



Strengthening national character through multicultural-based civic education learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the internalization of national values through multicultural-based Civic Education learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. This research employed a qualitative case study conducted in several public and private elementary schools in Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The research participants consisted of Civic Education teachers, school principals, and fifth-grade students selected purposively, while informants were identified through snowball sampling until data saturation was reached. Data were collected via classroom observations, interviews, and documentation, and then analyzed using reduction, display, and conclusion techniques. Findings indicate that values such as love for the country, tolerance, and cooperation are taught through contextual and collaborative learning strategies, such as group discussions, reflective activities, and experiential learning. The role of teachers and school leadership is crucial in fostering an inclusive environment through supportive school programs and participatory learning practices. Students also exhibited positive changes, including respect for diverse opinions and collaboration with peers from different backgrounds. Despite challenges related to socio-cultural diversity and varying levels of awareness, strategies such as contextual learning, teacher guidance, and inclusive programs enhance multicultural education. Therefore, multicultural-based Civic Education in elementary schools is vital for promoting an inclusive national character and respect for diversity.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:

12 January 2026

Accepted:

11 March 2026

Published:

31 March 2026

KEYWORDS

multicultural education;
civic education;
national values;
multicultural learning;
Madrasah Ibtidaiyah



1. Introduction

Education fundamentally functions as a process of human cultivation and humanization aimed at shaping individuals who possess knowledge, character, and social responsibility. In the context of Indonesia as a multicultural nation characterized by ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, education plays a strategic role in fostering national cohesion and social harmony. Educational institutions are expected not only to develop students' cognitive



competencies but also to internalize values of tolerance, inclusivity, and national identity as foundations for peaceful coexistence (Wibowo, 2024).

In recent years, strengthening national character has become increasingly urgent amid globalization, digital transformation, and the rapid spread of disinformation that potentially threatens social cohesion. Various social phenomena, including moral degradation, intolerance, and exclusivist attitudes among younger generations, indicate challenges in cultivating inclusive citizenship values within educational environments (Bala & Sanjaya, 2025). Therefore, education systems are required to adopt approaches that promote respect for diversity while reinforcing national values rooted in Pancasila.

Multicultural education emerges as an important educational paradigm in addressing these challenges. It emphasizes equality, recognition of cultural diversity, and the development of democratic attitudes that enable students to live harmoniously in pluralistic societies (Banks & McGee Banks, 2016). Within Indonesian education, this paradigm is particularly relevant when integrated into Civic Education (PKn), which explicitly aims to develop responsible, ethical, and democratic citizens.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), as Islamic-based primary educational institutions, occupy a unique and strategic position in implementing character education grounded in both national and religious values. Learning in MI integrates cognitive development with spiritual and moral formation based on Islamic teachings that promote *rahmatan lil 'alamin* principles, emphasizing compassion, justice, and social harmony (Awalita, 2024). Through this integrative framework, MI has strong potential to cultivate national identity alongside religious moderation from an early age.

Civic Education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is a key subject for instilling values such as patriotism, social responsibility, democratic participation, and respect for human rights. Ideally, PKn learning becomes a space where national values and Islamic ethical teachings intersect, enabling students to understand diversity as both a social reality and a religious mandate (Nurmansyah et al., 2024). However, the practical implementation of PKn learning in many madrasahs still varies depending on pedagogical capacity and contextual adaptation.

Despite its strategic role, the implementation of Civic Education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah continues to face several pedagogical and structural challenges. Learning practices often remain textual and teacher-centered, limiting students' opportunities to engage critically with issues of diversity and citizenship (Mulyoto et al., 2020). As a result, students' understanding of multicultural realities tends to remain superficial and normative rather than reflective and experiential.

Additionally, some educators still perceive multiculturalism narrowly or misunderstand it as cultural relativism, which reduces its pedagogical potential (Pohan et al., 2024). Limited access to contextual teaching materials, insufficient

professional development, and inadequate training in multicultural pedagogy further hinder effective implementation. These challenges indicate the need for innovative learning approaches that meaningfully integrate national character education with multicultural perspectives.

Previous studies have demonstrated that multicultural approaches in civic education contribute positively to students' tolerance, solidarity, and appreciation of diversity (Istianah et al., 2024). Empirical findings show that integrating multicultural and Islamic values strengthens national awareness and social empathy among madrasah students (Sholeh et al., 2025). Similarly, project-based civic learning has been shown to enhance civic responsibility and collaborative attitudes in primary education contexts (Taufiqurrahman, 2023; Puwanti et al., 2025).

International studies further reinforce these findings. Research conducted in minority educational settings highlights the importance of dialogical learning spaces in helping students negotiate identity and citizenship within multicultural societies (Harjatanaya, 2025). Studies in European contexts also emphasize the transformative role of religious education teachers in fostering tolerance and national belonging among students (Yağdı, 2025). Moreover, systematic reviews indicate that integrating Islamic education with multicultural citizenship promotes intercultural dialogue and democratic character development globally (Fahmi et al., 2025).

However, most previous studies primarily focus on measuring the outcomes of multicultural education or examining curriculum integration separately. Limited research critically analyzes how multicultural education functions as an integrative pedagogical instrument within Civic Education learning, specifically in the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. This gap indicates the need for deeper conceptual and contextual analysis linking multicultural education, Islamic values, and national character formation simultaneously.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to critically analyze the role of multicultural education as an instrument for strengthening national character within Civic Education learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. This research seeks to explore how multicultural principles can be conceptually and pedagogically integrated into PKn learning to foster inclusive citizenship grounded in moderate Islamic values.

This study is grounded in Banks' multicultural education theory as the grand theoretical framework guiding the analysis of diversity, equality, and democratic values in educational contexts. This theory provides the conceptual basis for understanding how multicultural principles can be integrated into educational practices in pluralistic societies (Banks, 2008, 2015).

At the middle-range level, this study employs civic education and national character education frameworks as analytical lenses to examine how multicultural

values are implemented in Civic Education learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. These frameworks guide the analysis of how educational practices foster students' civic responsibility, tolerance, and national identity (Lickona, 1991). Previous studies also indicate that integrating character values into learning processes in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah can effectively strengthen students' responsibility, discipline, and moral development through structured curricula and instructional strategies (Kulsum et al., 2024).

The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically by providing an integrative framework for civic education that aligns national character development with multicultural awareness. Ultimately, this study positions madrasahs as strategic institutions in cultivating a generation that is intellectually competent, morally grounded, and capable of sustaining national unity within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a field research design to investigate the role of multicultural education in strengthening national character through Civic Education (PKn) learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. A qualitative approach was chosen to enable an in-depth understanding of educational practices, classroom interactions, and the internalization of multicultural values within the madrasah context (Saefullah, 2024).

Furthermore, the selection of informants was expanded through snowball sampling to obtain richer, more in-depth data, and the process continued until data saturation was reached, indicating that no new significant information emerged from additional participants. In total, six informants from two Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Sleman Regency participated in this study, consisting of two Civic Education teachers responsible for teaching PKn, two madrasah principals who provided perspectives on school policies and programs related to multicultural and character education, and two fifth-grade students who shared their learning experiences in Civic Education classes. The teachers held bachelor's degrees in education and were actively involved in implementing PKn learning, while the principals held master's degrees in education or educational management. The students, aged 11, provided insights into how multicultural values and national character were experienced and understood in classroom learning.

The research was conducted in several public and private Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in Civic Education learning and their relevance to the research objectives. The participants included madrasah principals, homeroom teachers responsible for teaching Civic Education (PKn), and fifth-grade students who directly experienced the learning

process. These participants were considered capable of providing comprehensive information regarding the implementation of multicultural education and its role in strengthening national character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations focused on how teachers integrated multicultural values and national character education into Civic Education learning activities, including teaching strategies, classroom interactions, and students' participation in discussions related to diversity and citizenship. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, principals, and students to explore their perspectives and experiences regarding the implementation of multicultural education in PKn learning. Document analysis was carried out by examining lesson plans, teaching materials, learning modules, and school policy documents related to Civic Education programs.

The research instruments consisted of observation protocols, interview guides, and document analysis sheets developed based on the theoretical framework of multicultural education and civic education. The instruments were designed to identify aspects such as recognition of cultural diversity, democratic participation, tolerance, and the development of national character values in classroom learning.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis techniques. The analysis process involved several stages, including data reduction, data categorization, data interpretation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was carried out by comparing information obtained from different sources and data collection techniques. Through this process, the study aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of how multicultural education contributes to strengthening national character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analysis process involved several stages, including data reduction, data coding and categorization, interpretation of emerging themes, and drawing conclusions. To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from different participants and data collection techniques. In addition, member checking was conducted with several informants to confirm the accuracy of the data and interpretations (Kabanga et al., 2023).

3. Results

3.1 Integration of multicultural values in civic education learning

The findings indicate that the integration of multicultural values in Civic Education (PKn) learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah occurs through several key practices, including the promotion of tolerance, respect for diversity, cooperation,

and national identity awareness. These values are integrated into classroom instruction, collaborative learning activities, and school programs that emphasize unity in diversity.

Classroom observations revealed that teachers incorporate multicultural values into learning materials and classroom discussions. Civic Education lessons frequently include topics related to cultural diversity, national unity, and social responsibility. Teachers also use interactive learning strategies such as group discussions and collaborative assignments to encourage students to respect different opinions and work cooperatively with their peers.

This practice is reflected in the statement of one Civic Education teacher (R1), who explained:

"...In my civic education classes, I always try to instill national values such as love for the country, cooperation, and tolerance through classroom activities. For example, when discussing unity, I invite students to talk about cultural diversity in Indonesia and how we can remain united despite our differences. I also use group work so that students learn to cooperate and respect each other's opinions..."

Similarly, another teacher (R2) emphasized the importance of adapting learning strategies to students' diverse social and cultural backgrounds. According to the teacher, storytelling about national figures and reflective activities are often used to strengthen students' understanding of national identity and tolerance.

"Our students come from different backgrounds, so I try to adapt my teaching so that everyone feels valued. I often use stories about national figures such as Ki Hajar Dewantara and R.A. Kartini to foster a sense of nationalism. After the lesson, I encourage students to reflect on how they can maintain unity in the school environment..."

These findings indicate that teachers integrate multicultural values through contextual learning strategies, including discussion, reflection, and collaborative activities that allow students to experience the meaning of cooperation and respect for diversity directly. In addition to classroom learning, the integration of multicultural values is also supported by school policies and programs. Interviews with school principals revealed that madrasahs implement several activities aimed at strengthening national values and multicultural awareness among students.

One school principal (R3) explained that the madrasah organizes programs such as National Week, speech competitions on the theme of unity, and cross-class activities that promote the value of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

"...We have several programs that support the strengthening of national values, such as National Week, speech competitions on unity, and cross-

class activities with the theme of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. In these activities, teachers guide students to understand the meaning of unity and diversity...

Another principal (R4) stated that multicultural values are reinforced not only through classroom instruction but also through extracurricular activities and teacher role modeling.

"...We have a program called 'Madrasah Love for the Homeland' which includes activities such as singing regional songs, learning about national heroes, and community service. Teachers are also encouraged to model tolerance and respect so that students can learn from the school environment..."

Student perspectives also demonstrate how multicultural values are experienced in Civic Education learning. Students reported that classroom activities encourage them to respect differences and cooperate with classmates from diverse backgrounds.

One student (R5) explained that discussions and group work help them learn to appreciate different opinions.

"...In civics class, we often discuss love for the country and cooperation. Through group discussions, I learn to listen to my friends' opinions and respect them even when they are different..."

Similarly, another student (R6) described learning activities that help them understand the concept of unity in diversity.

"...I like it when we create posters about unity and diversity. From that activity, I learned that Indonesia has many cultures and ethnic groups, but we are still one nation..."

Overall, the findings show that the integration of multicultural values in Civic Education learning occurs through classroom instruction, collaborative learning activities, and school programs that promote tolerance, cooperation, and national identity among students.

3.2 The role of teachers and the madrasah environment in building multicultural awareness and national character

The findings of this study indicate that teachers and the madrasah environment play an important role in fostering multicultural awareness and strengthening national character among students. Teachers contribute to this process through contextual learning strategies, role modeling, and classroom interactions that encourage respect for diversity. At the same time, the madrasah environment supports the internalization of multicultural values through school culture, institutional programs, and daily social interactions among students.

Interviews with Civic Education teachers revealed that teachers actively integrate multicultural values into classroom activities by connecting learning materials with students' real-life experiences. One teacher (R1) explained that

discussions about cultural differences are frequently used to help students understand the importance of mutual respect.

“...In civic education lessons, I always try to foster mutual respect and appreciation for differences by relating the subject matter to students' daily lives. For example, when discussing unity, I ask them to share stories about different customs or habits in their homes, and then we discuss the importance of respecting one another. Through this activity, students learn that differences are not a barrier to cooperation...”

Similarly, another teacher (R2) described the use of project-based learning and collaborative discussions as strategies to strengthen multicultural awareness and national character among students.

“...The strategies I often use are project-based learning and group discussions. For example, I ask students to create posters about diversity in Indonesia or perform short plays about tolerance. Through these activities, students learn national values in a fun and contextual way, and they become more accustomed to respecting different opinions...”

These findings indicate that teachers play an active role in promoting multicultural awareness by using contextual and participatory learning strategies. Through activities such as storytelling, discussion, and creative projects, students are encouraged to reflect on cultural diversity and practice tolerance in their interactions with classmates.

In addition to the role of teachers, the madrasah environment also contributes to the development of multicultural awareness and national character. Interviews with school leaders revealed that institutional policies and school programs are designed to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

One school principal (R3) explained that the madrasah promotes a school culture that emphasizes moderation, cooperation, and respect for diversity through both academic and extracurricular activities.

“...At our madrasah, we encourage teachers to instill multicultural values not only in subject lessons but also through daily activities such as congregational prayers, community service, and cross-class collaboration. We also organize teacher training so that educators can integrate national and multicultural values into their teaching...”

Another principal (R4) emphasized that several institutional programs have been developed to strengthen students' awareness of diversity and national identity.

“...We organize programs such as Inclusive Madrasah and Tolerance Day, where students interact across classes and present cultural traditions from different regions. We also hold national ceremonies, community service activities, and social programs to create a friendly and inclusive school environment...”

These programs demonstrate the role of the madrasah in creating a social environment that supports the internalization of multicultural values through collective activities and institutional support.

Student interviews and classroom observations further illustrate how these practices influence students' attitudes and behavior. Students reported that teachers consistently encourage them to respect peers from different backgrounds and cooperate during classroom and school activities. One student (R5) explained:

"...Our teacher often tells us that we must respect our friends even if they come from different ethnic groups or have different customs. In class, we are taught not to mock friends who speak differently or have different habits. We are encouraged to help each other and work together..."

Another student (R6) described how school activities help them develop cooperation and appreciation for diversity.

"...At school, we often work in groups and participate in class cleanliness competitions. From these activities, I learned to cooperate with friends from different regions. Sometimes we also perform regional dances during national celebrations, and I realized that differences allow us to learn from each other...."

Classroom observations supported these statements. During group discussions and collaborative assignments, students were observed listening to different opinions, sharing responsibilities, and working cooperatively with peers from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Students also participated enthusiastically in collective activities such as classroom cleanliness programs, cultural performances, and collaborative projects. These observations indicate that the interaction between teachers' instructional practices and the madrasah environment contributes to the development of students' multicultural awareness and cooperative attitudes.

3.3 Challenges and strategies for strengthening multicultural education in civic education learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

The analysis of interview and observation data identified several challenges in implementing multicultural education in Civic Education learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Based on the responses of teachers, school leaders, and students, three main challenges were identified: (1) differences in students' social and cultural backgrounds, (2) limited instructional time to explore multicultural values, and (3) the need to strengthen an inclusive school culture that fully supports multicultural learning.

The first challenge relates to the diversity of students' backgrounds and learning characteristics. Teachers reported that students come from different social and cultural environments, which sometimes affects how they understand national values and interact with peers. One teacher (R1) explained:

“...The main obstacle I face is the diversity of students’ abilities and backgrounds. Some students quickly understand the values of unity and nationality, while others tend to be more individualistic. Because of this, teachers need to guide them more carefully so that they understand the importance of respecting differences...”

The second challenge concerns the limited time available for Civic Education lessons. Teachers explained that the available learning time is often insufficient to explore multicultural values in depth, especially when the curriculum also requires the delivery of conceptual knowledge related to citizenship.

“...Another challenge is the limited time in class. Sometimes the lesson must focus on completing the material, so multicultural values cannot always be discussed in depth. Therefore, teachers need to integrate these values into various learning activities...” (R1)

The third challenge is related to the need to strengthen an inclusive school culture continuously. School leaders indicated that although the madrasah promotes values of tolerance and cooperation, some members of the school community still need time to adapt to diversity in everyday interactions fully. One school principal (R3) stated:

“...The biggest challenge for the school is building a truly inclusive madrasah culture. Some members of the school community are not yet fully accustomed to diversity. Therefore, we continue to develop programs that encourage interaction and cooperation among students...”

In addition to identifying challenges, the findings also reveal several strategies implemented by teachers and schools to strengthen multicultural education in Civic Education learning. Three main strategies were identified from the data: (1) contextual and experience-based learning strategies, (2) the development of inclusive school programs, and (3) strengthening teacher competence through professional development.

Teachers reported that contextual learning strategies are frequently used to help students understand multicultural values through real-life experiences. For example, teachers encourage students to share cultural stories, discuss traditions from different regions, and reflect on the importance of unity in diversity. One teacher (R2) explained:

“...I adapt my teaching methods to the social and cultural backgrounds of my students. For example, if there are students from different regions, I ask them to share stories about traditions in their hometowns. Then we discuss the national values that can be learned from those traditions...”

Another strategy involves the development of school programs that promote cooperation and inclusivity among students. School leaders described several activities designed to strengthen multicultural awareness through collective experiences. One principal (R4) stated:

“...We organize various activities such as community service, inter-class competitions, and programs related to diversity. These activities allow students to interact with friends from different backgrounds and learn to work together...”

In addition to instructional strategies and school programs, teachers also play an important role in mediating conflicts and guiding students when misunderstandings occur. Student interviews revealed that teachers often provide direct guidance when students experience disagreements or difficulties in understanding differences. One student (R5) explained:

“...Sometimes it is difficult when friends have different opinions or habits. However, our teacher always reminds us to respect each other. If there is a conflict, the teacher invites us to discuss it together so that we can understand each other....”

Similarly, another student (R6) described how teachers help them understand cultural differences among classmates.

“...At first, I was confused when friends from other regions spoke differently. However, the teacher explained that each region has its own customs, and we should respect them. After that, I started to understand and accept those differences...”

Classroom observations also supported these findings. During group discussions and collaborative learning activities, teachers were observed guiding students to listen to different opinions, respect diverse perspectives, and cooperate in completing shared tasks. These practices indicate that teachers and school programs play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of multicultural education and strengthening students' understanding of diversity in the madrasah environment.

4. Discussion

4.1. Integration of multicultural values in civic education learning

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of multicultural values in Civic Education (PKn) learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah plays an important role in strengthening students' national character. The results show that multicultural values such as tolerance, respect for diversity, cooperation, and social responsibility are not only introduced through conceptual explanations but are also internalized through classroom interactions, collaborative learning activities, and school programs. Learning strategies such as group discussions, collaborative assignments, and reflective activities enable students to directly experience the meaning of cooperation and respect for differences in their daily learning processes. These practices indicate that Civic Education functions not only as a subject that transmits civic knowledge but also as a medium for shaping inclusive attitudes and strengthening students' national identity.

The emergence of these findings can be understood through the perspective of multicultural education theory, which emphasizes equality, recognition of diversity, and the development of democratic attitudes among learners (Banks, 2008; Banks, 2015). Learning environments that encourage dialogue, cooperation, and critical reflection allow students to understand differences and develop respect for others. The findings of this study support this theoretical perspective, as teachers intentionally integrate multicultural values into learning activities by encouraging students to discuss cultural diversity, work collaboratively with peers, and reflect on their roles as citizens in a pluralistic society (Nieto & Bode, 2018).

The results of this study are also consistent with previous research. For example, research by (Muhajir et al., 2025) found that the internalization of multicultural values in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Guntur Nusantara in Denpasar contributed to the development of a school environment that respects diversity. Programs such as the *P5 Project Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and the celebration of religious holidays provided opportunities for students to interact and collaborate across cultural and religious backgrounds, thereby strengthening tolerance and social cohesion. Similarly, Mardhiah et al. (2024) reported that multicultural education contributes to the development of students' multicultural competence, which plays a significant role in shaping inclusive and democratic national character.

The interview data in this study further reinforce these findings. Teachers emphasized that contextual learning strategies, such as discussions, storytelling about national figures, and reflective activities, help students understand the importance of respecting differences and maintaining unity. Students also reported that collaborative activities, such as group discussions and poster-making projects related to unity in diversity, allowed them to practice tolerance and cooperation in real classroom situations. These experiences demonstrate that experiential and participatory learning approaches are effective in facilitating the internalization of multicultural and national values among students.

However, the findings also reveal several challenges in implementing multicultural-based Civic Education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Some teachers experience difficulties in developing innovative learning strategies that effectively integrate multicultural perspectives into classroom instruction. In addition, limited professional training opportunities and learning resources may reduce teachers' ability to implement multicultural learning approaches optimally. These findings suggest that strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence through continuous professional development programs is necessary to support the effective implementation of multicultural education in Civic Education learning.

Despite these challenges, the study provides important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to

the development of Civic Education studies by demonstrating how multicultural education can function as a framework for strengthening national character in Islamic primary education institutions. From a practical perspective, the results suggest that schools and educators should continue to develop contextual, participatory, and experience-based learning strategies that integrate multicultural values into Civic Education instruction. Such efforts are essential to prepare students to become responsible citizens who are capable of living harmoniously within Indonesia's diverse and pluralistic society.

This study also has several limitations. The research was conducted in a limited number of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Sleman Regency, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Future research may expand the scope of investigation by involving schools from different regions and educational backgrounds in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of multicultural education in Civic Education learning.

4.2. The role of teachers and the madrasah environment in building multicultural awareness and national character

The findings of this study demonstrate that teachers play a crucial role in fostering multicultural awareness and strengthening national character among students in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. As shown in the results, teachers actively integrate multicultural values into Civic Education learning through contextual teaching strategies such as group discussions, storytelling about cultural diversity, and project-based activities, including poster creation and role-playing on themes of tolerance. These strategies allow students to engage directly with issues of diversity and encourage them to practice respect for different perspectives in classroom interactions. Such practices indicate that teachers function not only as transmitters of civic knowledge but also as facilitators who guide students in developing empathy, cooperation, and appreciation for cultural differences.

The emergence of these practices can be understood in relation to the role of teachers as cultural mediators within multicultural learning environments. Teachers who connect learning materials with students' real-life experiences help learners understand diversity in meaningful ways and develop positive attitudes toward others. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of (Lin & Chung, 2024) who argue that teachers play an important role in helping students interpret social differences and develop empathy toward other groups in pluralistic societies.

In addition to the role of teachers, the findings also highlight the importance of the madrasah environment in supporting the internalization of multicultural values. The results indicate that school culture, institutional policies, and extracurricular programs create opportunities for students to experience

multicultural values beyond the classroom. Programs such as Inclusive Madrasah, Tolerance Day, national ceremonies, and community service activities provide students with practical experiences that reinforce the values of cooperation, unity, and respect for diversity. Through these activities, students are not only introduced to the concept of national values conceptually but are also able to practice them through social interaction and collective participation in school life.

These findings reflect the importance of educational environments that support the development of social awareness and national identity. Educational institutions that provide inclusive learning environments and meaningful social experiences enable students to develop a sense of belonging and responsibility toward their communities. This perspective is supported by (Turan Bora & Akbaba Altun, 2025) who emphasize that effective education is closely related to the ability of schools to foster social awareness and collective responsibility through real-life experiences within the school environment.

Furthermore, student interviews and classroom observations in this study demonstrate that collaborative learning activities contribute significantly to the development of multicultural awareness. Students reported that activities such as group discussions, classroom cleanliness competitions, and cultural performances encourage them to cooperate with peers from different backgrounds and respect each other's perspectives. These findings suggest that experiential learning environments allow students to internalize values of tolerance and cooperation through direct interaction with their peers.

These results are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of collaborative and experience-based learning in strengthening multicultural awareness among students. For instance (Berlian & Huda, 2022) found that collaborative activities in schools provide opportunities for students to interact positively with peers from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, thereby fostering inclusive attitudes. Similarly, (Ma'arif et al., 2024) highlight that school culture and institutional policies that emphasize inclusivity and tolerance play a significant role in shaping students' national character by creating social spaces that encourage respect for diversity.

Overall, the findings indicate that the synergy between teachers' instructional practices and an inclusive madrasah environment plays a vital role in building students' multicultural awareness and national character. Teachers facilitate the learning process by integrating multicultural values into classroom activities, while school culture and institutional programs provide practical contexts in which students can apply these values in their daily interactions. This combination not only strengthens students' cognitive understanding of citizenship but also nurtures empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity as essential foundations for developing inclusive and responsible citizens.

4.3. Challenges and strategies for strengthening multicultural education in civic education learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of multicultural education in Civic Education learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah faces several interconnected challenges related to classroom instruction, students' socio-cultural diversity, and the development of an inclusive school culture. As indicated in the results, teachers reported difficulties in addressing the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of students, while also managing limited instructional time for exploring multicultural values in depth. These challenges indicate that the integration of multicultural perspectives in Civic Education requires not only pedagogical competence but also institutional support and adaptive teaching strategies (Mansur & Sholeh, 2024).

The diversity of students' backgrounds emerged as one of the primary challenges identified in the findings. Students come from different social, cultural, and regional contexts, which sometimes influence how they interpret differences and interact with peers. In such situations, teachers are required to guide students carefully so that diversity becomes a learning resource rather than a source of misunderstanding. This finding supports the argument of Moussa, (2024) who emphasizes that the success of multicultural education depends largely on the readiness of educational institutions and educators to transform diversity into a source of enrichment rather than division.

Another challenge identified in the findings relates to the limited time available in Civic Education classes to explore multicultural values comprehensively. Teachers explained that curriculum demands often require them to focus on conceptual knowledge, leaving less opportunity to facilitate deeper discussions about tolerance, unity, and diversity (Riski, 2022). To address this challenge, teachers apply contextual and experience-based learning strategies that integrate multicultural values into everyday learning activities. For example, teachers encourage students to share cultural stories, participate in discussions, and engage in creative projects related to diversity. These strategies allow students to connect civic values with their real-life experiences. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Jach & Trolan (2023) who argue that contextual learning approaches in civic education can strengthen students' understanding of national values because they are closely connected to students' social realities.

The findings also highlight the importance of institutional strategies in strengthening multicultural education within the madrasah environment. School leaders reported that programs such as cross-class activities, community service, diversity-themed competitions, and extracurricular programs are implemented to encourage interaction among students from different backgrounds. These initiatives create opportunities for students to practice cooperation and mutual

respect beyond the classroom setting. In addition, teacher training programs and collaboration with higher education institutions are conducted to enhance teachers' competencies in implementing multicultural learning strategies. This supports the findings of Febriyanti et al. (2023) and Barsihanor et al. (2024), which emphasize that strengthening teacher capacity and developing a tolerant school culture are key factors in the successful implementation of multicultural education in schools.

From the students' perspective, the findings also indicate that differences in habits, communication styles, and opinions sometimes create misunderstandings during peer interactions. However, consistent teacher guidance through mediation, contextual explanations, and reflective discussions helps students gradually develop respect for differences. Teachers play an important role in helping students interpret diversity positively and manage conflicts constructively. This finding aligns with Rachmadtullah et al., (2020) that emphasize that Civics teachers act as facilitators in shaping students' multicultural awareness by guiding them to view diversity as a valuable national asset rather than a source of conflict.

This study indicates that strengthening multicultural education in Civic Education learning requires a combination of pedagogical and institutional strategies. Improving teacher competence, applying contextual and participatory learning approaches, and developing an inclusive madrasah culture are essential components in addressing the challenges identified in this study. The synergy between classroom practices and institutional support enables multicultural education to move beyond theoretical discourse and become embedded in students' attitudes and daily interactions. As a result, students are more likely to develop national character traits that reflect tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for diversity within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of multicultural education in Civic Education learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah contributes significantly to the development of students' national character and multicultural awareness. The findings reveal that the integration of multicultural values such as tolerance, respect for diversity, and mutual cooperation is reflected in students' daily interactions, including their willingness to collaborate with peers from different socio-cultural backgrounds, respect diverse perspectives during classroom discussions, and participate actively in collective school activities. These findings indicate that multicultural learning is not only understood conceptually but is also practiced in students' social behavior within the madrasah environment.

The study also highlights the important role of teachers and madrasah institutions in strengthening multicultural education. Contextual learning strategies, reflective discussions, and collaborative learning activities implemented by teachers help students understand national values in meaningful ways. In addition, the support of inclusive school programs and madrasah leadership contributes to the creation of a learning environment that promotes tolerance and social cohesion. Although several challenges remain, such as differences in students' socio-cultural backgrounds and the need to continuously strengthen an inclusive school culture, strategies such as teacher professional development, contextual learning approaches, and diversity-oriented school programs have proven effective in addressing these issues.

Multicultural-based Civic Education in madrasahs plays a strategic role in fostering students' awareness of diversity, national identity, and social responsibility from an early age. These findings imply that strengthening multicultural education requires continuous collaboration between teachers, school leadership, and educational institutions to ensure that values of tolerance and inclusivity are consistently integrated into learning practices. Future research may further explore the implementation of multicultural civic education in broader educational contexts and examine its long-term impact on students' civic attitudes and social participation.

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