

An Analysis of Multicultural Values: Empirical Study on Students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received April 12, 2025

Revised April 19, 2025

Accepted April 20, 2025

Keywords:

Multiculturalism, Students,
Universitas Muhammadiyah
Gombong

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the values of multiculturalism in students at Muhammadiyah Gombong University both theoretically and practically, in the context of everyday life. The research was motivated by the plurality (ethnicity, race, culture, language and religion) of different students which raises concerns in social aspects and academic communities. A survey was conducted on 250 students from 6 study programs of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Gombong to obtain data on multicultural values in the campus environment. The method used was mixed methods to collect quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (descriptive) data. The results showed that multiculturalism lies in the attitude of openness, active acceptance, and equal recognition of social groups as an integral part of an entity Society, both democratic values, harmony and tolerance. The Strategy of Muhammadiyah Gombong University in Building Multicultural values includes 3 ways, namely the Role of Student Organizations and UKM, Collaboration of lecturers and students, and the Role of the Curriculum as a Container for Multicultural Character Building. Overall, this research concludes that Muhammadiyah Gombong University strengthens the position of successful Islamic higher education as a strategic space for inclusive and transformative multicultural character building.

1. INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism has become a critical issue amidst the complexity of the globalization era marked by the intensification of cross-cultural interactions in maintaining social cohesion, including in Indonesia as a country with ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity (Banks, 2015). Higher education, as a microcosm of society, bears a strategic responsibility to instill multicultural values through the integration of curricula, policies and practices on campus (Banks & Banks, 2010). As experienced by many other educational institutions, the campus environment is faced with complex challenges stemming from diverse religious understandings, cultural backgrounds, regional origins, and Islamic organizations, as is the case with students at Muhammadiyah Gombong University.

These differences often trigger friction that has the potential to hinder the effectiveness of communication and collaboration between campus residents, and can even disrupt the harmony and peace of the academic community. The increasing tendency of exclusivity also strengthens social fragmentation, which in turn creates polarization in campus life. As data obtained that 10 out of 100% of new students who entered in T.A 2024/2025 are non-Muslim, and 30 out of 100% are

students who come from outside the city, province and island.

The implementation of multiculturalism values among students faces various complex challenges. One of the main problems is the students' lack of understanding and awareness of the importance of multiculturalism values, which can hinder the creation of social harmonization in the campus environment. Cultural differences and lack of interaction between student groups are among the causes of tension and hinder social integration (Bintang & Warsono, 2022). This is complex considering that universities are supposed to be a place to strengthen social values and moderate values. Second, multicultural values have not been maximally integrated in the education curriculum system. This is in line with the results of research (Hartono et al., 2024) showing that one of the main challenges is the lack of understanding and skills of educators in integrating multicultural values into the curriculum and classroom management, so that it can hinder the development of tolerance and respect for diversity among students.

So that the non-integration of these values will hinder students' understanding in understanding and strengthening multicultural values as an ideology that must be understood. (Ali & Noor, 2019) revealed that differences in perceptions regarding the boundaries of multiculturalism as an ideology can lead to ambiguity in its application, thus potentially triggering ego-centrism and exclusivity among student groups. The third problem is the homogeneous campus environment and the many cultures in it is one of the problems in the process of strengthening multicultural values. The homogeneous social environment around campus is also an obstacle in fostering respect for diversity, because lack of interaction with different groups can strengthen stereotypes and prejudices (Hartono et al., 2024).

Moreover, the challenges posed by multiculturalism to civic solidarity within pluralistic societies have also garnered significant attention. A lack of tolerance toward differences can hinder the establishment of an inclusive coexistence. Internal factors such as students' limited readiness and awareness, along with external constraints like the scarcity of spaces for reflection and intercultural interaction, serve as substantial barriers to the implementation of multicultural values (Mazid & Suharno, 2019). These challenges are further compounded by the pressures of contemporary technological developments, which have become the most formidable obstacles to implementation. The influence of technology and globalization often diverts students' attention away from local and national values, steering them instead toward global cultures that may not align with the principles of multiculturalism (Azahra et al., 2025). Therefore, strategic efforts are essential to overcome these barriers in order to foster a more inclusive and harmonious campus environment.

The results of previous studies provide a fairly broad overview but have not touched specifically on the empirical study of Multicultural values of Muhammadiyah Gombong University students. For example, Efaningrum et al. (2022) highlighted the multicultural awareness of generation Z and its implications for education, while Mahbubah et al. (2022) reviewed religious tolerance at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang, but has not deeply discussed the concrete strategies for implementing multicultural values in campus life holistically. Research by Fikriyati et al. (2021), which discusses the influence of group conformity on the multicultural attitudes of migrant students in Malang, shows that social factors play an important role in the formation of multicultural attitudes, but does not explain how these values are strategically built through campus policies and practices. In fact, Kurniawan et al. (2023) highlighted the dilemma of Islamic educational institutions in balancing religious identity and the demands of pluralism, but have not examined how this is managed in the context of Muhammadiyah in an applicable manner. This indicates a research gap that has not been answered completely.

This research is present to fill the void of studies on how multicultural value internalization strategies are implemented at Muhammadiyah Gombong University as an open Islamic campus.

This research answers the void of literature on the application of multicultural values on Muhammadiyah campuses that have unique characteristics: on the one hand based on progressive Islamic values, on the other hand open to accepting the diversity of student identities. By exploring the real practices that occur in the field, this research seeks to present a complete portrait of how this campus responds to the challenges of diversity.

The main contribution of this research is to offer a comprehensive understanding of the implementation strategy of multicultural values on the campus of Muhammadiyah Gombong University, which has not been widely explored. The urgency of this research also lies in the need for universities to respond to the reality of social pluralism in a systematic and planned manner, in order to create an inclusive, peaceful and civilized learning ecosystem. In addition, the findings of this research are expected to be a reference for higher education policy makers, especially Muhammadiyah Gombong University, in formulating curriculum policies and multiculturalism-based character development. As emphasized by Syahrul (2020), research-based recommendations can help universities build learning environments that are inclusive and adaptive to diversity.

2. METHODS

This study used a mixed methods design (Pane et al., 2021) by combining quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a comprehensive picture (Creswell, 2017) of the implementation of multicultural values within the Faculty of Health Sciences. The research subjects consisted of 250 randomly selected students from various study programs as quantitative samples, as well as five students from five different regional backgrounds as purposively selected qualitative respondents. Quantitative data were collected through online questionnaires using Google Forms, while qualitative data were obtained through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted both in person and online. Quantitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel with descriptive statistical techniques in the form of frequency distributions and percentages, while qualitative data was analyzed with a thematic approach through a process of coding, categorization, narrative presentation, and conclusion drawing on student perspectives regarding the form of implementation of multicultural values on campus. This mixed method approach allows researchers to capture both numerical general trends and narrative depth of meaning from student experiences.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 A Theoretical Review of Multiculturalism

Understanding and awareness of the importance of multiculturalism have, in fact, been embedded since the early formulation of national culture by the founding fathers of Indonesia. They recognized that Indonesia was established on the foundation of cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity. However, in recent developments, public understanding of the concept of multiculturalism has gradually shifted away from the spirit and fundamental essence initially conceived.

As emphasized by (Asmuri, 2017), Indonesia's cultural diversity is a sociological reality that reflects the richness of the nation's collective identity. This diversity is evident in the existence of over 300 ethnic groups, approximately 200 local languages, and thousands of cultural expressions that grow and evolve simultaneously within a shared social space. Such a context necessitates the development of social interactions grounded in the values of tolerance, which serve as a crucial foundation for fostering harmonious, inclusive, and sustainable social relations. In alignment with this view, (Rahmat, 2019) argues that the concept of multiculturalism should be rooted in the lived realities of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity within society. Therefore, to achieve genuine social harmony, there must be a deep internalization of tolerance values, alongside efforts to deconstruct primordial views that may

threaten social cohesion and integration.

Etymologically, the term *multiculturalism* derives from the combination of two words: *multi*, meaning many, and *cultural*, a loanword from the English term *culture*, meaning the customs, arts, and social institutions of a group. Thus, multiculturalism is generally understood as a worldview that acknowledges the existence of multiple cultures within a shared social space and encourages the creation of mutually beneficial and symbiotic inter-cultural relationships (Chairul, 2006). Furthermore, (Suryadinata, 2002) posits that multiculturalism should not merely be seen as a pragmatic political doctrine, but rather as a life paradigm that prioritizes respect, recognition, and protection of cultural diversity within society. In this sense, multiculturalism demands the cultivation of a collective awareness to build harmonious living arrangements within the framework of social pluralism.

Terminologically, multiculturalism refers to a condition of cultural diversity within a complex societal structure (Bukhori, 2019). The term is commonly used to describe a social configuration consisting of various community groups with differing religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. In academic discourse, multiculturalism is often discussed dialectically in relation to concepts such as *plurality* and *diversity*, each bearing distinct conceptual connotations. (Chairul, 2006) adds that *plurality* refers to the presence of more than one entity or element within a social order, while *diversity* highlights the essential differences among those elements. Multiculturalism, however, goes beyond merely indicating difference; it represents an active recognition of the existence and rights of distinct groups to coexist peacefully within an inclusive and equitable social system. Consequently, multiculturalism functions as a normative framework that underscores the importance of respect, acceptance, and protection of the cultural rights of groups within a pluralistic society.

Substantively, multiculturalism is understood as a normative belief asserting that ethnic and cultural groups can coexist peacefully through the principle of co-existence. This principle requires mutual respect and appreciation for each group's identity and cultural expressions (Mulyadi, 2017). In the context of public policy, this approach aligns with the view that multiculturalism serves as a strategic ideology to address the erosion of social cohesion and national identity, particularly in the face of globalization, which significantly undermines local and national identities (Agustianty, 2021). Reinforcing this view, (Azra, 2007) argues that multiculturalism essentially represents a *worldview* that emphasizes acceptance of the reality of diversity, including religious and cultural plurality, and is practically implemented through inclusive cultural policies. From this perspective, multiculturalism not only reflects a socially plural reality but also serves as a normative framework for designing a democratic, just, and civilized societal order. Moreover, (Hernandez, 2001) asserts that the primary aim of multiculturalism is to foster cross-group cooperation, establish egalitarian relationships, and cultivate a culture of appreciation within increasingly complex and non-monocultural societies. Therefore, multiculturalism is not merely passively tolerant; it also demands an active and progressive approach to constructing a just, equitable, and mutually enriching social structure.

The principles of openness, active acceptance, and equal recognition of social groups as integral components of society constitute the core of multiculturalism, as supported by various theoretical perspectives. Multiculturalism differs from the notion of plurality, which merely acknowledges the presence of differences. Thus, the internalization of multicultural values through educational approaches can significantly contribute to the formation of an inclusive, just, and democratic society. The construction of a civilized social order depends on principles such as tolerance, appreciation of diversity, and the reinforcement of a harmonious collective identity. This is particularly relevant in public universities, which inherently embody such diversity.

3.2 Multicultural Values

According to (Tilaar, 2014), multicultural education reflects four fundamental core values: (1) respect for cultural diversity as a reality of human life; (2) recognition of the inherent dignity, worth, and human rights of every individual; (3) the cultivation of responsibility, both personal and collective, within the context of a global community; and (4) the instillation of universal human responsibility for the sustainability of the natural environment. These four values not only function as ethical principles in social dynamics but also serve as essential philosophical foundations for establishing sustainable diversity governance. Operationally, these values can be translated into three principal tenets: democracy, tolerance, and social harmony.

A. Democratic Values

Democracy constitutes the foundational pillar of the socio-political structure, emphasizing values of equality, freedom, and active participation of all societal elements. In the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), democracy is defined as a worldview that prioritizes equal rights and responsibilities and ensures equal treatment for every citizen without discrimination. Etymologically, the term “democracy” derives from the Greek *demos* (people) and *kratos* or *cratein* (power or governance), thus denoting “government by the people” (Kurniati et al., 2021). This definition underscores that the ultimate source of authority lies in the people, a principle that forms the cornerstone of modern state governance.

Terminologically, scholars have expanded the definition of democracy to encompass political and social dimensions. Joseph A. Schumpeter, as cited by (Isdianto, 2016) views democracy as an institutional mechanism for political decision-making, whereby power is acquired through a competitive process of securing public support via elections.

Furthermore, democracy extends beyond a system of governance to embody fundamental values underpinning social life and education. According to (Hendri B Mayo, 2012), the five core values of democracy include: (1) resolving conflict through peaceful and legitimate institutions, (2) enabling non-violent social change, (3) ensuring orderly and systematic power transitions, (4) recognizing pluralism in social life, and (5) upholding justice as a shared foundation. These values demonstrate that democracy encompasses not only procedural elements but also ethical dimensions that form the normative framework of societal life.

In a similar vein, (Alamsyah, 2014) highlights democratic values within social relations, namely: (1) freedom of expression within ethical and normative boundaries, (2) the right to voice opinions, and (3) respect for differences. These two approaches—Mayo's institutional perspective and Alamsyah's sociocultural perspective—expand our understanding of democracy as manifest not only in formal procedures but also in everyday social ethos and behaviors.

In the educational context, democratic values hold strategic significance. (S. Eko Putro Widoyoko, 2014) argues that applying democratic principles in schools can: (a) foster equality among students, (b) fulfill shared needs, (c) enhance student collaboration, (d) develop critical thinking skills, and (e) shape tolerant character. This aligns with the progressive pedagogical paradigm, which emphasizes active student participation in the learning process as a democratic endeavor. Furthermore, (Kurniasih & Sani, 2016) explain that the objectives of democratic values in education include fostering students'

intellectual maturity, instilling problem-solving confidence, providing social and cognitive skills, and nurturing concern for others' welfare. In line with this, Darmadi adds that democratic values aim to (1) promote freedom of expression, (2) encourage openness to new ideas, and (3) prevent and resolve conflicts among students peacefully.

From these various perspectives, it can be concluded that democracy is not merely a political construct but also an educational paradigm and a value of life. Within the educational sphere, democratic values play a vital role in shaping learners who are independent, critical, tolerant, and adaptable to social dynamics. These values align with the goals of 21st-century education, which emphasize critical thinking, collaboration, and social awareness as key attributes of responsible and active citizenship.

B. Tolerant Values

Etymologically, the term “tolerance” is derived from the Latin *tolerantia*, which connotes patience, gentleness, openness, and leniency in addressing differences (Casram, 2016). In modern usage, tolerance is understood as an attitude of acknowledging, accepting, and respecting individual and group differences, including those of opinion, religion, socioeconomic status, and political affiliation (Wahab, 2015). This concept is emphasized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which defines tolerance as mutual respect and appreciation for cultural diversity, freedom of expression, and the essence of humanity (Ginting & Aryaningrum, 2009). Similarly, Heiler succinctly defines tolerance as respect for societal plurality (Syukur & Agus Hermanto, 2021).

Tolerance is not merely a passive stance of allowing differences but an active value that promotes respect for diversity, mutual understanding, and harmonious living. The fundamental components of tolerance include: (1) Appreciation of difference, which recognizes diversity as a socially enriching and educationally valuable resource (Baidhaw, 2005); (2) Equality, which upholds the right of every individual to be treated fairly and without discrimination based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other identities; (3) Respect and civility, which are manifested through polite, empathetic communication that honors human dignity (Kuse, 2023); and (4) Open dialogue and communication, which involve active listening, constructive expression of views, and shared understanding across differences (Zaprul Khan, 2018).

In pluralistic societies, the implementation of tolerance values is fundamental to achieving harmonious and balanced social relations. Tolerance fosters strong social cohesion and mitigates intergroup conflict. According to Wosino, interreligious interactions often cultivate a pattern of social communication that emphasizes shared national identity over doctrinal differences.

C. Values of Social Harmony

The term “harmony” (*kerukunan*) originates from the root word *rukun*, which in Arabic is *rukun* (plural: *arkan*), meaning foundation or pillar. In the semantic development of the Indonesian language, the term has evolved to signify a condition of social relations marked by harmony, concord, and the absence of conflict—whether in interpersonal or intergroup interactions within society.

Conceptually, harmony can be understood as a social construct reflecting peaceful coexistence and stability in diverse communities. (Nugroho & Ni'mah, 2018) assert that social harmony in the context of Indonesian nationhood represents an organized, peaceful, and mutually respectful shared life. These values are rooted in the spirit of

mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), derived from religious teachings, belief systems, and the nation's noble character as reflected in the Pancasila ideology.

To cultivate and sustain harmony in a multicultural society, a proactive and continuous approach is essential. This includes not only structural efforts such as interfaith dialogue forums but also cultural and educational strategies. (Oktavia, 2019) emphasizes the importance of strengthening tolerance, deepening understanding of one's own religious teachings, and fostering openness toward the beliefs of others as substantive strategies for cultivating constructive diversity awareness. This highlights that harmony does not emerge spontaneously, but is the product of deliberate and strategic social engineering.

Harmony should also be regarded as a national ideal foundational to the continuity of statehood. (Naim, 2016) warns that the absence of harmony may result in social conflict, violence, and national disintegration. When social relations are marked by suspicion and tension, the social cohesion that underpins national unity becomes fragile. In this context, a multicultural approach that foregrounds harmony as a central value is essential for building an inclusive and civilized society (Bahtiar, 2020).

From a structural functionalist perspective, harmony serves as a social mechanism that maintains systemic stability. Every individual and institution is expected to fulfill their roles to foster social equilibrium. A weakening of harmony may disrupt the social system and lead to dysfunction and open conflict. Harmony is not merely a normative concept but a social construction shaped through symbolic interaction, religious values, and collective consciousness. It becomes a crucial element in safeguarding national integration amid diversity. Efforts to build harmony must be systematically pursued through the strengthening of social institutions, multicultural education, and the internalization of tolerance in daily life. In this way, harmony becomes the cornerstone for cultivating an inclusive, just, and dignified Indonesian society.

The values of democracy, tolerance and social harmony are the three main pillars in building a civilized multicultural society. In the findings of this study, the value of democracy is not only interpreted as a system of government based on electoral procedures, as proposed by Schumpeter, but more than that, it is internalized as a life value that fosters equality, participation, and openness in social and educational life. This reinforces the normative views of Hendri B. Mayo (2012) and Alamsyah (2014) that democracy is a way of life that requires every citizen to be socially responsible. Education, in this case, becomes an important medium in shaping the character of critical and democratic learners as emphasized by Widoyoko (2014) and Kurniasih and Sani (2016). Thus, democracy is no longer just an institutional structure, but a social culture that lives in the daily practice of society.

Meanwhile, the value of tolerance in this study is understood not only as an attitude of allowing differences, but as a form of active awareness that leads to respect, acceptance, and openness to diversity. This is in line with UNESCO's definition that tolerance is the foundation of a peaceful and dignified human life, and is reinforced by Baidhawiy (2005) who emphasizes the importance of developing tolerance through religious and cross-cultural education. The findings show that tolerance living in a multicultural society must be institutionalized through curriculum, social practices, and dialogue between groups. Thus, these findings not only strengthen UNESCO's view, but also provide a practical contribution in building social strategies to realize tolerance as an operational value in daily life.

The value of social harmony, as explained by Nugroho and Ni'mah (2018) and Bahtiar (2020), is an ideal condition that shows the stability of relations between individuals and groups. However, this study shows that social harmony is not the result of moral will alone, but rather a social construction that must be consciously shaped through educational mechanisms, strengthening social institutions and cross-cultural communication. In the perspective of structural-functionalism theory, social harmony serves to maintain the order of the societal system. However, this finding also criticizes the approach, which tends to emphasize stability and ignore the role of conflict as a building block of harmony. This research proves that conflict that is handled dialogically can actually strengthen social cohesion and deepen understanding across identities. Therefore, social harmony needs to be seen as a dynamic process that continues to be shaped through participation, empathy and cross-cultural education, not as a static end goal.

Overall, this research confirms that democracy, tolerance and social harmony are not only ethical principles in a multicultural society, but also concrete social and educational strategies. They complement each other in building an inclusive, just and peaceful society. This finding is in line with and at the same time extends Tilaar's (2014) idea that multicultural education should be based on the philosophical foundations of global responsibility, diversity, and social justice. Thus, the contribution of this research is not only to enrich the literature, but also to provide conceptual and practical footing in building a model of education and society based on universal human values.

3.3 Analysis of the Role of Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong in Fostering Multicultural Values Among Students

This study began by distributing questionnaires to 250 students from the Faculty of Health Sciences, which comprises six academic programs. The distribution of respondents by study program indicates that the majority were from the Diploma in Nursing program, accounting for 94 respondents (37.1%), followed by the Bachelor of Nursing with 60 respondents (23.8%) and the Diploma in Midwifery with 43 respondents (17.1%). These figures reflect the predominance of respondents from nursing-based programs—both at the diploma and bachelor's levels—constituting more than half of the total respondent population.

This indicates a significant representation of nursing students in the study, which may influence the tendencies observed in the research findings. Meanwhile, participation from the Bachelor of Pharmacy and Bachelor of Midwifery programs was recorded at 17 (6.7%) and 14 respondents (5.7%) respectively. The lowest number of respondents came from the Bachelor of Hospital Administration program, with a total of 22 students (8.6%). The detailed distribution of respondents by academic program is presented in the following table:

No.	Program Studi	Persentase (%)	Jumlah Responden
	Keperawatan	23,8%	60
	Kebidanan	5,7%	14
	Farmasi	6,7%	17
	D3 Keperawatan	37,1%	94
	D3 Kebidanan	17,1%	43
	Administrasi Rumah Sakit	8,6%	22
		100%	250

Table 1. Table of Respondent Distribution by Study Program

After determining the percentage of respondents, the questionnaire results distributed to each study program were obtained, with the following percentages:

No	Pertanyaan	Ya (%)	Tidak (%)	Tidak tahu (%)
1	Saya memahami tentang nilai-nilai multikulturalisme?	80 %	15%	5%
2	Bagaimana pendapat Anda tentang pentingnya multikulturalisme di lingkungan kampus?	93.75%	6.25%	0
3	saya sering Anda berinteraksi dengan mahasiswa dari latar belakang budaya yang berbeda	75%	25%	0
4	Apakah Anda merasa bahwa keberagaman budaya di kampus meningkatkan rasa saling menghormati?	100%	0	0
5	Saya menerima dan menghargai perbedaan suku, agama, ras, dan budaya di lingkungan kampus.	81.25%	18.75%	0
6	saya melihat keberagaman suku, agama, ras, dan budaya memengaruhi suasana belajar	12.5%	87.5%	0
7	kampus menyediakan program atau kegiatan pembelajaran yang mendukung dan membahas multikulturalisme	93.75%	6.25%	0
8	Saya menghindari perilaku diskriminatif terhadap mahasiswa dari latar belakang yang berbeda.	100%	0	0
9	multikulturalisme mempengaruhi terhadap pembentukan karakter mahasiswa	93.75%	6.25%	0
10	Saya menghormati kebebasan beragama dan beribadah teman-teman saya di kampus.	100%	0	0
11	Apakah Anda merasa toleransi antar mahasiswa sudah diterapkan di lingkungan kampus?	81.25%	18.75%	0
12	Dalam kegiatan kampus, saya cenderung aktif berdiskusi dan menyuarakan pandangan saya secara terbuka.	100%	0	0
13	Saya menjalin hubungan yang harmonis dengan semua teman tanpa memandang suku, agama, ras, dan budaya mereka.	87.5%	12.5%	0
14	Saya tidak pernah pernah mengalami konflik karena perbedaan budaya di kampus	25%	75%	0
15	dosen dan tenaga kependidikan berperan dalam mendorong nilai-nilai multikulturalisme	93.75%	6.25%	0
16	Saya aktif terlibat dalam kegiatan bersama yang mempromosikan persatuan dan kesatuan mahasiswa.	87.5%	12.5%	0
17	Saya mendukung program nilai-nilai multikulturalisme dapat membantu mengurangi diskriminasi di kampus	100%	0	0
18	Saya mendukung program kampus yang bertujuan meningkatkan kerukunan antar mahasiswa.	93.75%	6.25%	0

19	Lingkungan organisasi mahasiswa tempat saya bernaung mendorong terciptanya suasana yang rukun dan inklusif.	100%	0	0
20	Saya bebas bersuara di Lingkungan Kampus (Organisasi dan Ruang Kluiah)	85%	15%	0

Table 2. Questionnaire Results on Multiculturalism and Its Impact at Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong

Based on the survey results presented in Table 3, several key analyses can be drawn regarding students' understanding of multiculturalism and the influence of multicultural values at Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong. The distributed questionnaire was structured into four sub-sections: (1) Students' Understanding of Multicultural Values, (2) The Impact of Multiculturalism on Students' Social Dynamics on Campus, (3) Multiculturalism, Tolerance, and Harmony within Campus Democratic Freedom, and (4) The Role of Institutions and Student Organizations in Fostering a Multicultural Culture. The summarized questionnaire results are presented in Table 3 as follows. After collecting the completed questionnaires, the researchers analyzed and concluded the following:

1. Students' Understanding of Multicultural Values

Students' comprehension of multiculturalism serves as a critical foundation for creating an inclusive and harmonious campus environment. According to the survey data, 80% of respondents reported an understanding of multicultural values, while 15% indicated they did not, and 5% stated they were unsure. These figures reflect a relatively high level of literacy regarding multicultural concepts among students. Furthermore, 93.75% of students considered multiculturalism important within the campus environment, indicating that students not only understand but also value the application of these principles in academic life. These findings align with previous research suggesting that multiculturalism in higher education fosters inclusive and tolerant mindsets toward diversity (Banks & Banks, 2010).

2. The Impact of Multiculturalism on Students' Social Dynamics on Campus

Survey results indicate that intercultural interactions are common within the campus environment, with 75% of students frequently engaging with peers from different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, 100% of students agreed that cultural diversity enhances mutual respect, while 81.25% expressed acceptance and appreciation of ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural differences. These findings suggest that multicultural values are not only understood theoretically but have also been practically applied in students' daily social interactions. Nevertheless, only 12.5% perceived cultural diversity as a factor influencing the academic atmosphere. This indicates that diversity is not yet significantly integrated into academic dynamics and remains predominantly within the socio-cultural sphere. However, 93.75% of students acknowledged the presence of campus programs that support multicultural learning, highlighting a potential to strengthen the positive influence of multiculturalism in student character development.

3. Multiculturalism, Tolerance, and Harmony within Campus Democratic Freedom

Tolerance and harmony are key indicators for assessing the effectiveness of multiculturalism on campus. The survey shows that 100% of students avoid discriminatory behavior and respect their peers' freedom of religion. Inter-student tolerance is considered relatively high (81.25%), and a majority (87.5%) reported maintaining harmonious relationships regardless of cultural background. Furthermore, 100% stated they feel free to express their opinions in campus activities, indicating that campus democracy coexists harmoniously with multicultural values. However, 25% reported having experienced cultural conflict on campus. While relatively low, this figure presents a valuable point for evaluation and reinforces the need for inclusive conflict resolution mechanisms.

4. The Role of Institutions and Student Organizations in Fostering a Multicultural Culture

The successful implementation of multiculturalism is closely linked to the role of educational institutions and student organizations. A total of 93.75% of students stated that faculty members and academic staff actively promote multicultural values. Moreover, 87.5% participate in activities that encourage unity, and 100% support programs aimed at reducing discrimination and enhancing harmony. Student organizations are also perceived as conducive environments for fostering inclusive and harmonious interactions (100%). These findings indicate that the university has systematically carried out its educational and cultural functions in strengthening multicultural values. With 85% of students feeling free to voice their opinions both in student organizations and classrooms, the campus effectively serves as a constructive laboratory of democracy and tolerance.

3.4 Institutional Strategies for Fostering a Multicultural Culture at Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong

A. The Role of Student Organizations and Activity Units (UKM) in the Internalization of Multicultural Values

The role of student organizations and student activity units (UKM) in the internalization of multicultural values among students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong reflects a complex yet transformative dynamic. These organizations serve as strategic platforms for cross-cultural, interreligious, and socio-economic interactions, indirectly stimulating practices of tolerance, cooperation, and empathy across identities. An interview with Puji Handoko, a lecturer of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK), revealed that:

"UKM serves as a social laboratory where students learn to navigate diversity through direct engagement, not merely through theoretical instruction."

This observation is reinforced by Rafi Maulana, the Chair of the Arts and Culture UKM, who noted that their activities are deliberately designed to be inclusive, involving students from various regions and religions in collaborative art projects such as the annual cultural festival.

Similarly, Tiyan Faturahman, UKM supervisor, emphasized that UKMs on campus are not only spaces for talent development but also arenas for cultivating values of tolerance and diversity through cultural approaches "Through inter-UKM collaborative activities, students learn to appreciate differences without compromising their Islamic identity," he stated. Interviews with active members from the Arts and Culture UKM, HMTI UKM, and the Nature Lovers UKM highlighted three flagship programs oriented

toward multicultural values: the Nusantara Cultural Festival, Interfaith and Cultural Dialogues, and the Multicultural Social Expedition in partner villages. The Nusantara Cultural Festival provides a platform for students from diverse ethnic backgrounds to showcase local arts, affirming a collective identity that is diverse yet unified. The Interfaith and Cultural Dialogues engage youth from various religious communities around the campus in open and moderate discussions.

These activities enhance intercultural dialogue capacities while strengthening empathy among groups. In the Multicultural Social Expedition, students from various UKMs collaborate on community service projects—such as environmental and health education, and mangrove planting—that emphasize solidarity in diversity. These initiatives demonstrate that the internalization of multicultural values is not merely theoretical but also practical and dialectical.

Analysis of interview data suggests a strong correlation between active student participation in UKM activities and heightened awareness of tolerance, respect for diversity, and the development of inclusive leadership. Therefore, strengthening multicultural-based student organizations constitutes an essential strategy for cultivating a campus culture that upholds pluralistic values.

These findings align with (Banks & Banks, 2010), who argue that multicultural education must be rooted in participatory experiences, enabling students to actively engage in diverse social realities. Similarly, (Gollnick & Chinn, 1991) underscore the critical role of student organizations in shaping social identity and fostering collective multicultural awareness. The interviews also reveal that active UKM engagement contributes to transforming students' attitudes from exclusivist to inclusivist perspectives.

This is consistent with the research by (Zhang, English et al., 2021), which demonstrated that intercultural social group interactions in campus settings significantly enhance students' intercultural competence. Accordingly, student organizations and UKMs serve not only as channels for talent and interest development but also as strategic instruments in shaping multicultural character aligned with Indonesia's pluralistic societal context.

B. Lecturer-Student Collaboration: A Platform for Strengthening Multicultural Values

Lecturer-student collaboration at Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong has proven to be a strategic element in reinforcing the internalization of multicultural values within the academic environment. An interview with AIK lecturer Adi Hamid Fuad emphasized the pivotal role of faculty in guiding and mentoring student activities as a key to fostering healthy and dialogical cross-cultural understanding “Lecturers are not merely educators but also facilitators of inclusivity, instilling values through shared activities,” he explained.

This collaboration is reflected in three key initiatives: Religious Moderation Training, Cultural and Religious Workshops, and the Multicultural Community Engagement Program. In the Religious Moderation Training, AIK lecturers and students from UKM Dakwah and UKM Seni collaboratively designed training modules emphasizing diversity as a blessing and an opportunity for cooperation. The program employs simulations and case studies that encourage participants to reflect on diversity in social life.

Nur Wahyu Hidayah, a lecturer in Industrial Engineering, noted that the diverse backgrounds of students serve as an integrative force for creating an inclusive and

tolerant academic ecosystem: “We encourage students to leverage diversity as a strength in team-based and cross-disciplinary projects,” she stated. This approach is evident in Interdisciplinary Collaborative Projects, Inclusive Discussion Forums, and the Student Innovation and Culture Week. Students from Industrial Engineering, Law, and Management programs described how they worked in heterogeneous teams to address community-based issues requiring integrated technical, legal, and managerial perspectives.

The Inclusive Discussion Forum, held regularly by the Student Executive Board (BEM), facilitates student dialogue on contemporary issues such as digital intolerance and ethics of diversity in social media. This platform enhances students’ abilities to articulate critical ideas while maintaining respect for differing viewpoints.

During the Student Language and Culture Week, students from various cultural backgrounds presented innovative works rooted in local and global wisdom—fostering cross-cultural value exchange and appreciation through English. These practices indicate that students not only experience multiculturalism passively but also internalize it actively through social and academic engagement.

In the Cultural and Religious Workshops, interdisciplinary collaboration takes the form of discussions and cultural performances exploring universal values in Indonesia’s local traditions. The Multicultural Community Engagement Program, involving cross-departmental lecturers and students, focuses on engagement with multiethnic marginalized communities such as coastal fishers and farmers. These programs have significantly enhanced students’ social empathy and their capacity to bridge differences constructively.

Field observations and interview analyses suggest that structured and reflective collaborative frameworks between lecturers and students deepen and sustain the internalization of multicultural values. These findings resonate with (Montgomery, 2020) in *Higher Education*, who argues that academic-student partnerships in cross-cultural contexts are critical drivers of global competence and social cohesion in multicultural higher education institutions. Thus, the development of a multicultural campus environment depends not only on institutional policy but also on students’ capacity to practice diversity reflectively and strategically.

C. The Role of Curriculum in Shaping Multicultural Character

The curriculum plays a strategic role as an instrument for shaping students’ multicultural character in higher education. At Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong, the integration of multicultural values into the curriculum is carried out not only through strengthened learning content but also through pedagogical approaches and project-based activities. Eka Novriana, a curriculum officer, explained that the curriculum is designed to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of students and communities in terms of race, culture, language, and religion:

“We embed multicultural values thematically in courses such as Nursing Ethics and Therapeutic Communication, and adopt interactive learning methods grounded in multicultural social interactions and the contextualization of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah values, tailored to our students’ diverse cultural and religious profiles.”

Interview results with curriculum developers indicated that the internalization of multicultural values is pursued through thematic integration into subjects such as

Nursing Ethics and Therapeutic Communication, employing social interaction-based cross-cultural learning methods. Furthermore, the curriculum is designed to integrate Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah values contextually, reflecting the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds of students. This approach indicates a clear institutional awareness in cultivating inclusive, culturally responsive, and progressively religious student character within a multicultural academic framework.

The implementation includes three core practices: (1) Cross-Cultural Simulations in Patient Communication, where students engage with patients from different cultural backgrounds in role-play scenarios; (2) Field Projects Based on Local Culture, aimed at understanding health practices within partner village contexts; and (3) Multicultural Reflections in Portfolio Assignments, which require students to critically reflect on differing values and customs encountered during clinical interactions. These practices have shown to improve cultural sensitivity, professional empathy, and adaptability in multicultural contexts.

Analysis of the interviews reveals that the curriculum serves not only as a medium for knowledge transfer but also as an ethical and social formation platform that cultivates globally-minded and humanistic health professionals. A culturally diverse curriculum and cross-group collaborative learning have been shown to enhance social cohesion and intercultural skills in multicultural higher education environments.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that, fundamentally, multiculturalism is a normative perspective that emphasizes the importance of harmonious coexistence among ethnic and cultural groups through the principle of coexistence. In this context, multiculturalism is not merely a reflection of social plurality, but also serves as a normative foundation for building a democratic, just, and civilized society. At Universitas Muhammadiyah Gombong, multicultural values among students are cultivated systemically and structurally through curriculum integration, student organizational activities, and collaborative practices between lecturers and students. A curriculum that is responsive to diversity, student organizations that promote cross-identity interaction, and the contextual reinforcement of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah values collectively foster an inclusive campus atmosphere that is open to cultural, religious, and social differences. Academic collaboration serves as a key factor in creating an educational space that not only transfers knowledge but also nurtures students' social awareness and multicultural ethics. These findings contribute significantly to the development of value-based higher education models and provide a valuable reference for Islamic universities in shaping a young generation that is tolerant, dialogical, and committed to social justice within a pluralistic society.

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