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MULTICULTURAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES IN STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' SOCIAL TOLERANCE

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ABSTRACT

Social tolerance among students is a crucial value in maintaining harmony within a diverse school environment. However, differences in cultural, ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds often lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, discrimination, and low levels of tolerance among students in schools. Therefore, the role of multicultural guidance and counseling services becomes increasingly important in fostering inclusive attitudes, mutual respect, and harmonious social interactions within the educational environment. This study aims to analyze the role of multicultural guidance and counseling services as a strategy to strengthen students' social tolerance. The study employed a qualitative approach using a literature review method by analyzing 23 scholarly articles related to multicultural counseling and social tolerance in educational settings. Data were collected through literature review techniques and analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The results indicate that multicultural guidance and counseling services can enhance students' understanding of diversity, empathy, mutual respect, and positive social interactions among peers from different backgrounds. The implementation of culturally responsive counseling programs also contributes to reducing prejudice, preventing social conflict, and strengthening harmonious relationships among students. In addition, these services encourage the development of a more inclusive, respectful, and supportive school climate. This study provides practical implications for school counselors in developing programs that support the creation of a tolerant and inclusive school environment.

Keywords: Multicultural Counseling; Social Tolerance; Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Social and cultural diversity is a fundamental characteristic of both global society and Indonesia. In the educational context, schools serve as social spaces where individuals from diverse religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds come together. Ideally, this diversity should serve as a social asset in fostering mutual respect and enriching students' learning experiences. However, in reality, diversity often gives rise to dynamics of intolerance, group exclusivity, stereotypes, and even social discrimination.

Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicates that approximately one-third of students across 79 countries feel they lack a sense of belonging at school, and nearly 20% of students feel like outsiders in their school environment. This situation highlights the presence of social distance and the potential for exclusion in student

interactions. Additionally, a UNESCO report on school climate reveals that bullying remains a significant global issue, with students who experience bullying tending to exhibit low levels of safety and social acceptance. This phenomenon demonstrates that social tolerance is not a condition that forms automatically but requires a structured and sustained educational process.

Indonesia, as a multicultural nation, faces similar challenges. Diversity in ethnicity, religion, race, and culture constitutes a national treasure that defines the nation's identity. However, this diversity also harbors the potential for conflict if not managed through systematic and sustained values education. Various studies indicate that intolerant attitudes among students remain a significant issue . The phenomenon of students grouping based on shared identities is still frequently observed. Data from the Setara Institute (2023) reveals that intolerant practices continue to pose a threat in the educational sphere, including in the form of identity-based discrimination and restrictions on religious expression. Furthermore, the results of the National Assessment indicate that approximately 25% of students in Indonesia remain at risk of exposure to intolerance, signaling that values of respect for diversity have not yet been fully internalized within our education system.

A survey conducted by PPIM UIN Jakarta (2017) found that some Muslim students in Indonesia exhibit a certain degree of intolerant attitudes toward other religious groups. The report indicates that intolerance does not occur solely in the realm of discourse but also has the potential to influence patterns of social interaction within educational settings. Similar findings were reported by the Wahid Foundation (2018), which highlighted an increase in religious exclusivism among the younger generation. This situation suggests that the internalization of multicultural values has not yet fully permeated students' social practices.

A similar phenomenon is also evident in students' social interactions at school. Several studies have found a tendency for students to form groups based on shared religion or ethnicity. Elizar (2022) notes that "grouping based on specific identities can reinforce ingroup bias and hinder social openness." This pattern aligns with Social Identity Theory, which explains that individuals tend to identify with specific groups and distinguish themselves from others. If not positively guided, this tendency can develop into social prejudice. Various cases in Indonesia also indicate a lack of sensitivity toward diversity. The case of the mandatory hijab policy for non-Muslim female students at SMKN 2 Padang (Kompas.com, 2021) highlights discriminatory practices within school policies. Additionally, the bullying case in Bantul (CNN Indonesia, 2022) demonstrates that bullying is often linked to differences in social identity. This phenomenon indicates that intolerance does not only manifest in the form of major conflicts but also in the form of social exclusion and stereotypes.

Lanny's (2021) research indicates that "a lack of multicultural understanding results in low levels of students' social empathy toward different groups." Meanwhile, Fitria Ningsih (2022) emphasizes that "the internalization of tolerance values requires an affective approach and direct experience, not merely the transfer of cognitive knowledge." This means that normative teaching within the curriculum is insufficient to foster a robust multicultural character. The gap between the ideal values outlined in the curriculum and students' social realities indicates a need for more practical interventions. While tolerance is indeed taught in Pancasila and Citizenship Education, daily social practices are often still marked by

stereotypes, jokes with ethnic, religious, or racial undertones, and psychological distance between groups. This situation indicates that social tolerance cannot be built through a cognitive approach alone but requires reinforcement in the affective and social behavioral aspects.

From a guidance and counseling perspective, this situation underscores the urgency of multicultural counseling services. Irmanozi (2024) states that "multicultural counseling services are effective in enhancing awareness of diversity and reducing students' social prejudices." This statement is supported by Usmawati's (2023) findings, which indicate that "multicultural service strategies contribute to fostering mutual respect among students." Thus, the phenomenon of low multicultural sensitivity in Indonesia is not merely a social issue but a matter of character education. Without systematic intervention, the potential for social polarization among the younger generation may increase. Therefore, strengthening multicultural counseling serves as a relevant preventive and curative strategy for building a school culture that is inclusive, dialogic, and respectful of differences.

Furthermore, Srimuliati et al. (2025) found that students' levels of tolerance tended to be low prior to the intervention, with students feeling more comfortable interacting with groups sharing similar identities. Consequently, cultural differences often trigger negative labeling and conflict. Heni Alfiaz et al. (2025) also demonstrated that low tolerance correlates with increased social prejudice and weakened intergroup cohesion. Similar findings were reported by Az- Zahra et al. (2024), who stated that a less inclusive learning environment can hinder cross-cultural interaction. A number of studies reinforce the urgency of addressing this issue through a systematic educational approach. "Discrimination among students arises due to a lack of understanding of differences in background" (Leppriani Lolok et al., 2025). Additionally, it was found that "students' tolerance levels were in the low category before receiving multicultural services" (Srimuliati et al., 2025). These findings indicate that social tolerance does not develop automatically but requires planned intervention.

Beyond its impact on social relationships, low tolerance also affects the learning environment. A non-inclusive environment can reduce psychological safety, hinder student participation, and increase interpersonal conflict. In the long term, these conditions can foster an exclusive mindset that carries over into community life. Therefore, multicultural guidance and counseling serve as a relevant strategy, both as a preventive and curative measure, in building an inclusive educational environment. Based on this background, this study aims to systematically analyze the role of multicultural guidance and counseling services in strengthening students' social tolerance through a literature review approach. This study is expected to contribute to the development of guidance and counseling services and support the creation of a harmonious school environment that values diversity.

Based on this background, this study aims to systematically analyze the role of multicultural guidance and counseling in enhancing student tolerance in schools through a literature review approach. This study is expected to provide conceptual contributions to the development of guidance and counseling theory and practice, as well as serve as a basis for educational policy recommendations oriented toward the creation of an inclusive, harmonious, and socially just school environment.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a literature review approach to examine various concepts and empirical findings regarding the role of multicultural guidance and counseling in enhancing students' social tolerance. Data sources were obtained from relevant national and international journal articles and scholarly books, collected via databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and DOAJ using relevant keywords. Through this process, a total of 23 articles aligned with the study's focus were identified.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach through the stages of literature collection, selection, and grouping, followed by content analysis and synthesis to identify patterns and trends in the research findings. By reviewing various previous research findings, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the role of multicultural guidance and counseling services in enhancing student tolerance, including intervention methods, implementation mechanisms, and their impact on social relationships within the school. Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight the importance of reinforcing multicultural values and counseling services as preventive strategies in fostering inclusive social behavior, thereby enabling students to develop an attitude of mutual respect and prevent the emergence of intolerance within the educational environment.

3. RESULTS

Based on a literature review of 23 scientific articles, this study indicates that multicultural guidance and counseling services play a significant role in strengthening students' social tolerance. The findings from various studies are not isolated but complement one another in explaining how these services contribute to the development of inclusive social attitudes within the school environment.

Research conducted by Della Puspita, Khalisa Maulidina, Wulan Puspita, and Fikri Al-Bukhori (2025) reveals that guidance and counseling services can foster tolerance among students by enhancing empathy, acceptance of differences, and interpersonal skills. These findings indicate that guidance and counseling services not only serve as a means of resolving individual problems but also play a preventive and developmental role in shaping students' social character to be more open to diversity.

In line with these findings, research conducted by Heni Alfiaz, Lani Diana, Aurilia Nikmatul Maula, Nila Auliana Nur Farikhah, Suhaibudin, and Nora Yuniar Setyaputri (2023) reinforces that the implementation of multicultural guidance and counseling services through various programs, such as orientation activities, workshops, and multicultural-based extracurricular activities, has proven effective in enhancing empathy and reducing conflicts among students resulting from cultural differences. Moreover, participatory and experience-based approaches are also considered capable of helping students understand differences more concretely, thereby making the process of internalizing the value of tolerance more effective.

On the other hand, the dynamics of students' social interactions are influenced not only by cultural factors but also by technological advancements. This is evident in a study conducted by Wenny Audina Kartikasari, Firman, and Yarmis Syukur (2023), which shows that phubbing behavior can diminish the quality of interpersonal relationships and increase

feelings of loneliness among students. These findings offer an additional perspective that efforts to improve social tolerance must account for changes in students' communication patterns in the digital age, meaning that multicultural counseling approaches must be adaptable to the times.

Furthermore, research by Tabita Tindie Yuliana, Aulia Rizkika Saraswati, and Bakhrudin All Habsy (2025) emphasizes that multicultural counseling plays a crucial role in helping individuals understand their cultural background and psychosocial needs during the counseling process. This indicates that the success of counseling services is determined not only by the techniques used but also by the counselor's ability to fully understand the student's cultural context.

Furthermore, these findings are supported by Elizar's (2018) research, which confirms that the implementation of multicultural counseling is key to enhancing the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services in schools. Elizar emphasizes that without cultural sensitivity, the counseling process is prone to communication barriers, misunderstandings, and suboptimal outcomes. Thus, understanding students' cultural backgrounds is a crucial aspect in the delivery of counseling services.

When examined as a whole, these various studies reveal a consistent pattern of findings. First, multicultural guidance and counseling services have been shown to enhance empathy and acceptance of differences. Second, these services are effective in reducing social conflicts and prejudice among students. Third, experience-based approaches and direct interaction are key factors in the success of these services. Fourth, external factors such as technological advancements must also be considered when designing relevant interventions.

Overall, findings from various studies consistently indicate that multicultural guidance and counseling services are an effective strategy for strengthening students' social tolerance. These services contribute to building empathy, increasing openness to differences, and developing the ability to interact harmoniously in diverse environments.

4. DISCUSSION

Social tolerance is a key aspect of multicultural life that emphasizes an individual's ability to accept, respect, and coexist with differences. In the context of education, tolerance is not only understood as a normative concept but as a social competency that needs to be systematically developed through the educational process. Theoretically, social tolerance is closely related to an individual's ability to constructively manage differences in values, cultures, and identities. However, the development of a tolerant attitude does not occur automatically; rather, it is influenced by social interactions, experiences, and structured educational interventions.

The findings of this study indicate that prior to the intervention, students tended to exhibit low levels of tolerance, characterized by a tendency to form groups based on shared identity and the emergence of negative labeling behaviors toward other groups. This phenomenon can be explained through the perspective of Social Identity Theory, which states that individuals naturally categorize themselves into specific social groups (ingroups) and distinguish themselves from other groups (outgroups). This tendency has the potential to lead to social bias and prejudice if not balanced by adequate cross-cultural understanding. As

stated by Elizar (2022), "grouping based on specific identities can reinforce ingroup bias and hinder social openness." Thus, the low level of tolerance found in this study indicates the dominance of group identity that has not been balanced by multicultural awareness.

Furthermore, the results of this study show that following the implementation of multicultural guidance and counseling services, there was a significant increase in tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for diversity among students. This indicates that a multicultural guidance and counseling approach plays a strategic role in developing students' social competencies. Conceptually, multicultural guidance and counseling emphasizes the development of cultural awareness, sensitivity to differences, and the ability to understand others' perspectives. Irmanozi (2024) states that multicultural counseling services are effective in enhancing students' awareness of diversity and reducing social prejudice. This statement aligns with research findings showing a shift in students' attitudes toward greater inclusivity following the intervention.

The effectiveness of this service is also closely tied to the use of a group counseling approach that fosters open dialogue among students. From a theoretical perspective, group counseling facilitates the exchange of experiences, self-reflection, and deeper social learning. Direct interaction among group members encourages students to understand differences more empathetically, rather than merely cognitively. Ningsih (2022) emphasizes that the internalization of tolerance values requires an affective approach and direct experience, not just the transfer of cognitive knowledge. Thus, the success of the intervention in this study indicates that direct experience through social interaction makes a significant contribution to shaping attitudes of tolerance.

The findings of this study are also consistent with various previous research results indicating the effectiveness of multicultural guidance and counseling in enhancing students' social tolerance. Srimuliati et al. (2025) revealed that students' tolerance levels were in the low category before receiving multicultural services, while Alfiaz et al. (2025) found an increase in students' tolerance scores following the intervention. Furthermore, Az-Zahra et al. (2024) stated that multicultural interventions can significantly reduce social prejudice. The consistency of these findings indicates that multicultural guidance and counseling is a relevant and effective approach to addressing issues of intolerance in educational settings.

In a broader context, the increased social tolerance resulting from this intervention not only impacts interpersonal relationships among students but also contributes to the creation of a more inclusive and harmonious school climate. An inclusive school environment can enhance students' psychological sense of security, encourage active participation in the learning process, and reduce the potential for social conflict. This aligns with the findings of Az-Zahra et al. (2024), who state that an inclusive learning environment influences increased cross-cultural social interaction among students.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations that should be noted. As a literature review, this study relies on secondary data sources drawn from various previous studies, and thus does not directly reflect empirical conditions in the field. Furthermore, the number of articles analyzed is limited to 23 sources, which allows for variations in context and methodology that may influence the synthesis results. Therefore, future research is recommended to use an empirical approach, such as experiments or quasi-experiments, to directly test the

effectiveness of multicultural guidance and counseling services within specific school contexts.

Thus, the findings of this study confirm that multicultural guidance and counseling serve not only as an educational intervention but also as a transformational strategy in shaping students' character to be inclusive, empathetic, and capable of living in a diverse society. This approach is becoming increasingly relevant amid the growing social complexity of multicultural societies; therefore, its implementation within the education system must be continuously strengthened and developed.

5. CONCLUSION

Overall, improvements in students' multicultural attitudes are achieved through various forms of guidance and counseling services focused on direct interaction and real-life experiences among students. Such services include multicultural-based group counseling, which provides a space for students to engage in dialogue, share experiences, and understand differing perspectives—thereby fostering empathy and reducing social prejudice.

Additionally, classroom-based services centered on diversity play a crucial role in building students' foundational understanding of tolerance, particularly when conducted through participatory methods such as discussions, case studies, and shared reflections. These services help students recognize the importance of valuing differences in their daily school environment.

Effective services in instilling multicultural awareness from an early age. These activities provide a broader understanding of diversity and prepare students to interact in heterogeneous environments. Furthermore, cross-cultural extracurricular activities help strengthen multicultural attitudes by offering more natural social experiences through collaboration and direct interaction among students.

Meanwhile, individual counseling services sensitive to students' cultural backgrounds help develop self-understanding, acceptance of differences, and reduce barriers to cross-cultural communication. Open cross- al dialogue activities also serve as an important form of service in fostering openness, mutual respect, and building healthy communication among students from diverse backgrounds.

Thus, these various forms of services collectively contribute to enhancing students' multicultural attitudes by providing direct experiences, meaningful social interactions, and reflective processes that foster the growth of tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for diversity in daily life.

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