

Implementation of Tolerance Character Education: A Comparative Study on Indonesia and Finland Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to compare the implementation of tolerance in elementary schools in Indonesia and Finland.

Methods: The method used was qualitative descriptive with a literature study design. The type of study used was a comparative literature review. Data obtained were secondary data, including articles in online scientific journals, website articles, and books related to the implementation of character education of tolerance in Indonesia or Finland elementary schools.

Results: Elementary schools in Indonesia or Finland have their own method of implementing character education, especially tolerance. Both countries have varied methods to implement tolerance values. This implementation is not only carried out in the class but also outside the class. However, from various methods and strategies used by schools in those countries, the two countries actually have several differences. In Indonesia, the implementation of tolerance values is still often carried out in the school environment by involving schoolmates. However, in Finland, tolerance can be implemented not only with friends from the same school but also with friends from different schools. Moreover, tolerance values in Indonesia are still implemented in existing lessons, while Finland has its own subject discussing life values, such as tolerance.

Application/Originality/Value: This study explained methods for implementing tolerance character in Indonesia and Finland elementary schools based on three elements: providing freedom and not forcing others, respecting other beliefs, and understanding each other on existing differences.

Keywords: Character education, tolerance, elementary school

Introduction

A tolerant attitude is really required in living a social life. Indonesia is an archipelagic country with various tribes, cultures, customs, languages, and religions. Thus, every citizen is obliged to have a tolerant attitude, which includes respecting each other in various life contexts. Besides creating a harmonious social life, a tolerant attitude can also raise awareness regarding how diverse this country is.

If tolerance is not embedded in each individual, it will lead to intolerance cases. Intolerance can emerge in various forms, such as racism, sexism, religious discrimination, or social discrimination. This can cause division and have a bad impact on social life. Furthermore, intolerance in Indonesia is a big problem because it will impact other problems, or it can be stated that it is the root of all social problems ([Anwar, 2021](#)). Thus, the higher the intolerance, the higher the various societal conflicts.

Current intolerance cases, such as the increasing number of bullying incidents in the educational environment, cause unrest and a decline in the quality of education in Indonesia ([Tamaeka, 2022](#)). According to the study conducted by [Oktavia et al. \(2022\)](#), it is found that the motive of the bullying perpetrators is entertainment so that the atmosphere becomes lively and to start the games, either during break time or during class when there is no teacher. Based on [Fiolisa \(2021\)](#), in the education field, students often feel discriminated against due to physical, economic, or other background limitations, such as a student who experiences bullying in school due to a different background from other friends. Moreover, from [BBC News Indonesia \(2023\)](#) website, the chairman of the expert council of the Federation of Indonesia Teachers Association (FSGI), Retno Listyarti, stated that from January to May 2023, FSGI found at least 12 bullying cases in Indonesia schools. Four cases occurred in elementary school, five in junior high school, and the remaining in senior high/vocational school.

A study regarding implementing a tolerance attitude in elementary school has been conducted several times. First, a study by [Risdianto et al. \(2020\)](#) discussed instilling tolerance values in thematic learning in the 5th grade of SD Negeri Melong Mandiri 2, Cimahi City. Second, a study by [Hasiba and Febrianti \(2019\)](#) discussed the roles of classroom teachers in instilling tolerant character values in 4th-grade students in SD Negeri Kembangan Utara 05 Pagi, Jakarta Barat. Third, a study by [Aningrum \(2019\)](#) discussed the implementation of character education of tolerance in SD Negeri Percobaan 2,

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Sleman Regency. Fourth, a study by [Remiswal and Khoiro \(2019\)](#) discussed the multicultural approach to learning Islamic education to improve a tolerant attitude through school culture in SD Swasta Anwar Karim, Pasaman Barat Regency. Fifth, a study by [A'la \(2019\)](#) discussed the implementation of traditional games in strengthening tolerance characters in the physical education, sports, and health subjects in 3rd-grade students in SD Negeri 1 Watuaji, Jepara Regency. Sixth, a study by [Mikkola et al. \(2007\)](#) discussed a collection of activities carried out to instill a tolerant attitude in the school field in 5th-grade students in Ruustorpan School, Finland. Seventh, a study by [Daheri et al. \(2022\)](#) discussed the transformation of the managerial substance of character education in the school and also examined the pattern of character education in Finland through contextual and textual understanding. Eighth, a study by [Hasibuan et al. \(2023\)](#) discussed a review and analysis of the elementary school curriculum in Finland, a country that has a reputation for the best education in the world according to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and compared it with the elementary school curriculum in Indonesia.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that instilling a tolerant attitude in Indonesia has been widely carried out. None of the studies above specifically discusses the comparison of the implementation of a tolerant attitude in elementary schools between Indonesia and Finland. Therefore, this study aims to compare the implementation of a tolerant attitude in elementary schools in Indonesia and Finland. The results of this study will be useful for parties in the education field in Indonesia to implement a tolerant attitude effectively.

Literature Review

Theories

[Forst \(2013\)](#), a contemporary German political philosopher, stated that the construction of tolerance theory is a theory regarding tolerance that seeks to be 'tolerant' of other principles and ethics. This theory is not a political understanding that agrees with ethical doctrines. However, this theory is an understanding with an autonomous moral foundation.

Elements

[Sena \(2018\)](#) stated that several elements of tolerance must be shown when expressing attitudes toward others. Some of the elements are (1) Providing freedom and independence to every human being in acting, moving, having desires according to themselves, and choosing a religion or belief; (2) Recognizing everyone's rights in determining their attitudes, behavior, and fate; (3) Respecting others' beliefs, in this context related to religion or social life, in choosing groups; (4) Respecting and understanding each other as a basis for recognizing equality, appreciation, and respecting between fellow human beings. In line with this, [Sari \(2023\)](#) also stated that tolerance has several elements, such as providing freedom or independence, recognizing everyone's rights, respecting other beliefs, and understanding each other. Meanwhile, according to [Aulia \(2023\)](#), tolerance contains peace and tranquility elements built on the principle of openness and high respect in creating brotherhood and the values of humanity. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that tolerance has elements in the form of providing freedom and not forcing others, respecting other beliefs, and understanding each other's differences.

Types

According to [Natsir \(1970\)](#), in his book "Keragaman Hidup Antara Agama", there are three forms of tolerance: religious tolerance, cultural tolerance, and political tolerance. This is in line with the study conducted by [Bayu et al. \(2022\)](#), which stated that according to its scope, tolerance has several forms, such as religious tolerance, social tolerance, and cultural tolerance. Moreover, according to [Yusuf \(2022\)](#), tolerance has various types: religious tolerance, cultural tolerance, political tolerance, social tolerance, family environment tolerance, and social media tolerance. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that tolerance consists of political, religious, social, and cultural tolerance.

Factors

[Golebiowska \(2004\)](#), elaborated on the relationship between social, political, and psychological factors and religious tolerance. The results of the bivariate analysis showed that respondents with younger age, having higher education, and living in urban areas with sufficient financial conditions have higher religious tolerance than respondents with older age, having lower education, living in rural areas, and dissatisfied with their financial condition. Furthermore, according to [Kelly \(2018\)](#), there are several factors influencing tolerance attitudes, including internal and external factors. Internal factors consist of personality type, self-control, and ethnocentrism. Meanwhile, external factors consist of the educational environment, social identity, and religious fundamentalism. Besides that, based on [Pitaloka et al. \(2021\)](#), factors influencing tolerance are religion and social norms, parenting and teacher care, and education. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that there are several factors influencing tolerance: internal factors consisting of psychology, personality type,

self-control, and ethnocentrism, as well as external factors consisting of social environment, education, and religious fundamentalism.

Instilling

[Tilaar \(1999\)](#) stated that there are three steps in implementing a tolerant attitude toward students: modeling and instilling tolerance, instilling appreciation for differences, opposing stereotypes, and not being prejudiced. [Sutton \(2006\)](#) suggested four methods of instilling tolerance: introducing forms of cultural diversity, comparing opinions with someone's values, developing the habit of not easily being hurt and instilling the habit of protesting against unfair and dishonest in daily life. Moreover, based on the study conducted by [Hariandi et al. \(2019\)](#), there are several strategies that the teacher can carry out to instill a tolerant attitude, such as using a learning orientation by paying more attention to affective domain, the teacher always becomes a good figure in behaving in the class, the teacher gives an understanding of differences to students, and teacher in learning activities makes heterogeneous learning groups. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that there are several methods for instilling a tolerant attitude in students, such as introducing forms of diversity, modeling and instilling tolerance, instilling appreciation of differences, and forming heterogeneous learning groups.

Methods

Type and Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a literature review method. The type of study used was a comparative literature review. This study focused on comparing the implementation of character education of tolerance in Indonesia and Finland elementary schools. Tolerance elements in this study include providing freedom and not forcing others, respecting other beliefs, and understanding each other's differences.

Data and Data Source

Data in this study consisted of secondary data, including articles in online scientific journals, website articles, and books related to the implementation of tolerance education in elementary schools in Indonesia or Finland. The search source of the data was from online search engines, Google and Google Scholar. The reason for choosing these search engines is because they are easy to access.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection technique used literature search via (1) Google with keywords *monikulttuurisuus kouluissa*/multiculturalism at school, *kunnioittaa toisiaan koulussa*/respect each other at school, and *penguatan nilai toleransi*/strengthening the value of tolerance; and (2) Google Scholar with keywords "*sosiaalinen vuorovaikutus peruskoulussa*" /social interaction in elementary school, "*pendidikan toleransi di sekolah dasar*" /tolerance education in elementary school, "*penanaman toleransi di sekolah dasar*" /tolerance cultivation in elementary school. Literature search was adjusted to the data and results that are in accordance with the research focus, which is the implementation of character education of tolerance in Indonesia and Finland.

The data sorting process was conducted by carefully reading the literature search results with the assistance of online search engine sites, Google and Google Scholar. The researcher conducted the next data sorting manually with the criteria of articles containing the implementation of character education of tolerance in the form of providing freedom and not forcing others, respecting other beliefs, and understanding each other of existing differences.

Data Validity

In testing data validity, the researcher used the check-and-recheck technique, researcher validity, and source triangulation. Check and recheck is conducted to recheck data obtained by reading them seriously, carefully, and repeatedly. Furthermore, researcher validity is to check the results of the analysis with other researchers to validate the information obtained. Meanwhile, source triangulation involves comparing the results with other secondary data, such as relevant articles.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted according to the opinion of Miles and Huberman (1994), which included data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. Data reduction is an activity of summarizing and underlining elements that will be used as comparative results. The elements examined include providing freedom and not forcing others, respecting other beliefs, and understanding each other's differences. Moreover, data presentation was conducted by grouping the findings into Excel

files. Concluding, on the other hand, involves comparing similarities and differences through the table, which will later be briefly described based on the comparative results.

Results and Discussion

The following are the results of the research obtained. results are presented in the form of [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Comparison of the implementation of tolerance character

Elements studied	Character Education in Indonesia	Character Education in Finland
Providing freedom and not forcing others.	(1) Group discussion, question and answer activities, and group work.	(1) Culture of trust and learning of values.
	(2) Discussion and question and answer activities.	(2) Social interactions. Making own observations and conclusions.
	(3) Habituating students to respect others' opinions.	(3) Simple methods in daily life.
Respecting other beliefs.	(1) Commemoration of religious holidays and creating groups of different religions in the learning process and class activities.	(1) Teaching different subjects (religion and life perspective), not in one class.
	(2) The teacher gives understanding to students.	(2) Discussing and reflecting phenomena in students' lives through the media.
	(3) Games or playing <i>tepuk anak sholeh</i> (Clap of Shaleh Kid).	(3) Introducing religious or non-religious points of view to children with the help of phenomena, people, stories, etc.
	(4) Praying according to students' respective beliefs and religions.	(1) Program to bring together older and younger students.
Understanding each other's existing differences.	(1) The teacher provides an example.	(2) Guiding students to explore and organize their perceptions about the world. Critical cultural literacy and cultural heritage program of The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through world heritage sites.
	(2) Creating heterogeneous groups.	
	(3) Practicing gender bias tolerance.	
	(4) The teacher provides advice, guidance, and understanding for students, and in technical learning, the teacher can create study groups that are always changing.	(3) Increasing dialogue between the young generation with immigrant backgrounds and other students.

The Implementation of Character Education of Tolerance in Indonesia

Several strategies are employed by elementary schools in Indonesia to implement character education on tolerance. Several methods are carried out in implementing the elements of providing freedom and not forcing others. First, according to [Yulianti and Dewi \(2021\)](#), creating group discussions, conducting question-and-answer activities, and group work in the learning process can be the methods to implement the values of freedom and mutual respect in expressing opinions. Students are taught to respect others' opinions by not interrupting the conversation during the discussion; likewise, when students express their opinions, they must be polite, not force their will, and not offend other people's feelings. Second, based on [Hero \(2021\)](#), in SD Katolik Nangahaledoi, Sikka Regency, the teacher designs learning methods through discussion and question-and-answer activities in the teaching and learning process. This is to train students to respect each others' opinions and be honest. Third, according to [Risdiyanto et al. \(2020\)](#), in SD Negeri Melong Mandiri 2, Cimahi City, spontaneous activities can be carried out by habituating students to respect others' opinions.

Furthermore, in implementing elements of respecting others' beliefs, schools also have various methods. First, based on [Hero \(2021\)](#), in SD Katolik Nangahaledoi, Sikka Regency, there are religious holidays, such as Christmas and Eid al-Fitr. Students hold celebration activities together by exchanging gifts and eating together. Besides that, in the learning process and class activities, the teacher divides students into groups of different religions, so mixing among students occurs. Second, according to [Yuliani et al. \(2021\)](#), in SD Negeri Baranangsiang, Bandung Barat Regency, the teacher provides understanding to students that if muslim students are praying, they are asked to not disturb them; likewise, when non-muslim students are praying, muslim students must be respectful. Third, based on [Ariestina \(2019\)](#), in MI Ma'arif Mangunsari, Salatiga City, instilling tolerance can be implemented with games or unique methods such as inviting students to play Clap of Shaleh Kid. However, there is an explanation that it is not good to say "kafir...kafir...no..." at the end of the lyrics because saying *kafir* (infidel) to non-muslims can offend a person's feelings. Fourth, according to [Risdiyanto et al. \(2020\)](#), in SD Negeri Melong Mandiri 2, Cimahi City, tolerance can be implemented by praying silently according to students' respective beliefs and religion.

Lastly, in the implementation of the element of understanding each other's existing differences, several methods are carried out; first, according to [Yulianti and Dewi \(2021\)](#), the teacher can provide an example of being tolerant by not differentiating one student from another, not speaking rude words, and not behaving physically violently. Second, based on [Mayasari et al. \(2019\)](#), in SD Negeri 6 Langsa, Langsa City, the teacher creates heterogeneous groups because, through different opinions, students are trained to remain respectful toward fellow friends. Third, according to [Ariestina \(2019\)](#), in MI Ma'arif Mangunsari, Salatiga City, schools practice gender bias tolerance by dividing teachers, groups in learning, assignments, playing games, and guarding the canteen. Fourth, based on [Risdiyanto et al. \(2020\)](#), in SD Negeri Melong Mandiri 2, Cimahi City, when holding group learning and many students behave discriminatory or do not want to cooperate, the teacher will give advice, guidance, and understanding to students so that this negative behavior does not happen again. Furthermore, the teacher can create study groups that are always changing in every lesson so that students can mingle and understand each other.

The Implementation of Character Education of Tolerance in Finland

Different from Indonesia, elementary schools in Finland have their own method of implementing character education of tolerance. Several methods are carried out in implementing the elements of providing freedom and not forcing others. First, based on [Adiputri \(2022\)](#), schools have taught that students can be trusted to take only their rights and not to take others' rights and not disturb public or shared property with the system built, namely a culture of trust. Moreover, learning values continue to be carried out in upper levels, such as in the 3rd - 6th grades. Second, according to [Kelly et al. \(2018\)](#), the Finland system respects student collaboration, which allows students to build knowledge through social interactions. Third, based on the [Opetushallitus \(2023\)](#) website, when learning culture and world perspective, students have opportunities to make observations and draw conclusions regarding authentic objects, not only hearing or reading information collected by others. Fourth, according to [Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliiton \(2020\)](#) website, the teacher can ask students to think about the most concrete method to show respect and appreciation to others and allow others to be who they are. The method can be really simple in daily life, such as introducing friends to other friends, considering others' opinions, listening to others, and inviting others to join the group.

Furthermore, as reported from the [Opetushallitus \(2023\)](#) website, students who do not participate in the religious community will obtain information about life perspectives. In this learning, several methods exist to implement the element of respecting others' beliefs. First, religion and life perspective are alternative subjects. Thus, teaching different subjects not in the same class so that students can focus on the content of certain subjects and not violate students' rights. The second is to discuss and reflect on phenomena, such as Christmas, Easter, or Ramadan celebrations, and prohibitions of eating pork or wearing hijab, which enter students' lives through the media. The third is to introduce religious or non-religious points of view to students in detail with the help of phenomena, people, and stories.

The last is a method carried out by schools in Finland to implement the element of understanding each other's existing differences. First, based on [Kelly et al. \(2018\)](#), the method to encourage collaboration is establishing and developing programs that regularly bring older students with younger students, such as using cross-class reading buddies. Second, according to [Opetushallitus's \(2023\)](#) website, since early grades, the main thing in teaching Life Perspectives is to guide students in exploring and organizing their perceptions about the world, their relationship with themselves, others, nature and environment, and society. This can occur on small scales by introducing different cultures, ways of thinking, and points of view. Moreover, there is critical culture literacy to understand students' own culture and others' culture, as well as the UNESCO cultural heritage program through world heritage sites related to things considered important by different times and cultures. Third, based on [Naskali \(2016\)](#), the classroom teacher has many impacts and roles, so the teacher should increase dialogue between young people with immigrant backgrounds and other school children.

The Comparison of the Implementation of Character Education of Tolerance between Indonesia and Finland

Either elementary schools in Indonesia or Finland have their own method of implementing character education, especially tolerance. From several existing methods and strategies, there are several similarities between these two countries, where schools both have various methods to implement tolerance values. This implementation is not only carried out in the class but also outside the class.

However, from various methods and strategies used by schools in Indonesia and Finland, the two countries actually have many differences. Several differences are: (1) In implementing the element of providing freedom and not forcing others, several schools in Indonesia use the group discussion method. Meanwhile, schools in Finland have more varied methods, such as the culture of trust, learning values, social interactions, observations, and simple methods in daily life. (2) In implementing the element of respecting others' beliefs, each country has its own method. In Finland, there is a life perspective subject with various methods and media, while in Indonesia, teaching this element can be carried out by various methods, such as commemorating religious holidays, providing understanding to students, instilling through games and singing, and praying according to students beliefs and religion by praying silently; (3) In the implementation of the element of understanding each other of existing differences, the two countries have varied methods. In Indonesia, the teacher creates heterogeneous groups and also provides examples, advice, guidance, and understanding to students. Moreover, there are schools practicing gender bias tolerance. Meanwhile, in Finland, the methods used are not only implemented in the class with friends, but Finland is able to bring older students with younger students and increase dialogue among young generations with immigrant backgrounds with other school children. The teacher is also able to guide students to explore and organize their perceptions about the world. Schools also have critical cultural literacy and UNESCO cultural heritage programs through world heritage sites.

Conclusion

In the previous study, there was a comparative study related to education in Indonesia and Finland. However, there is no study regarding the implementation of a tolerant character between elementary schools in Indonesia and Finland. Therefore, updates regarding the study are required. This study explained methods for implementing a tolerant character in Indonesia and Finland elementary schools based on three elements: providing freedom and not forcing others, respecting other beliefs, and understanding each other's differences.

There are several limitations in this study. First, there is a lack of data sources related to the implementation of character education of tolerance in Finland, and there are some data obtained from websites with low validity. Second, not all data obtained describe implementation nationally, so the data studied can be considered to generalize the existing information. Third, the element of tolerance discussed in this study is limited to only three elements. Therefore, further study related to comparative study in the implementation of character education of tolerance in Indonesia and Finland can be better if there is more valid and diverse data source. Furthermore, elements that are not included in this study can be added.

In this study, there are several suggestions for parties in elementary schools in Indonesia to implement a tolerant attitude effectively. First, for the government, the government can establish policies related to instilling character education, one of which is tolerance, outside existing general subjects. Thus, instilling character can be focused on carrying it at once. Second, teachers and principals can create interesting programs to instill character education throughout the school, not just in the classroom.

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