**Title :**

**Multicultural Approach in Character Education: An Insight from Surakarta, Indonesia**

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Dear Editor,

We are writing to submit our manuscript entitled "Multicultural Approach in Character Education: An Insight from Surakarta, Indonesia" for consideration for publication in the Nsukka Journal of the Humanities (NJH).

This study explores the implementation and effectiveness of a multicultural approach in character education within the unique socio-cultural context of Surakarta, Indonesia. Surakarta, known for its rich cultural diversity, provides a compelling case study for understanding how multiculturalism can be integrated into educational practices to foster positive character development among students. Our research provides valuable insights into the strategies for implementing a multicultural approach in this specific setting. The manuscript presents empirical findings based on case studies. We believe that these findings will be of significant interest to your readership, particularly those involved in educational research, policy development, and practical implementation of character education in diverse cultural contexts.

This manuscript has not been previously published and is not being considered for publication elsewhere. All authors have read and approved the manuscript, and we agree to its submission to the Nsukka Journal of the Humanities (NJH).

We believe that the Nsukka Journal of the Humanities (NJH), with its focus, is an ideal platform for disseminating our findings. We are confident that this research will contribute to the journal's mission of advancing knowledge in the field of education.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our manuscript. We look forward to your feedback and the opportunity to contribute to the Nsukka Journal of the Humanities (NJH).

Thank you.

Regards,

Musa Pelu, Imam Mustajab, Shandru Mariyadas.

**Multicultural Approach in Character Education: An Insight from Surakarta, Indonesia**

**Abstract**

Amidst the globalization of the world, the increase in cultural diversity in society, which brings about multiculturalism, has become an inevitable consequence. Multiculturalism is often perceived as a societal threat. However, it can be interpreted as a beneficial phenomenon if effectively utilized, particularly through educational initiatives. This study investigates the implementation of multicultural approach within character education, employing Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School in Surakarta, a culturally diverse and potentially conflict-prone urban setting, as a case study. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through purposive sampling and analyzed via an interactive approach. The findings reveal that the school's transformation into a multicultural environment exemplifies an empowering school culture, pivotal for fostering students' moral knowing, feeling, and action. Strategic prejudice reduction and equitable pedagogy, guided by strong principal leadership emphasizing dialogue and tolerance, cultivate students' empathy, respect, and inclusive behavior. Local community voluntary involvement shows the utilization of social structure surrounding school. Despite challenges in fully integrating diverse content due to curriculum breadth, the school effectively uses its multicultural culture as "cultural capital" to develop core character education components. This research demonstrates how multiculturalism can be leveraged as positive social capital, rather than being perceived as a societal threat.

**Introduction**

Amidst the globalization, the escalating interconnectedness of nations and peoples has made the amplification of cultural diversity within societies an increasingly inevitable consequence. This global phenomenon, leading to the rise of cultural diversity, is not merely a localized trend but a defining characteristic of multiculturalism across continents (Zajda & Majhanovich, 2024). However, despite its inherent richness and potential for innovation, multiculturalism is regrettably often perceived as a societal threat. This apprehension stems from various factors, including concerns about social fragmentation, challenges to traditional values, and the potential for increased intergroup conflict (Devaki et al., 2025).

Indonesia stands as a notably multicultural nation, characterized by a complex tapestry of diverse ethnic groups (Jayadi et al., 2022; Parker & Hoon, 2014). These groups contribute significantly to the nation's socio-cultural development. As a pluralistic society, Indonesia encompasses a broad spectrum of cultures, religions, beliefs, and ethnicities. According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, the nation comprises over 1,300 distinct ethnic groups. While this diversity represents a substantial asset and enriches Indonesia's social fabric, it also presents the potential for societal tensions and conflicts (Fatgehipon, 2023; Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023).

Surakarta serves as a microcosm of Indonesia's multicultural landscape. Despite its strong Javanese cultural heritage, Surakarta's population reflects a heterogeneous composition, with more than five prominent ethnic groups contributing to its urban dynamism (Triyanto et al., 2023). The city's demographic profile is predominantly Javanese, followed by significant populations of Chinese, Arab, Banjar, and Madurese residents, alongside smaller contingents from various other Indonesian regions. This societal structure exhibits horizontal diversity across ethnicity, race, religion, ideology, and culture, while vertical stratification is marked by substantial socio-economic disparities. These differences can foster group-specific loyalties and potentially exacerbate societal tensions.

To mitigate these risks, multiculturalism should be implemented within educational environments to cultivate a sense of shared responsibility and promote social harmony (Nurwanto & Cusack, 2017). Rodiyana et al. underscore the necessity of multicultural educational practices in conflict resolution (Rodiyana et al., 2024). Given Indonesia's propensity for social conflict, a multicultural approach within education is imperative (Raihani, 2018).

The complexity of Indonesian society significantly influences students' educational experiences. As students enter educational institutions with distinct identities, fostering mutual respect becomes a fundamental moral imperative (Khalfaoui et al., 2021). Gay asserts that multicultural education enhances ethical behavior (Gay, 1997).

Character education programs serve as a crucial intervention for promoting ethical conduct in educational settings (Betawi, 2020). Educational institutions implement character education to instill moral values in students (Limiansi et al., 2025). Kropfreiter et al., (2024), define character education as a deliberate and structured educational endeavor aimed at developing students' intellectual and moral dimensions, preparing them for responsible citizenship. A direct approach to inculcating moral values is employed in character education to prevent undesirable behaviors (Suri & Chandra, 2021). These behaviors are often assessed against societal norms, necessitating that character development extend beyond classroom instruction and incorporate daily habituation within the educational unit and community (Ramlan et al., 2023). The Indonesian government has prioritized character education in its policy framework (Ferary, 2021).

Recent international studies on multicultural and character education have highlighted the opportunities and challenges for its implementation at the senior high school and university contexts in the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, and Asia (Appel & and Lee, 2023; Cohen, 2024; Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025; Waston et al., 2024). However, the implementation of character education within the junior high school context, particularly through a multicultural lens, remains under-explored (Fatgehipon, 2023; Jeynes, 2019). Existing research on character education in Indonesia predominantly focuses on religious education (Islamic et al., 2024; Rais et al., 2022; Umar et al., 2024), citizenship education (Sarkadi et al., 2022; Sartika et al., 2024; Shumer et al., 2012), or the integration of both (Achadi & Fithriyana, 2020; Subaidi, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to examine the multicultural perspective in character education within the school setting. Specifically, it describes the implementation of character education at Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta, positing that a multicultural educational approach can positively impact Indonesia's future. Surakarta, as a highly multicultural city, serves as a representative case study.

Our framework founded upon two fundamental pillars: multicultural and character education. It integrates Banks and Banks's (2016) multicultural education with Lickona's (2009) character education. Five dimensions of multicultural education consist of content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. In addition, centers around three core components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Multiculturalism, in this context, encompasses the recognition of diverse backgrounds, including ethnicity, race, gender, social class, and religion, and advocates for treating individuals from these backgrounds with moral respect (Gay, 1997), (Baidhawy, 2010). Fernando et al. emphasize the importance of incorporating existing cultural values through open dialogue and tolerance in multicultural educational programs (Fernando et al., 2023). Character education integrates societal knowledge, necessitating the inclusion of community values and knowledge in school life (Kristanto & Wibowo, 2023). Schools play a crucial role in instilling character education through classroom instruction and habituation activities (Japar & Sumantri, 2024). Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta, selected for its under-researched status, offers a novel context for examining multicultural approaches in character education. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of multicultural character education in diverse societies by analyzing the case of Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta, Indonesia.

**3. Method**

This research employs a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2014). As a qualitative study, it tends to be descriptive and utilizes analysis with an emphasis on process and meaning. A case study approach is adopted as the research design (Yin, 2014). Case study is an investigative design for developing an in-depth analysis of a case bounded by activity. Due to scope limitations, this research focuses on a single case, namely Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta as the research setting. The study spanned six months, involving fieldwork conducted at school.

In this qualitative research, the primary instruments are the researchers themselves (Xu & Storr, 2012). The subjects of this study are school principal, teachers, school staffs, and people from surrounding community of Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta. The selection of research subjects was conducted through purposive sampling with the criterion of being able to provide information about the implementation of multicultural approach in character education at the school. Samples may include documents, events, people, or observed situations.

**Table 1.** List of Informants

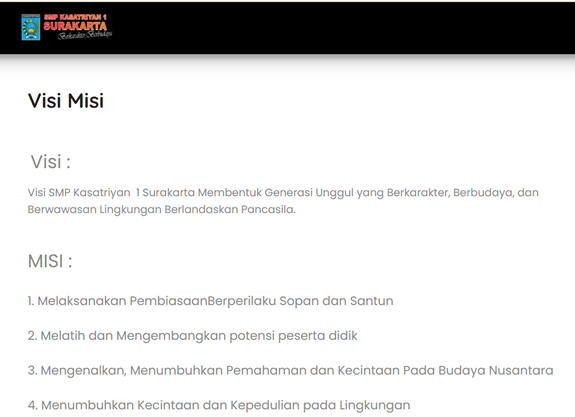
|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Name** | **Information** | **Code** |
| 1 | BI | School Principal | SP |
| 2 | U | School Vice Principal | SVP |
| 3 | P | School Teacher | ST1 |
| 4 | SI | School Teacher | ST2 |
| 5 | W | School Teacher | ST3 |
| 6 | M | School Teacher | ST4 |
| 7 | T | School Security Guard | SSG |
| 8 | L | Community Protection Unit | CPU |

Data collection was conducted in natural setting conditions (Freebody, 2003). Data collection techniques were implemented in three ways: observation, interviews, and documentation. An interactive data analysis model was utilized after data collection through three concurrent streams of activity: data condensation, followed by data display, and concluded with verification/conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014).

1. **Result**

Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta provides a compelling example of an educational institution evolving to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse society. Established in 1948 as a continuation of the earlier Kasatriyan Elementary School which established in1910, the school initially held a monocultural orientation, exclusively serving students from within the Surakarta palace. However, societal shifts prompted a significant expansion of its admission policy to include students from the broader community and surrounding regencies. This pivotal change led to Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School's transformation into a genuinely multicultural environment, fundamentally restructuring its social fabric.

**Figure 1.** School Vision and Mission



**Sources :** Research Documentation

The school's vision and mission, as depicted in **Figure 1**, is to cultivate individuals with character by promoting moral and cultural values. School’s vision points out regarding the generation to be good character. In addition, the school’s first mission focus on habituation of politeness.

The habituation serves as one of the main strategy to develop character on students. For instance, every fridays, all students, regardless of their faith, are invited to make voluntary charitable contributions (*infaq*). The funds collected are dedicated to social and humanitarian endeavors, including providing tuition assistance for students in dire financial need or offering support to students, their families, and relatives during times of misfortune or bereavement. This practice is a concrete means of fostering values such as benevolence, compassion, interfaith tolerance, and prudence. The distribution of *infaq* is carried out without regard to ethnic origin, religion or other backgrounds.

The enactment of policies that transcend individual backgrounds is essential for fostering a multicultural environment where all are viewed equally, without distinction. Such conditions are necessary to cultivate students' character, encouraging them to value differences and refrain from discriminatory behaviors. Furthermore, this principle of accepting diversity unreservedly is not solely for students but is also actively embraced by teachers. As stated by one of the teachers :

*“'The collaboration among teachers here is exceptionally strong, regardless of their backgrounds. This has been the case since the beginning ... any school activities or programs, including character education initiatives, receive full support. This even extends to events commemorating specific religious holidays. The key is that it benefits the children. For me, what truly matters is that all religions teach goodness. As teachers, we must fulfill our duties.”*

***P, ST1***

The views expressed show that teachers collaborate effectively, disregarding ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic differences. This collaborative interaction provides a positive example for students to follow. At Kasatriyan 1 Surakarta Junior High School, teacher collaboration is based on a deep respect for diversity. This understanding makes teachers feel responsible for modeling good moral character for their students. As explained in the interview results, this commitment to developing student character is deeply embedded in teachers, whether or not there are written rules:

*“'**The junior high school has regulations for both students and staff. These rules are inherently good, serving to guide students toward better behavior, with teachers acting as exemplars. Consequently, any violation must incur a sanction; rules must be adhered to. This effectively establishes a norm for all.”*

***SI, ST2***

*“'Every school certainly has regulations for students and teachers, sir. However, there are no specifically tailored ones ... for instance, greeting students at the school gate upon their arrival, and ensuring the duty teacher is present. Nevertheless, these routine practices have been running well, and I believe that as long as school activities contribute to the children's moral character, we should simply support them.”*

***W, ST3***

*“There are no written agreements among teachers. However, there is an unwritten agreement among teachers: every teacher assigned to duty must stand at the school gate each morning before students arrive to shake hands with incoming students. This is intended to instill good habits and provide a positive example, such as politeness, to the students.”*

***BI, SP***

The opinions above presented highlight a collective understanding among teachers to alternate morning duties in welcoming students to school. This practice is designed to provide an educational example for students, fostering discipline as a fundamental aspect of their character. Additionally, this act of welcome demonstrates the principle of showing respect to elders, as depicted in **Figure 2**.

**Figure 2.** Teachers greeting students each morning



**Sources :** Research Documentation

The figure above illustrates the daily cultivation of respect as a core value for character education within the school. Students are taught to honor others regardless of their diverse backgrounds. The school views its inherent diversity as something to be valued and appreciated, rather than a source of conflict.

The diversity among the school's members is also understood within the broader sociocultural context of Surakarta as a multicultural city. Multiculturalism needs to be presented to students to provide contextual understanding. However, not all subjects can fully accommodate learning materials on multiculturalism due to their extensive content. Therefore, schools in general can integrate content and construct knowledge about diversity within multicultural society. While differences can sometimes lead to friction within society, as famously exemplified by the May 1998 Riots in contemporary history, Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School has uniquely leveraged such events. The school uses these historical reflections to educate students on diversity within a multicultural society.

**Figure 3.** The Documentary Screening of The May 1998 Riots



**Sources :** Research Documentation

As shown in **Figure 3**, the documentary screening of the May 1998 Riots is not meant to promote the reoccurrence of social conflict. Instead, students learn that conflicts often stem from misunderstandings caused by a lack of respect for differences. The May 1998 Riots, as a social conflict, are strongly associated with prejudice and discrimination against a specific ethnic group by others. Students are guided to reflect on the harmful nature of social conflicts. The aim is for students to understand the negative effects of prejudice that disrespects diversity. One of the character values directly targeted for development is tolerance.

Tolerance plays a crucial role in the multicultural approach. As an attitude of appreciating and respecting differences—whether in opinions, beliefs, cultures, or other backgrounds—without discrimination, tolerance is key to fostering harmony within a multicultural society. A simple example of tolerance at Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta is illustrated in the image below.

**Figure 4.** Celebrations Feature Diverse Attire



**Sources :** Research Documentation

**Figure. 4** depicts a celebration at Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta, a school situated in the heart of the Surakarta Palace area, rich in Javanese cultural nuances. Despite this strong cultural context, the school respectfully accommodates student diversity by not mandating strict adherence to traditional Javanese attire. Students are instead permitted to wear clothing that aligns with the event's theme and their individual beliefs. Through this policy, students are encouraged to understand and appreciate diversity without coercion or judgment, thereby fostering a tolerant attitude. This approach views diversity, coupled with tolerance, as an opportunity to open dialogue and promote understanding across different backgrounds.

Subsequent research findings indicate a pronounced focus on dialogue as a core value in character education at Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta. Dialogue, understood as open communication, is deemed necessary to effectively manage the various differences and diversity within the school population. This communicative openness manifests in diverse aspects of Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta 's operations, as detailed in the interview results below:

*“Before any rules or regulations are implemented, they are first socialized with parents/guardians; this applies to student regulations. The same process is followed for teacher regulations. Therefore, the rules here are a collective agreement and must be implemented to ensure the smooth flow of the learning process. These regulations also support the implementation of character education, as their objective is to foster good moral conduct and character in students.”*

***BI, SP***

*“Ms. Budhy (School Principal) is close to us; she does not present herself as a frightening principal... ha ha... rather, it is her demeanor that makes teachers feel respectful and reluctant to not perform our duties and obligations well. For instance, regarding frequent requests for teaching leave or empty periods. She also teaches, and she is disciplined in her teaching, thus setting a good example for us. This is beneficial for students, and it is also a form of character education, sir. Ms. Budhy always arrives early at school and stands at the school gate to shake hands with students arriving at school. It's rare, sir, for a principal to do this, and every morning at that.”*

***U, SVP***

*“I also foster a highly familiar and collaborative communication style during teacher and staff development sessions, held at least twice a month, on Mondays. This includes inviting them to provide input and criticism. Additionally, there are various regulations with corresponding sanctions. We also routinely hold meetings with parents at least once a year.”*

***BI, SP***

The aforementioned perspective indicates that dialogue, as open communication, is effectively implemented in the school management at Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta. The principal's demonstration of openness in sharing information and receiving input sets a positive example for character education goals. Communication extends beyond just teachers and the principal; regular meetings for dialogue with parents are also crucial to accommodate diverse perspectives on student character development at Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta.

The establishment of strong relationships and effective communication through open dialogue in these meetings is a critical factor in character education at the school. The sense of unity and shared understanding cultivated through such communication drives the achievement of common goals in nurturing student character, as evidenced by the following statement:

*“At this junior high school, the bond between teachers and administrative staff is one of profound togetherness and brotherhood, a hallmark of our institution. This fosters a comfortable working environment, even though the religious affiliations and employment statuses of the teachers and administrative staff vary. In fact, these differences seem to enhance their closeness and unity. I strive to maintain this situation by cultivating persuasive relationships, being more accessible to them, avoiding a didactic approach, setting a good example, and frequently visiting teachers during break times. Alhamdulillah (praise be to God), all school programs and activities proceed smoothly.”*

***BI, SP***

*“Due to the well-known tradition of familiarity, and togetherness here, I strive to maintain this situation ..... I engage more closely with them, fostering dialogue in a relaxed atmosphere while simultaneously conveying information or listening to their input and complaints. For this reason, their welfare and rights are also given attention.”*

***BI, SP***

The interview findings underscore the significant role and responsibility of the school principal in character education within the school environment. Continual evaluation and development are essential for bridging and maintaining a harmonious, diverse environment, ultimately aiming for effective student character formation. The principal serves as the primary exemplar, guiding and habituating approaches to character education in a multicultural school setting.

Further intriguing research findings highlight the involvement of parties outside the school in character education initiatives at Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta. The surrounding community, with its varied backgrounds, contributes to the process of student character development. Details are provided in the following interview results:

*“Local residents often text or come to the school to inform me of problematic students from Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta. Because I am originally from Baluwarti village and maintain close relationships with the community, they tend to reach out to me whenever issues arise concerning the junior high school.”*

***T, SSG***

*“I am acquainted with several local residents and community members, including those who run the soto stall, stationery shop, and photocopy service ... having been a customer of theirs, I can attest to their concern for Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta. There have been instances where they reported or provided information to me regarding junior high students skipping classes.”*

***M, ST4***

*“My daily duty is to patrol this village to check on security. So sometimes I see Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta students still loitering outside the school during school hours; sometimes they're fighting or smoking. I usually reprimand them. Then, when I pass Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta, I immediately report it to the school. I usually tell Mas Teguh, the school's security guard, because he's my neighbor. Sometimes I also report directly to the teachers' office.”*

***L, CPU***

*“'The local community is quite concerned about Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta. They will report to the school if they see junior high students skipping school, smoking while loitering during school hours, fighting, or engaging in other inappropriate actions. Some come directly to the school, while others text or call the school. Anything that disturbs order or comfort will be reported, including students who disrupt the peace. Those who report include Linmas officers, employees at the Keraton tourist object, parking attendants, and community leaders like the neighborhood head (Pak RT).”*

***W, ST3***

*“In several activities, such as Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, the school consistently provides zakat fitrah and sacrificial meat to street vendors in the school's vicinity, as well as to residents of the surrounding Baluwarti village. This is an annual routine, which establishes a strong rapport with them. They frequently report students who disturb public order or comfort, such as those skipping classes, engaging in fights, or smoking. They often visit the school directly. Linmas officers also frequently come to the school, even if only to monitor security or for a casual visit. It is precisely these Linmas officers who often report cases of our junior high school students being truant, fighting, or smoking. Consequently, these positive relationships prove to be a significant aid in addressing the children's moral behavior.”*

***BI, SP***

The interview results above show an interesting point: Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta’s character education is strongly supported by external parties. The surrounding community, whether communicating directly or by phone, actively monitors student behavior and reports concerns to the school. The school openly welcomes this involvement, without regard for the reporter's social status. Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta sees local residents as a valuable part of the diverse community whose contributions to successful character education are respected and appreciated, consistent with a multicultural approach that values all backgrounds.

1. **Discussion**

Pivotal change led to Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School's transformation from monocultural institution into a genuinely multicultural environment. Thus, fundamentally restructuring its social fabric, a clear manifestation of empowering school culture and social structure. Aligns with Koirala (2025), views that successful implementation of multicultural approach in education requires institutional change. The school vision serves as the cornerstone for a well-established character-and multicultural school culture that is used systematically as the central "cultural capital" for implementing the character education curriculum. This proactive approach directly addresses the diverse backgrounds of the school's members aligning with the core multicultural objective of treating all individuals with moral respect (Gay, 1997).

The school actively fosters a perception among its members that emphasizes similarities over differences, creating a normative standard for attitudes and behaviors. This cultivates an atmosphere of unity and fraternity, crucial for supporting and implementing character education focused on enhancing awareness, attitudes, and tolerant behavior (Zakso et al., 2021). A unique tradition of cooperative programs, such as distributing compassionate gifts without regard to background, reinforces this culture of tolerance and sympathy. This commitment to unity despite differences underscores the school's dedication to prejudice reduction by actively shaping positive intergroup relations. Furthermore, it embodies moral feeling, fostering empathy and concern for others. The school understands its role as a primary source for developing a robust understanding of multiculturalism, recognizing that open dialogue and tolerance are particularly crucial (Fernando et al., 2023). The principal strategically employs these two essential elements—dialogue and tolerance—in forming this integrated school culture. Dialogue is fundamental to multicultural education since it is employed to have a common point while embracing differences in the aim to establish harmonious relationships (Sleeter, 2018). Simultaneously, tolerance, defined as accepting others' differences, is inextricably linked to dialogue, being its content. Tolerance, crucial for realizing multiculturalism (Pelletier-Dumas et al., 2017), is cultivated not just conceptually but also at an operational level within the school's daily practices. Aligns with Sukodoyo et al., (2025), which concluded that a diverse society relied on multicultural approach in education to cultivate tolerance and mutual respect.

The principal of Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School plays a pivotal role in establishing and cultivating a school culture founded on character and multiculturalism. The principal's leadership model is characterized by modeling, instruction, and continuous reinforcement of positive character traits, serving as an exemplar for all school members—teachers, staff, and students. As stated by Ryu et al., (2022), that the central role of principals in fostering character development initiatives stems from their capacity to shape school culture. This proactive leadership demonstrates moral action, actively "doing the good" and providing the will necessary for institutional change. In fostering tolerance, the principal acts as an initiator, motivator, and facilitator, consistently demonstrating self-control and respect for diverse backgrounds, thereby establishing a foundation for developing awareness, attitudes, and tolerant behavior among school members (Zakso et al., 2021). Regular and sustained communication by the principal with the school community regarding the implementation of this culture is vital, especially given the school's multicultural composition.

The main challenge encountered is that the process of integrating content through teaching materials cannot be fully maximized, primarily due to the extensive scope of the subject matter, which hinders further development (Banks & Banks, 2016). Within the classroom, teachers prioritize dialogue and tolerance through student-centered learning methods, directly impacting equity pedagogy. By accommodating existing differences and fostering mutual respect for diverse opinions, teachers ensure that learning is accessible and meaningful for all students. As highlited by Pilten & Pilten (2025), that cultural diversity in education demands more than just acceptance. It requires understanding, valuing, and integration into all learning processes. This pedagogical approach helps preserve intimacy and cohesion within social relationships, emphasizing shared aspects while appreciating unique differences. The screening of the documentary film on the May 1998 Riots serves as a strategic approach that not only facilitates content integration but also constructs knowledge aimed at prejudice reduction. This process cultivates moral knowing and moral feeling, which are then expected to manifest as moral action. It supported by Kalogerogianni (2025) views that digital tools helps on the multicultural approach within learing space.

The school's recognition that a multicultural approach formally indoctrinates tolerance (Budirahayu & Saud, 2021) aligns with the objective of strengthening character education by instilling awareness, attitudes, and tolerant behavior (Zakso et al., 2021)—a clear bridge between Banks & Banks's (2016) "prejudice reduction" and Lickona's (2009) "moral knowing" and "moral feeling." To sustain this, professional development sessions for staff occur bi-weekly, and routine parent meetings during report card distributions serve as crucial platforms for disseminating policies, soliciting input, and fostering dialogue on various school issues, including character formation. The existence of congruence or harmony between school culture and community culture facilitates synchronization and interpersonal interaction (Woodruff, 1996).

The leadership model, emphasizing exemplary behavior and a multicultural approach through dialogue and tolerance, has created a comfortable and conducive work environment, allowing school members to fulfill their duties without undue pressure. This environment supports empowering school culture as it fosters a sense of psychological safety. Learning in such a multicultural setting through mediated experiences significantly aids in developing attitudes relevant to complex societies (White & Shin, 2017). The principal's effective school management (Abdullah et al., 2019), including attending to staff rights and welfare (facilitated by financial autonomy), is a crucial leadership factor that enables the school to achieve its vision and goals (Zakso et al., 2021). As concluded by

The research findings from Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta highlight a compelling synergy such active surrounding community involvement significantly strengthens character education. Local residents, including vendors, security personnel, and community leaders, actively monitor student behavior and report concerns to the school, demonstrating a robust external support system. This open collaboration, welcomed by the school regardless of the informant's background, emphasis on social action and equity pedagogy, where diverse community voices are valued and integrated as a utilization of social structure. Aligns with Ji et al., (2025), who emphasized the critical role of wider community to multicultural education. This extensive community participation profoundly enriches framework of character education. The direct feedback from the community provides tangible reinforcement for moral knowing, making students aware of behavioral expectations and consequences. The visible concern from various community members cultivates moral feeling, helping students understand their impact on the wider community. Additionaly, this constant vigilance and feedback encourage moral action, guiding students toward responsible choices. Therefore, three core component of character education namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action included (Lickona, 2009). Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School Surakarta effectively leverages a comprehensive ecosystem where character is continually nurtured by a supportive, diverse community. Reinforces the Theeuwes et al., (2025) views that empowering school culture and social structure could benefit on urban society such as Surakarta.

Ultimately, Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School demonstrates that educational institutions can effectively implement comprehensive character education programs, meeting students' social, emotional, and cognitive needs in a multicultural environment (White & Shin, 2016).

1. **Conclusions**

This study reveals crucial insights into the Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School's transformation into a multicultural institution, a process that exemplifies an empowering school culture and social structure. By expanding admissions beyond Surakarta’s palace relatives, the school deliberately cultivated diversity, laying the groundwork for an inclusive environment. The school's core culture, built on dialogue and tolerance, serves as the primary capital for this integration. Dialogue fosters knowledge construction process, enabling school members to understand diverse perspectives, while tolerance cultivates moral feeling directly contributing to the reduction of prejudice. Furthermore, the principal's leadership, characterized by modeling and strategic emphasis on dialogue and tolerance, underpins equity pedagogy, directly enhancing students' moral knowing and encouraging moral action. Strong school culture and utilization of local surrounding community as social structure become an intriguing aspect from Kasatriyan 1 Junior High School. This comprehensive approach, though challenged by the difficulty in fully integrating content through teaching materials due to subject breadth, still demonstrating how a multicultural school culture can systematically cultivate core character education components. These findings hold significant implications for educational policy and practice in multicultural societies worldwide, offering a practical model for fostering social harmony through character education, and addressing a notable gap in junior high school level research.

However, the study's limitation as a single-case study in Surakarta restricts the direct generalizability of its findings. Another limitation of this study is that data from the perspectives of students were not explored. This was primarily due to constraints on the research timeline. Future research could enhance these insights through comparative analyses across various school types or regions, exploring student perspectives, and assessing the long-term impact on behavior outside the school environment. In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence that multiculturalism, when effectively integrated into character education can serve as a powerful catalyst for positive change.

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