Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development *- e-ISSN 2830-7917 & p-ISSN 2964-7339*
Volume 5 No 3 (2026) 1293-1304

Curricula:
Journal of Curriculum Development
https://ejournal-education.upi.edu/curricula

Analysis of students' attitudes toward respecting differences in Civic Education

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ABSTRACT
Respect for differences is an essential character value that supports inclusive social interactions among elementary school students. However, limited evidence is available regarding how this value is developed through Civic Education learning in elementary schools. This study aims to analyze students' attitudes toward respecting differences in Civic Education learning at SD 2 Mekarmukti and identify the supporting and hindering factors in its development. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach and collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation involving fourth-grade students and their classroom teacher. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, while triangulation ensured the trustworthiness of the findings. The findings show that students demonstrated positive attitudes toward respecting differences by accepting diversity, respecting peers from different backgrounds, and resolving conflicts through discussion and compromise. Teachers promoted tolerance through contextual learning, a democratic classroom approach, and role-playing activities, although limited instructional time and peer influence remained challenges. The findings highlight the importance of teachers' pedagogical competence, awareness of students' social context, and collaboration with families in strengthening tolerance education.

ARTICLE INFO
Article History:
Received: 14 Jan 2026
Revised: 9 Jul 2026
Accepted: 16 Jul 2026
Publish online: 8 Aug 2026
Keywords:
character education; civic education; elementary school; respect for differences; tolerance
Open access
Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

ABSTRAK
Sikap menghargai perbedaan merupakan salah satu nilai karakter yang penting untuk mendukung interaksi sosial yang inklusif di kalangan murid sekolah dasar. Namun, bukti mengenai bagaimana sikap tersebut dikembangkan melalui pembelajaran Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan di sekolah dasar masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sikap murid terhadap menghargai perbedaan dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan di SD 2 Mekarmukti serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang mendukung dan menghambat pengembangannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan murid kelas IV serta guru kelas. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, sedangkan triangulasi digunakan untuk menjamin keabsahan temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa murid menunjukkan sikap positif dalam menghargai perbedaan melalui penerimaan terhadap keberagaman, penghargaan terhadap teman dari latar belakang yang berbeda, serta penyelesaian konflik melalui diskusi dan kompromi. Guru mengembangkan pendidikan toleransi melalui pembelajaran kontekstual, pendekatan kelas yang demokratis, dan kegiatan bermain peran, meskipun keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran serta pengaruh teman sebaya masih menjadi tantangan. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya kompetensi pedagogik guru, pemahaman terhadap konteks sosial murid, serta kolaborasi dengan keluarga dalam memperkuat pendidikan toleransi.

Kata Kunci: *menghargai perbedaan; pendidikan karakter; pendidikan kewarganegaraan; sekolah dasar; toleransi*

How to cite (APA 7)
Giwangsa, S. F., Sitepu, Z. F., Khalia, S., Sutrisno, D. H., & Fadhalah, K. A. (2026). Analysis of students' attitudes toward respecting differences in Civic Education. *Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development, 5*(3), 1293-1304.

Peer review
This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

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https://doi.org/10.17509/curricula.v5i3.764

INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamentally aimed not only at developing students' cognitive competencies but also at fostering positive character traits that enable them to live harmoniously in diverse societies (Iksal et al., 2024). One essential character value that should be nurtured at the elementary school level is respect for differences (Rohman, 2024). This value refers to students' willingness to accept and appreciate diversity in ethnicity, religion, culture, abilities, and perspectives, thereby promoting harmonious and respectful social interactions. Developing this character has become increasingly important in the twenty-first century, as students are expected to interact effectively in increasingly diverse social environments (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022).

Therefore, schools play a crucial role in integrating respect for differences into learning experiences to prepare students to become inclusive and responsible citizens (Shofiyyah & Miharja, 2025). Character education constitutes a crucial aspect of contemporary educational practices because it emphasizes not only the acquisition of academic competencies but also the development of students' values, attitudes, and behaviors (Utamirohmahsari, 2024). Among the core character values, respect for differences is essential to cultivate at an early age, as it enables students to appreciate diversity, respect the perspectives of others, and build positive social interactions within the school environment and the wider community. By fostering this value early, schools can better prepare students to participate actively and harmoniously in increasingly diverse societies (Gomez et al., 2024).

Indonesia is a country characterized by a high level of diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture, language, and customs. Such diversity makes tolerance and respect for differences indispensable values for every citizen (Budnyk et al., 2022). Within the context of elementary education, the development of respect for diversity should be implemented systematically and continuously to enable students to interact harmoniously within a multicultural society. Furthermore, the cultivation of these values plays a crucial role in preventing social conflicts that may arise from differences within society (Anggraeni et al., 2022). Civic Education plays a vital role in preparing students to become responsible citizens by developing not only civic knowledge but also essential social and character competencies (Maftuh, 2024).

Through Civic Education, students are encouraged to internalize values such as tolerance, unity, democracy, and respect for diversity, enabling them to understand, accept, and appreciate individuals from different cultural, religious, and social backgrounds. By fostering these values, Civic Education contributes to the creation of an inclusive, conducive, and harmonious school environment while promoting positive social interactions free from discriminatory attitudes (Busara, 2023; Waman & Dewi, 2021). Elementary school represents a critical stage in students' social development, as they begin to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, abilities, family environments, and perspectives (Elita et al., 2024; Han, 2024). At this stage, fostering respect for differences and tolerance is essential to help students appreciate diversity, respect others' opinions, develop empathy, and collaborate effectively in everyday situations.

Cultivating these values from an early age provides an important foundation for the development of positive social character, harmonious interpersonal relationships, and

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responsible citizenship in the future (Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025; Nuromliah et al., 2025). Schools serve as social environments that provide students with opportunities to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, characteristics, and experiences. In this context, schools play a strategic role in creating a culture that supports the development of mutual respect among all members of the school community. The establishment of an inclusive school environment can encourage students to learn to accept diversity, appreciate differences, and build positive and harmonious social relationships with peers and other members of the school community (Assefa & Zenebe, 2024; Guberina, 2023). Although the values of tolerance and respect for diversity have been incorporated into the objectives of national education and integrated into Civic Education learning, they have not yet been implemented effectively within school environments.

In the learning process, some students still demonstrate limited respect for their peers' opinions, tend to restrict their social interactions to particular groups, and exhibit a lack of openness toward existing differences. These observations indicate that developing the character value of respecting differences requires greater attention and more intensive efforts to ensure that elementary school students effectively internalize the values of tolerance and appreciation for diversity. Based on preliminary observations at SDN 2 Mekarmukti, students demonstrated varying levels of respect for differences. While some accepted differing opinions and collaborated with peers from diverse backgrounds, others showed limited respect for their peers' views, interacted mainly within specific friendship groups, and participated less actively in heterogeneous group activities.

These observations indicate the need for further investigation into the development of respect for differences in Civic Education learning. Previous studies have explored character education, tolerance, and respect for diversity in Civic Education. However, research specifically examining elementary school students' attitudes toward respecting differences, particularly at SDN 2 Mekarmukti, remains limited. This gap highlights the need to understand better how this character value is developed through Civic Education. Therefore, this study aims to analyze students' attitudes toward respecting differences in Civic Education learning and identify the factors that support or hinder their development. The findings are expected to provide a better understanding of students' attitudes and serve as a reference for improving character education in elementary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Respect for Differences in Civic Education

In the context of character education, respect for differences is closely associated with tolerance, empathy, and justice. This attitude supports an inclusive learning environment that promotes togetherness and equality. Therefore, it should be fostered from the elementary school level to prepare students for harmonious social interactions (Elita et al., 2024). Elementary school is a critical period for developing the values, behaviors, and interaction patterns that shape students' future participation in society (Anggraeni et al., 2022). Civic Education (Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan/PKn) plays a strategic role in fostering respect for differences by helping students internalize the values of unity, democracy,

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tolerance, and respect for diversity, thereby supporting the development of responsible citizens with strong character (Waman & Dewi, 2021).

The Value of Tolerance in Civic Education Learning

Civic Education serves as an effective medium for internalizing tolerance among students through learning activities that emphasize respect for diversity. This can be achieved through instructional materials on multicultural social life, habituation of respectful behavior, knowledge of Indonesia's diversity, and collaborative learning with peers from different backgrounds. Thus, Civic Education not only builds understanding of citizenship concepts but also shapes students' character by fostering tolerant, democratic, and respectful attitudes in everyday life (Tuhuteru, 2023).

Implementation of Respect for Differences in Elementary Schools

The development of respect for differences among elementary school students can be promoted through instructional activities and school cultures that support diversity. Teachers play a pivotal role as facilitators and role models, fostering tolerance by demonstrating respectful behavior, integrating character values into instruction, and organizing extracurricular activities that encourage interaction and cooperation among students. Through these experiences, students learn to respect differences in religion, culture, language, and social background, fostering tolerant attitudes and harmonious social relationships (Kamal, 2023).

The Role of the School Environment in Fostering Respect for Differences

An inclusive school environment plays a vital role in fostering students' respect for differences by providing opportunities to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Through these interactions, students develop tolerance, respect for others' rights and opinions, and the ability to build harmonious social relationships (Dharma et al., 2025; Irshad et al., 2024). In this context, Civic Education supports the cultivation of these values by promoting tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' attitudes toward respecting differences in Civic Education (PKn) learning at SDN 2 Mekarmukti. A qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions in their natural educational setting without manipulating the research context. Participants included elementary school students, classroom teachers, and school personnel, selected through purposive sampling based on their knowledge, roles, and experiences relevant to the research focus. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations focused on students' behaviors reflecting respect for differences during Civic Education learning. In contrast, interviews with teachers and students explored the

https://doi.org/10.17509/curricula.v5i3.764

implementation of tolerance and respect for diversity in the school environment. Documentation, including field notes, photographs, and relevant school records, was used to support and verify the findings.

Source triangulation and technique triangulation were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, while technique triangulation involved comparing data gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation. The use of triangulation was intended to enhance the credibility and accuracy of the research findings. Data analysis was conducted interactively using the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, the data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation and understanding. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the findings obtained throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Attitudes Toward Respecting Differences Based on Interviews

Based on the interviews conducted with fourth-grade students, the students described various forms of tolerance demonstrated through accepting differences, respecting others, respecting other people's beliefs, and not imposing their own will on others. These findings show that students have begun to demonstrate tolerance in their interactions with peers in various school situations. Overall, the findings indicate that students understand the importance of respecting diversity and maintaining harmonious relationships with their peers.

Regarding acceptance of differences, students stated that they do not discriminate against their peers based on ethnicity, religion, or personal habits. Differences of opinion are regarded as a natural part of social interactions and are generally resolved through discussion, mutual respect, or compromise. Respect for others was reflected in students' willingness to allow their peers the freedom to choose activities according to their own preferences without coercion. They also expressed sadness when witnessing classmates being treated unfairly because of their differences.

Similarly, respect for other people's beliefs emerged from the interviews as students explained that they respect peers from different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. They rejected actions that ridicule others because of their differences and stated that they would reprimand classmates who engaged in such behavior. Regarding not imposing one's own will, students stated that they accept collective decisions even when these differ from their personal preferences and choose to compromise. As one student stated, *"We cannot force others to agree with us."*

Students' Attitudes Toward Respecting Differences in Civic Education Learning

Based on observations of five students during Civic Education (PKn) learning at SDN 2 Mekarmukti, the data revealed that students' attitudes toward respecting differences were

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overall in a highly positive category. Across the four indicators observed, with a maximum possible score of 80, the average score reached 70.6. This figure is equivalent to 88%, placing the class average in the Very Good category (85%-100%). In detail, four out of five students achieved the Very Good category: Student 1 (89%), Student 2 (91%), Student 4 (90%), and Student 5 (91%). One student, Student 3, obtained a percentage of 80% and fell within the Good category. No students were placed in the Sufficient or Needs Guidance categories, indicating that attitudes of tolerance and respect for differences have been well established within the classroom environment.

When examined by indicator, Indicators I and II consistently received the highest scores across all students, suggesting that these aspects have been more deeply internalized in students' daily behavior. In contrast, Indicator III received relatively lower scores compared to the others. This was particularly evident for Student 3, who scored 14, based on observations of five students, indicating a need for further guidance and development in this area. The observational findings are reinforced by the teacher's notes, which reflect concrete manifestations of respect for differences in students' daily interactions.

Student 1 actively acted as a tolerance agent by reminding peers who displayed disrespectful behavior, while Student 2 consistently collaborated with peers from different backgrounds without discrimination. Student 4 exemplified respect for differences in belief, remaining well accepted by classmates despite holding a different religion, and Student 5 displayed inclusive behavior by embracing peers with different abilities and opinions and giving them space to share their cultural stories. The only area for improvement was noted in Student 3, who in certain situations still displayed nonverbal responses such as smiling when a peer performed in front of the class.

However, this behavior did not extend to laughing or mocking, indicating that the student's attitude of respect is developing and generally positive. Nevertheless, this attitude still requires reinforcement to ensure consistency across various situations. Overall, these observational findings demonstrate that Civic Education learning at SDN 2 Mekarmukti has successfully fostered students' attitudes of respecting differences. This is consistent with the objectives of Civic Education as character education aimed at shaping tolerant, democratic citizens who appreciate diversity. Furthermore, these findings affirm that a conducive classroom environment and the teacher's role in instilling values of tolerance contribute significantly to the development of students' social attitudes.

Teacher Implementation of Tolerance Education Based on Classroom Observations

Based on observations of how teachers delivered lessons on tolerance to Year 4 primary school pupils, a total score of 95 out of a maximum of 100 was achieved, equivalent to 95%. This result places the teachers' overall performance in the Very Good category, with a score range of 86%-100%. This achievement indicates that the teachers have delivered tolerance-oriented lessons in a highly effective manner. In detail, the indicators of Planning & Introduction and Teacher Role Modeling each achieved a perfect score of 16 out of 16 (100%). This indicates that the teacher explicitly communicated the learning objectives related to tolerance, activated students' prior knowledge based on students' real-life experiences, created a safe and inclusive classroom environment, and prepared learning materials that effectively represented the values of diversity.

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In terms of role modeling, the teacher consistently demonstrated fairness and nonjudgmental attitudes and served as a concrete example of tolerance throughout the learning process. The indicator of Core Learning Activities: Cultivating the Four Components of Tolerance obtained a score of 30 out of 32 (93.8%), which falls within the Very Good category. This reflects the teacher's effectiveness in facilitating the four components of tolerance: accepting differences, appreciating others, respecting other people's beliefs, and refraining from imposing one's own views on others. Nevertheless, there remains room for improvement, as noted by the observer, who reported that time limitations prevented role-playing activities from being fully optimized as a means of providing direct learning experiences.

The Classroom Management and Response to Intolerant Behavior indicator scored 15 out of 16 (93.8%), falling into the Very Good category. Teachers were assessed as being highly effective in addressing intolerant behavior through educational interventions and in providing positive reinforcement for tolerant attitudes. Furthermore, teachers were able to ensure equal participation amongst all pupils by using inclusive and non-discriminatory language throughout the learning process. The Closing and Reflection Indicator achieved an outstanding score of 18 out of 20 (90%), placing it in the Very Good category. This success is reflected in the teacher's ability to facilitate reflection on the value of tolerance, connect the material to students' real-life experiences, and reinforce understanding of the four components of tolerance.

In addition, the teacher consistently valued each student's opinion and concluded the lesson by conveying a deeply meaningful moral message. Overall, no aspect of the teacher's performance scored below the Very Good category, indicating a high and consistent level of success throughout all stages of the learning process. These findings demonstrate that the teacher is capable of fulfilling the role of both a facilitator and an effective role model in fostering positive values in the classroom. Through this dedication, a learning environment has been created that strongly supports the optimal development of tolerance among students.

Teachers' Efforts and Challenges in Cultivating Respect for Differences Based on Interview Findings

Based on interviews conducted with a fourth-grade elementary school teacher, in-depth information was obtained regarding the implementation of tolerance education, particularly in fostering respect for differences, as well as the challenges encountered during the learning process. The interview findings are presented in two main sections: teachers' efforts in implementing the learning process and the challenges encountered.

Teachers' Efforts to Foster Respect for Differences

In communicating learning objectives related to fostering respect for differences, the teacher did not present them verbatim at the beginning of the lesson. Instead, these objectives were integrated through activities involving the observation of real-life phenomena that were closely related to students' daily experiences. One concrete example used was the differing determinations of the first day of Ramadan, which was selected because it was considered

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relevant and easily understood by students. This approach proved effective, as students responded positively and became quickly engaged when provided with examples closely connected to their everyday lives. The teacher adapted the learning context to the local environment to activate students' prior knowledge. Since the school is located in a rural area where the majority of residents share the same religious background, the teacher focused more on differences within the same religion rather than differences between religions.

This approach was considered more relevant because instances of intolerance commonly encountered by students stemmed from differences in religious interpretations rather than differences in religion itself. As a discussion starter, the teacher used real classroom situations, such as a student who practiced fasting differently during Ramadan. These experiences were then used as meaningful discussion topics. The rationale behind this approach was based on the principle that students should not merely receive information but should also directly experience and practice attitudes of respect and appreciation. The teacher employed a democratic approach by allowing students to participate in establishing classroom agreements to create a safe and inclusive classroom atmosphere.

Students were encouraged to express their opinions and collaboratively formulate rules to guide their daily interactions. This method ensured that every student felt valued and accepted because the rules were based on mutual agreement rather than teacher-imposed authority. Regarding instructional media, teaching materials, and learning methods, the teacher utilized available school facilities such as a smart television, projector, and textbooks. The primary instructional method was role-playing, as it allowed students to experience firsthand how respect for differences should be practiced. The teacher believed that these direct experiences had a stronger influence on students' attitudes and encouraged them to apply the values in their daily lives.

Challenges in Cultivating Respect for Differences

The main challenge faced by the teacher in implementing tolerance education was limited instructional time, particularly in conducting role-playing activities. The teacher acknowledged that role-playing requires considerable time and therefore cannot always be implemented optimally within a single lesson. This finding is consistent with the observer's notes, which indicated that limited time for role-playing activities reduced the effectiveness of delivering lessons related to respect for differences. As a solution, the teacher planned to improve time efficiency by preparing role-play scripts or themes before the lesson. Script development had previously been one of the primary causes of time constraints during instruction.

In addition to time limitations, the teacher also identified peer influence as a challenge in internalizing attitudes of respect for differences. According to the teacher, there were situations in which students who attempted to demonstrate respectful behavior were mocked by their peers, potentially reducing their motivation to act in a tolerant manner consistently. Nevertheless, the teacher observed a significant overall improvement, supported by classroom rules that strictly prohibited excluding or bullying students who were different. Despite peer challenges, the teacher observed a significant overall improvement supported by classroom rules that strictly prohibited excluding or bullying students. To address these challenges sustainably, the teacher emphasized the critical importance of close collaboration

https://doi.org/10.17509/curricula.v5i3.764

with parents. Since teachers supervise students only during school hours, consistent reinforcement of respect for differences requires cooperation between school and home.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that fourth-grade students demonstrated positive tolerance attitudes in their daily interactions at school. Students were able to accept differences, respect peers from diverse backgrounds, and resolve disagreements through discussion and compromise (Firdiana et al., 2025). These findings suggest that tolerance values are reflected in students' social behavior and contribute to the development of positive interpersonal relationships within the school environment. Tolerance can foster solidarity, encourage acceptance of differences, and promote respect for diversity in social life (Utama & Mubarok, 2024). Well-developed tolerance can also contribute to harmony in diverse environments (Anggraeni et al., 2022). Therefore, the tolerance attitudes demonstrated by students in this study have the potential to support the creation of a harmonious and conducive learning environment.

One contributing factor to these findings is the teacher's effective implementation of tolerance education. The results of this observation show that the fourth-grade at SDN 2 Mekarmukti implemented tolerance education very effectively, as reflected in the overall observation score of 95%, which falls within the Very Good category. These results suggest that the teacher's role as both a facilitator and a role model was a key factor in successfully fostering students' attitudes of respect for differences in the classroom. Teachers also play a central role as facilitators and role models of tolerant behavior for elementary school students (Kamal, 2023). Role-playing-based learning methods show that at every stage of learning, students are actively engaged in discussions, role assignments, and role-playing activities (Fa'izah et al., 2026; Ruminto, 2024).

Thus, the use of role-playing can foster tolerance, particularly in Pancasila education classes, which emphasize the principle of "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*." The use of the role-playing method in this study represents an interesting finding that distinguishes it from previous research. The development of tolerance among elementary school students primarily emphasizes the process of habituation and the example set by teachers (Anggraeni et al., 2022). In contrast, the present study demonstrates that the teacher deliberately selected direct experiential learning as the primary strategy for attitude formation. This choice was based on the belief that concrete experiences gained through role-playing would have a stronger influence on students' attitudes than purely informative approaches (Mariana, 2023). This finding is consistent with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of active experiences in shaping understanding and values (Hasibuan et al., 2026).

However, time constraints emerged as the main obstacle to implementing role-playing activities, a relatively novel finding warranting consideration in future tolerance education strategies at the elementary school level. Beyond the use of role-playing, another important finding of this study is the teacher's strategy of contextualizing tolerance education according to local social realities, particularly by using differences in religious interpretations within the same faith as a basis for classroom discussions and activating students' prior knowledge activities in line with the findings. This contextualized approach reflects the teacher's understanding that tolerance is not merely an abstract concept but a value that must be

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connected to students' real-life experiences (Handayani, 2026; Zebua, 2025). Previous research on character education to foster appreciation for ethnic diversity has also emphasized the importance of local context in character education (Sianturi & Ndona, 2025).

Despite these effective instructional strategies, several challenges remained in fostering students' tolerance attitudes. The social environment plays an important role in shaping tolerance attitudes among elementary school students; however, previous research has primarily focused on school-wide collective strategies rather than on peer influence as an individual factor (Nuromliah et al., 2025). In contrast, the present study specifically highlights the existence of peer pressure that can weaken students' consistency in demonstrating tolerant behavior, even when tolerance values have already begun to be internalized. This finding implies that efforts to cultivate tolerance should not be limited to classroom-level interventions but should involve the entire social ecosystem surrounding students, including parents, as emphasized by the teacher in this study. In line with previous studies, collaboration between schools and families plays an important role in optimizing the implementation of tolerance values (Setiawan et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of tolerance education at SDN 2 Mekarmukti has been carried out effectively and has successfully fostered students' attitudes of respecting differences. Students demonstrated highly positive tolerance attitudes, as reflected in their acceptance of differences, with concrete manifestations such as accepting differences, respecting peers from diverse backgrounds, and resolving conflicts through discussion and compromise. The teacher's implementation of tolerance-oriented learning also reached a very high standard, supported by effective strategies including contextualizing learning materials based on local social realities, employing a democratic classroom approach, and utilizing role-playing as a direct experiential learning method. Despite challenges related to limited instructional time and peer influence, the teacher addressed these obstacles through preparation and close collaboration with parents. These efforts helped maintain the effectiveness of tolerance education. Overall, the findings suggest that the success of tolerance education depends largely on the teacher's pedagogical competence, sensitivity to students' social context, and collaboration among teachers, students, and families.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article. The authors affirm that the data and content of the article are free from plagiarism.

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