity.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations, particularly regarding self-reported data and its cross-sectional design, which restrict causal inferences. Future research should consider longitudinal and experimental studies to provide a deeper understanding of how social interaction influences tolerance over time. Expanding the scope to diverse educational and cultural contexts would also enhance the generalizability of the findings. By recognizing the role of social interaction in tolerance education, policymakers and educators can implement evidence-based strategies that promote inclusivity and social cohesion in schools, ultimately contributing to a more harmonious society.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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