

Developing a Religion Tolerance-Based Character Education Framework for Elementary School Students

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Abstract: *Character education plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral values, especially in multicultural societies where religious tolerance is essential for social harmony. However, fostering religious tolerance in primary schools remains challenging due to limited structured character education programs. This study aims to explore the implementation of religious tolerance-based character education in elementary schools and identify effective strategies for its reinforcement. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis at an elementary school with a diverse religious background. The data were analyzed using data reduction, display, and conclusion-drawing techniques to understand the phenomenon comprehensively. The findings indicate that strengthening religious tolerance-based character education is implemented through routine activities, spontaneous interventions, teacher role modeling, and environmental conditioning. Routine activities such as daily handshakes, prayers, English Day, literacy sessions, and religious holiday celebrations foster an inclusive school culture. Teachers play a pivotal role in promoting tolerance through direct interventions and exemplary behavior, while the school environment reinforces tolerance through posters, study group arrangements, and discussion-based learning. This study concludes that integrating religious tolerance into daily school activities and the curriculum effectively instills tolerance values among students. These findings contribute to developing structured programs for character education in primary schools, promoting an inclusive and respectful learning environment.*

Abstrak: *Pendidikan karakter memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk nilai-nilai moral siswa, terutama dalam masyarakat multikultural di mana toleransi beragama sangat penting untuk keharmonisan sosial. Namun, memupuk toleransi beragama di sekolah dasar masih menjadi tantangan karena terbatasnya program pendidikan karakter yang terstruktur. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi pendidikan karakter berbasis toleransi beragama di sekolah dasar dan mengidentifikasi strategi yang efektif untuk penguatannya. Penelitian ini*

menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, dengan data yang dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen di sekolah dasar dengan latar belakang agama yang beragam. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan teknik reduksi data, display, dan penarikan kesimpulan untuk memahami fenomena secara komprehensif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penguatan pendidikan karakter berbasis toleransi beragama diimplementasikan melalui kegiatan rutin, intervensi spontan, keteladanan guru, dan pengkondisian lingkungan. Kegiatan rutin seperti jabat tangan setiap hari, doa, English Day, sesi literasi, dan perayaan hari besar keagamaan menumbuhkan budaya sekolah yang inklusif. Guru memainkan peran penting dalam mempromosikan toleransi melalui intervensi langsung dan perilaku yang patut dicontoh, sementara lingkungan sekolah memperkuat toleransi melalui poster, pengaturan kelompok belajar, dan pembelajaran berbasis diskusi. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa mengintegrasikan toleransi beragama ke dalam kegiatan sehari-hari di sekolah dan kurikulum secara efektif menanamkan nilai-nilai toleransi di antara para siswa. Temuan ini berkontribusi dalam mengembangkan program terstruktur untuk pendidikan karakter di sekolah dasar, mempromosikan lingkungan belajar yang inklusif dan saling menghormati.

Keyword: Religion Tolerance, Character, Education Framework, Elementary School

Introduction

Character education is currently regarded as an effective solution to social issues stemming from the erosion of moral values in society. In multicultural environments, religious tolerance is a fundamental value that must be instilled early. Schools play a crucial role in shaping students' characters, particularly in fostering respect and appreciation for religious diversity. However, in many elementary schools, the integration of religious tolerance into character education remains inconsistent, as there is a lack of structured programs specifically designed to embed tolerance values into daily learning activities.

As globalization advances, children face significant challenges in maintaining moral integrity and developing respectful interactions with individuals from different religious backgrounds. Studies have shown that religious tolerance helps promote social harmony, reduce prejudice, and build inclusive communities ([Horenczyk, G., & Tatar, M, 2002](#)). While several researchers have explored character education in schools, most studies focus on general character development rather than explicitly addressing how religious tolerance is systematically reinforced in the classroom and daily school routines ([Yolanda & Fatmariza, 2019](#)).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to bridge the gap between theoretical discussions on character education and its practical implementation in elementary schools. Many existing studies emphasize the importance of moral education, but few provide concrete models for integrating religious tolerance into structured learning activities. In addition, previous studies have primarily examined character education from a broad perspective, leaving a gap in research on specific strategies for embedding religious tolerance as a fundamental component of character education ([Purnomo, H., & Putra, M. S, 2022](#); [Maulana, A., & Gontar, Y, 2023](#); [Rahayu et al., 2023](#)).

This study aims to explore how religious tolerance-based character education is implemented in elementary schools and identify effective strategies that foster tolerance in students. Specifically, this research focuses on habitual activities, spontaneous interventions, teacher role modelling, and environmental conditioning as essential elements in strengthening students' understanding and practice of

religious tolerance. Furthermore, this study investigates how religious tolerance values can be embedded into learning activities through curriculum integration and structured lesson plans.

A qualitative descriptive approach was chosen to achieve these objectives, allowing for a holistic and in-depth exploration of religious tolerance-based character education in a diverse elementary school setting. Data collection involved observations, interviews, and document analysis, which provided insights into how educators and students engage with religious tolerance values in daily school activities. The collected data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

This study contributes to the field by offering a novel perspective on religious tolerance-based character education, particularly in elementary schools with diverse religious backgrounds. By identifying practical strategies for strengthening tolerance in school environments, this research provides valuable insights that can be used to develop structured and sustainable character education programs in Indonesian schools.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the implementation of religious tolerance-based character education in elementary schools. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a holistic and in-depth understanding of how religious tolerance is fostered in school environments. The research was conducted at SD Speak First Klaten, an elementary school known for its diverse religious backgrounds, making it an ideal setting to study the integration of religious tolerance in character education.

The population in this study includes school administrators, teachers, and students at SD Speak First Klaten. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who were directly involved in character education programs and had experiences related to religious tolerance in schools (Sugiyono, 2017). Specifically, school principals and teachers were chosen for interviews, while students were observed during school activities. To comprehensively understand the research topic, the sample consisted of five teachers, one headmaster, and 30 students from different grade levels.

Data collection in this study involved observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation was conducted to assess student behavior, particularly their demonstration of tolerance in daily interactions at the school. Interviews were conducted with the school principal and educators to gather in-depth information on the school's policies and practices of tolerance education. Additionally, documentation was used to collect relevant materials, such as school activity reports and policies supporting character education. This triangulation of data sources helped provide a well-rounded view of how tolerance education is applied in SD Speak First Klaten.

Table 1: Data Collection Instruments

Instrument	Description	Purpose
Observation	Monitoring student behavior during school activities	To observe the demonstration of tolerance and harmony in daily interactions.

Interviews	Structured interviews with educators and the principal	To gain insights into the application of tolerance-based character education.
Documentation	Collection of school reports, policies, and activity logs	To support data with real evidence of educational practices.

The research was conducted over three months, allowing sufficient data collection and analysis time. The study followed these steps: (1) Preliminary study, Identifying the research site, and obtaining permission from school authorities. (2) Data collection. Conducting observations, interviews, and document analysis ([Miles & Huberman, 2014](#)). Observations were conducted during daily routines and special activities related to character education. Interviews were held individually with teachers and the principal, while relevant school documents were analyzed for supporting evidence. (3) Data organization, Transcribing interviews, compiling observation notes, and categorizing documents for analysis.

The collected data was analyzed using interactive analysis techniques, which consist of three stages: data reduction, data display, and verification. In the first stage, the data was simplified by selecting the relevant and important parts. Then, the selected data was organized and presented systematically in a narrative format to make it easier to understand. In the final stage, verification was conducted to ensure the consistency and validity of the data. This analysis allowed for clear conclusions, providing insights into strengthening religious tolerance-based character education at SD Speak First Klaten.

Triangulation ensured credibility and trustworthiness by cross-verifying data from observations, interviews, and document analysis. Member checking was also conducted by allowing participants to review interview transcripts to confirm the accuracy of their responses. Additionally, peer debriefing with fellow researchers was used to validate the interpretations of the findings.

This study is limited to a single elementary school (SD Speak First Klaten), so findings may not be generalizable to all schools. Additionally, qualitative research relies on subjective interpretations, which may introduce researcher bias. However, triangulation and member checking were implemented to minimize biases and enhance data validity. Future research could expand to multiple schools to provide a broader perspective on religious tolerance-based character education.

Result and Discussion

Result

This research reveals key insights into how character education based on religious tolerance is implemented at SD Speak First Klaten. The study highlights several strategies that are integral to fostering tolerance among students. These strategies are embedded in the school's routine activities, spontaneous interventions, teacher role modeling, and environmental conditioning.

Routine Activities

The daily activities at SD Speak First Klaten are designed to reinforce values of tolerance. These include morning handshakes, where students greet each other regardless of religious background, fostering a sense of respect and equality. Daily prayers are another integral activity, with each student given the space to pray according to their faith. The school also holds collective prayers every Monday, which

brings together students from diverse religious backgrounds, reinforcing the value of mutual respect and harmony.

During observations, it was noted that students, when participating in English Day, often worked in groups where they spoke freely about their cultural practices. Observers saw students engaged in discussions about how they celebrate their religious holidays, leading to shared understanding and mutual respect. On Fridays, during group exercises, students from various backgrounds were seen working together, demonstrating strong teamwork despite their religious differences.

In interviews with teachers, it was revealed that the morning handshake activity was a significant way to promote respect:

School Principal: *"Our daily activities are designed to create an environment where respect and tolerance are at the forefront. The morning handshakes, for example, may seem simple, but they establish a tone of mutual respect from the beginning of the school day. It is an important ritual that sends a message to the students that everyone is equal, regardless of their background. Similarly, collective prayers and spaces for individual prayer allow students to express their faith while respecting the faith of others."*

Teacher 1: *"The handshakes in the morning are simple, but they help our students develop an early sense of respect for their peers, regardless of their backgrounds."*

Teacher 2: *"When students see their friends participating in prayers, even if their religions differ, it teaches them tolerance and harmony."*

Weekly activities, such as English Day and Literacy Sessions, promote engagement across religious and cultural boundaries. Students create bonds that transcend religious differences by learning a common language and sharing stories. Additionally, the school organizes Group Exercises every Friday, which help students build solidarity and unity despite their diverse backgrounds.

Celebrating religious holidays together is another potent activity that fosters respect for diversity. During these celebrations, students learn about different religious practices and experience the joy of cross-religious interaction, deepening their understanding of religious tolerance.

Table 2 Illustrates How These Routine Activities Are Integrated Into The School Day

Routine Activity	Purpose	Impact
Handshakes (Every Morning)	Fosters respect and equality among students	Students learn to acknowledge and respect each other regardless of religious differences.
Daily Prayers (End of Lessons)	Provides space for individual religious expression	Students develop respect for each other's religious practices.
English Day (Every Tuesday)	Encourages cultural exchange and communication	Promotes interaction among students from diverse backgrounds.
Literacy (Every Thursday)	Broadens students' understanding of diversity	Expands knowledge and appreciation of different cultures.
Group Exercise (Every Friday)	Builds solidarity and unity among students	Strengthens teamwork and social cohesion, reducing religious divides.
Religious Holiday Celebrations	Fosters respect for various religious practices	Students learn about and appreciate other religious customs.

Spontaneous Interventions

Teachers at SD Speak First Klaten actively address intolerant behavior as soon as it arises. When students display behaviors that exclude or disrespect others based on religion or culture, teachers immediately correct these actions. Through one-on-one interventions, students are taught the importance of respecting others' beliefs and differences.

During the observation period, teachers were seen intervening in real time. For example, one teacher was observed speaking to a student who had made a disparaging comment about a peer's religious practice. The teacher addressed the issue by explaining the importance of respecting differences. After the intervention, the student reflected on their behavior and apologized to the peer. Results from Interviews with Headmaster, Teacher, and Student:

School Principal: *"At SD Speak First Klaten, we do not wait for intolerance to fester. We believe that when we see a moment of intolerance, we must address it immediately. Our teachers are trained to spot such behavior and intervene in a way that not only corrects the action but also allows students to reflect on their behavior. This is crucial in fostering an environment where all students feel respected."*

Teacher 4: *"Whenever I notice a student making an inappropriate comment or behaving in a way that disrespects another's cultural or religious practice, I make sure to intervene on the spot. One instance involved a student who said negatively about a classmate's religious observance. I took the student aside and explained why such comments were hurtful and how we must respect each other's differences. After the talk, the student apologized to the peer, and I could see that they had learned something valuable about empathy."*

Student 2: *"There was a time when one of my classmates made a mean comment about my religion. However, my teacher quickly explained why those words hurt people. After that, the student who said it approached me and apologized. I was glad that the teacher was there to help solve the problem. It made me realize that respecting others is important, making our class feel more like a family."*

By addressing intolerance in real time, teachers help students understand the impact of their actions, allowing them to reflect on their behavior and develop empathy for others. This method effectively prevents the spread of intolerance and promotes a culture of respect within the school.

Through spontaneous interventions, the school ensures that tolerance is not merely an abstract concept taught in lessons but a lived experience, consistently reinforced in students' everyday interactions. By addressing these issues as they occur, teachers instill a sense of accountability and empathy, ensuring that students understand tolerance and actively practice it.

Table 3: Spontaneous Interventions

Intervention	Purpose	Impact
Reprimanding Intolerant Behavior	To correct disrespectful behavior immediately	Helps students understand the importance of mutual respect.
Guiding Students to Embrace Diversity	To educate students about the value of differences	Students learn how to appreciate diversity and practice tolerance.

Role Modeling by Teachers

The role of educators in modeling tolerant behavior is crucial at SD Speak First Klaten. Teachers are not just facilitators of learning but also serve as active examples of engaging with people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. By modeling inclusive behavior, such as attending interfaith events and showing respect for all students' beliefs, teachers provide a tangible example for students to emulate.

Teacher behavior significantly influences student attitudes, as demonstrated in social learning, where students tend to imitate the actions of authority figures. The behaviors modeled by teachers help students internalize the values of tolerance, which they then apply in their interactions. Interviews with students and teachers confirm that these modeled behaviors are crucial in developing students' attitudes toward diversity.

From the interviews with the headmaster, teacher, and students at SD Speak First Klaten, a consistent emphasis emerges on the role of teachers as behavioral role models in instilling values of tolerance within the school environment.

School Principal: "In this school, we believe that teachers should not only teach in the classroom but should also be role models in tolerance and respect for differences. For example, we often hold joint activities involving different religions and cultures. Our teachers are always present at these events as supervisors and active participants who show that all faiths are respected. We see students imitating this in their daily lives."

Teacher 3: "I always try not only to teach subject matter but also teach the values of life. For example, I once led a discussion about respecting other religions. In the discussion, I gave a concrete example of how we can respect the religious practices of our friends, for example, by not disturbing them during worship. I am confident that students will feel more open and valued if we show such an inclusive attitude."

Student 2: "I remember once when my teacher explained respecting friends of different religions. At that time, there was a friend of mine who was fasting. My teacher said that we should support our fasting friends by not eating in front of them. I feel more understanding of why it's important to respect each other. I also saw my other friends follow that teaching, making me feel more comfortable in school."

These three interviews highlight that the role of teachers as behavioral role models is crucial in shaping students' attitudes toward tolerance. Teachers' inclusive actions, both inside and outside the classroom—whether attending interfaith events or leading discussions—serve as clear and tangible examples for students to follow. Teachers do not merely impart academic knowledge but also teach essential life values such as tolerance, respect for differences, and creating an atmosphere of mutual respect. In doing so, students understand the theory of tolerance and internalize and apply it in their everyday interactions.

In one instance, a teacher was observed leading a discussion about respecting religious practices. The teacher's inclusive approach set a tone of acceptance that students mirrored. Students were seen following the teacher's lead, discussing the importance of religious tolerance.

Teachers also provide guidance on how to engage in conversations about religion, culture, and differences in a respectful manner. By doing so, they create a classroom environment where students feel safe to express their views without fear of judgment, thus fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and open dialogue.

Table 4 Teacher Role Modeling

Role Modeling Activity	Purpose	Impact
Teachers Displaying Tolerant Behavior	To set an example for students	Encourages students to adopt tolerant behaviors themselves.
Teachers Participate in Interfaith Activities	To model respect for all religious practices	Promotes acceptance of diversity and understandin

Environmental Conditioning

The school's physical environment plays a pivotal role in reinforcing values of tolerance. Posters, slogans, and visual reminders of respecting differences are strategically placed around the school. These environmental cues provide students with constant reminders of the values they are encouraged to embody.

During the observation, students actively participated in study groups where they collaborated with peers from different religious backgrounds. Posters like "Unity in Diversity" were prominently displayed, which helped students internalize the importance of respecting differences. The headmaster, Teachers, and students discussed how environmental cues impacted their behavior:

School Principal *"Our school's physical environment is carefully designed to reflect the values we hold dear. The posters, slogans, and visual reminders constantly reinforce our message of tolerance and unity. These small but impactful cues remind students every day that respecting differences is not just something we talk about but something we practice. It is vital that these reminders continuously surround students, so the values become second nature."*

Student 1: *"I see the posters everywhere, and it reminds me that we should be kind to each other, no matter our differences."*

Teacher 3: *"The mixed study groups are very effective. They help break down barriers and foster friendships across religions."*

In addition to visual cues, the school employed mixed study groups as another strategy. By encouraging students from different religious and cultural backgrounds to work together, SD Speak First Klaten fosters more profound understanding and collaboration. These group activities help break down stereotypes and promote a shared community.

Students participating in these mixed groups are exposed to diverse perspectives, enhancing their ability to empathize with others. Observations show that such group dynamics foster a stronger sense of unity and reduce the likelihood of division based on religion or ethnicity.

Table 5: Environmental Conditioning

Environmental Activity	Purpose	Impact
Posters and Slogans About Tolerance	To reinforce tolerance values visually	Keeps tolerance as a constant reminder in the school environment.
Mixed Study Groups	To encourage collaboration among students from different backgrounds	Promotes understanding and empathy between students from diverse backgrounds.

Support of the Findings with Results

The findings of this study are supported by the data collected through observations, interviews, and documentation. For example, during the interviews, teachers highlighted the significance of routine activities in shaping students' attitudes. One teacher noted that "the morning handshakes are a simple but powerful tool to teach respect," illustrating how a daily activity can reinforce the value of tolerance.

Observations also showed that students who regularly participated in English Day and Literacy Sessions were likelier to engage with peers from different backgrounds in a friendly and open manner. These activities emphasize communication and cooperation and are vital in breaking down barriers between students of different religious and ethnic groups.

In addition, the spontaneous interventions reported by teachers and the role modeling provided by staff have led to noticeable improvements in student behavior. Teachers described incidents where students who initially exhibited intolerance were corrected on the spot, leading to greater understanding and acceptance in subsequent interactions.

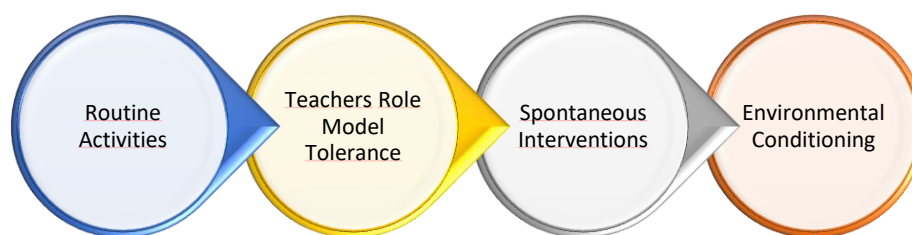


Figure 1: Flowchart of Religious Tolerance Education Implementation at SD Speak First Klaten

This flowchart demonstrates the continuous and interconnected process of implementing religious tolerance education at SD Speak First Klaten. Each element supports the others to create a school environment where tolerance is taught and practiced.

Discussion

Reinforcement in Self-Improvement Activities

1. Routine Activities in Strengthening Character and Tolerance

The daily routines at SD Speak First Klaten have been designed to promote academic growth and instill values of tolerance and mutual respect. These activities are essential in regularly reinforcing character education, thus creating an environment where tolerance becomes natural.

Handshakes: Shaking hands is an everyday ritual that helps students learn to respect others, regardless of religious differences. This simple yet powerful gesture fosters a culture of mutual respect ([Lisnawati, 2016](#); [Elsayed, W. 2024](#); [Widodo, H., & Fajar, 2024](#)). As observed, this practice encourages students to acknowledge one another, symbolizing respect and equality. The principal emphasized that the daily handshakes foster tolerance as they condition students to engage with peers from different backgrounds respectfully. This routine exemplifies how minor habitual actions can gradually lead to the internalization of tolerance ([Gunawardena, M., & Brown, B., 2021](#); [Aderibigbe et al., 2023](#)).

Daily and Weekly Prayers: Integrating prayer time into daily activities enables students to learn how to respect the religious practices of others. This is a foundational element in religious tolerance ([Wibowo, 2017](#); [Aderibigbe et al., 2024](#)). The school ensures that each student practices faith without interference, harmonizing religious differences. The interview with the teacher highlighted that these practices, such as prayers held in a non-disruptive and inclusive environment, help students internalize respect for different beliefs ([Goodman-Scott et al., 2018](#); [Fitrah, M. 2021](#)). During the morning prayer sessions, students from various religious backgrounds were seen participating in their religious rituals respectfully. This practice was about individual worship and learning to coexist peacefully, even with differing beliefs.

English Day and Literacy Activities: Implementing English Day on Tuesdays and Literacy activities on Thursdays indirectly fosters tolerance by creating opportunities for students to engage with each other outside their comfort zones. Learning a second language, such as English, can be a cultural bridge, encouraging students to interact with one another more inclusively. As highlighted in the principal's interview, these activities also act as unifying events that promote collective participation ([Nurasiah et al., 2022](#); [Tian & Wong, 2024](#)). Students confidently spoke English with peers from various religious backgrounds, showcasing how academic activities foster an environment where students feel comfortable and united despite their differences.

Regular physical activities, such as *Senam Bersama* on Fridays, allow students to bond over shared experiences, irrespective of their religious affiliations. Physical activities help break down barriers, promote unity, and solidify relationships, which can lead to stronger social cohesion ([Kemendiknas, 2017](#)). The principal pointed out that *Senam Bersama* promotes health and strengthens social bonds. Through this activity, students are encouraged to develop solidarity and teamwork, irrespective of religious differences, which are key elements of fostering religious tolerance ([Ahmadi, 2009](#); [Koukounaras, 2022](#)). During the Friday physical activity session, students participated together, regardless of their religious backgrounds, showing how this activity helps build a sense of unity and cooperation among diverse groups

2. Spontaneous Interventions to Correct Intolerant Behavior

The practice of spontaneous interventions in SD Speak First Klaten plays a vital role in maintaining a respectful and tolerant school environment. As observed, teachers intervene immediately when intolerant behavior arises, providing real-time corrections. This method is essential in preventing the escalation of intolerance, ensuring that students understand the consequences of their actions. According to [Sakti et al. \(2024\)](#), timely intervention creates a learning moment where students can reflect on their behavior. This reflection is crucial in helping students internalize the values of respect and tolerance. [Edelstein et al. \(2023\)](#) also emphasize that immediate correction, when done effectively, not only addresses the inappropriate behavior but also reinforces positive behaviors by offering a chance to reassess one's actions. This real-time correction fosters an environment where intolerance cannot fester, creating an ongoing dialogue about respect and understanding.

During the observation, a specific example highlighted the effectiveness of such interventions. A teacher was seen addressing a student who had made a derogatory comment about a peer's religious practice. The teacher immediately corrected the student, explaining the importance of respecting others' beliefs. This approach allowed the student to reflect on their actions and apologize to the peer involved. As highlighted by [Nurasiah et al. \(2022\)](#), such interventions allow the student to make a cognitive connection between their actions and the impact on others, which is fundamental in fostering empathy and understanding. Immediate feedback

addresses the behavior and encourages students to consider the broader implications of their words and actions, reinforcing tolerance in their daily interactions.

In addition, spontaneous interventions in the school setting contribute to creating a culture of empathy and accountability. [Setiardi, & Mubarok. \(2017\)](#) argue that when students witness and experience immediate corrective actions, it sets a precedent for how they are expected to behave in future situations. The consistency of these interventions creates an atmosphere where tolerance is not just a concept taught in the classroom but a lived experience. Students learn that intolerance will not be tolerated, and the focus is on building mutual respect. This approach aligns with scholars like [Raihanah. \(2022\)](#), who assert that when intolerance is swiftly corrected, it prevents further conflict and strengthens the overall school culture by emphasizing empathy, respect, and communal harmony.

3. Modeling Behavior: The Teacher's Role in Fostering Tolerance

Teachers play a pivotal role in modeling tolerant behavior, as their actions and words significantly influence student attitudes ([Mayer et al., 2024](#); [Tadege et al., 2022](#)). At SD Speak First Klaten, teachers intentionally model behaviors that promote religious tolerance, such as respecting diverse religious practices and participating in interfaith activities. This role is not limited to the classroom but extends to everyday student interactions. By demonstrating respect for students' various beliefs, teachers serve as living examples of the values of tolerance and inclusion, thereby setting a standard for students to follow. The importance of teacher modeling is recognized in educational research, where the behavior of teachers is often cited as a primary factor in shaping student character and attitudes toward diversity.

A teacher at SD Speak First Klaten shared that they consciously demonstrate respect for all religions by participating in interfaith activities and actively acknowledging the different religious practices within the classroom. This intentional modeling is crucial, as students imitate their educators' behavior. This phenomenon is supported by [Naim \(2017\)](#), who emphasized that teachers' actions are instrumental in character development, with students frequently mirroring their teachers' attitudes and behaviors. The modeling of inclusive practices by teachers goes beyond simply promoting tolerance. It encourages students to internalize these values as part of their everyday interactions. When students see their teachers treating each other's religious practices respectfully, they are more likely to adopt similar attitudes.

Furthermore, during observations, teachers were seen engaging in conversations with students about religious practices with respect and curiosity, further reinforcing that tolerance is not just a concept to understand but a value to be practiced in daily interactions. Such actions underscore the importance of the teacher's role in actively shaping their students' social and emotional learning. [Goodman-Scott et al. \(2018\)](#) argue that when teachers model inclusive behavior, they create an environment where students feel safe to express their identities and beliefs. This encourages empathy and fosters a culture of mutual respect among peers. Additionally, these positive interactions challenge prejudices and reduce stereotypes, ultimately promoting a more inclusive school culture.

4. Conditioning Through Environmental Cues

Teachers play a pivotal role in modeling tolerant behavior, as their actions and words significantly influence student attitudes ([Goodman-Scott et al., 2018](#); [Tadege et al., 2022](#); [Sulaeman et al., 2023](#)). At SD Speak First Klaten, teachers intentionally model behaviors that promote religious tolerance, such as respecting diverse religious practices and participating in interfaith activities. This role is not limited to the classroom but extends to everyday student interactions. By demonstrating respect

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Table 3. Data Findings and Discussion Reinforcement in Self-Improvement Activities

Category of Activity	Key Findings	Discussion	Theoretical Implications
Routine Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handshakes: Developing a daily habit of handshaking. - Daily Prayers: Conducted at the beginning and end of lessons. - Joint Prayers: Conducted based on religious affiliation every Monday. - English Day: Held every Tuesday morning. - Literacy: Shared reading every Thursday morning. - Group Exercise: Routine physical activity every Friday. - Celebrating Religious Holidays: Joint celebration of major religious holidays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fostering tolerance through daily activities like handshaking, which instills respect. - Activities like English Day and literacy integrate character-building with contextual tolerance development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to habit theory (Skinner, 1953), behaviors learned through daily habits tend to be deeply ingrained in individual character. - Routine activities reinforce tolerant attitudes as stated by Ahmadi (2009).
Spontaneous Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers give direct reprimands to students showing intolerant behavior. - Teachers guide students in understanding the importance of respecting differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct reprimands are corrective, providing contextual understanding of improper behavior. - These activities ensure students learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In line with character education theory (Lickona, 1991), direct reprimands and guidance build students' moral awareness,

		to appreciate differences through individual guidance.	encouraging them to learn from mistakes and improve their behavior.
Teacher And Principal Role Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers demonstrate tolerance through actions such as respecting differences and interfaith solidarity. - The principal creates an inclusive atmosphere to support tolerance learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers and principals act as real-life models for students, demonstrating tolerance values through daily behavior. - This provides students with concrete examples of tolerant behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observational learning theory (Bandura, 1977) states that students are likely to imitate behaviors observed from authority figures like teachers and principals. - Role modeling accelerates the internalization of tolerance values in students.
Environmental Conditionin g	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Posters and slogans promoting tolerance are displayed at school. - Heterogeneous study groups mix students from various religious backgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visuals such as posters and slogans reinforce tolerance values. - Heterogeneous study groups train students to collaborate despite differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental conditioning aligns with stimulus-response theory (Thorndike, 1911), which states that a positive and supportive environment strengthens desired behaviors. - This approach fosters systematic and sustainable development of tolerance habits.

Strengthening Religious Tolerance Character Education in Learning

Religious tolerance education plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, particularly in a multicultural country like Indonesia. A broad understanding of human values, openness, freedom of thought, and respect for religious freedom must support the attitude of tolerance. According to [Suryani and Muslim \(2024\)](#), multiculturalism is an essential foundation for fostering harmony amidst diversity. The learning process can serve as a medium to instill values of tolerance in students through integrated curricula, teaching strategies, and structured assessments.

Schools must design tolerance-based learning by explicitly incorporating these values into the curriculum. At SD Speak First Klaten, tolerance values are embedded within Core Competencies (KI) 1 and 2, encompassing religious principles and behaviors such as honesty, politeness, and care. Furthermore, tolerance is assessed through rubrics that measure attitudes, with indicators including respecting peers of different religions or ethnicities, accepting differing opinions, and forgiving others. This integration demonstrates that character education is not an additional burden but an integral part of teaching and learning processes.

Teachers play a critical role in facilitating lessons that internalize tolerance values. Discussing-based methods, for instance, creates opportunities for students to collaborate, appreciate differences, and express their opinions. Students learn the subject matter, understand diversity, and build empathy through this process.

According to [Gunawardena, M., & Brown, B., \(2021\)](#), this strategy enables students to enhance their social skills, which are highly relevant in a multicultural society.

Tolerance, a character trait instilled through learning, does not require dedicated sessions but is embedded in daily learning experiences. This approach makes learning more meaningful and effective. By providing direct experiences, students can quickly grasp the importance of tolerance values. Over time, this approach is expected to foster a generation capable of living harmoniously amidst diversity.

As role models of tolerance, teachers significantly influence students' character development. Social learning theory emphasizes that students tend to imitate behaviors observed in authority figures. Consequently, teachers must consistently demonstrate openness, inclusiveness, and respect for diversity in daily interactions. A learning environment supported by visual aids, such as posters and slogans promoting tolerance, further reinforces the learning process through subconscious influence.

Strengthening character education for tolerance at SD Speak First Klaten aligns with theories of character education, multicultural education, and constructivism. Integrating these values into curricula and teaching methods enables the systematic and sustainable development of students' tolerant character. Thus, students understand tolerance as a concept and apply it in daily life, contributing to creating an inclusive and harmonious society.

Table 4 Discussion and Findings of Strengthening Religious Tolerance

Key Findings	Discussion	Theoretical Implications
Tolerance values are integrated into the Core Competencies (KI) and lesson plans at SD Speak First Klaten.	The integration of tolerance values includes accepting differences in religion, culture, and opinions within attitude evaluation rubrics.	Aligns with character education theory (Lickona, 1991), which states that students' character is shaped by reinforcing values within the curriculum.
Teachers use discussion methods to foster collaboration and respect for differences.	This method provides students with direct experiences of practising tolerance, such as respecting others' opinions.	Constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) supports interactive learning as a way to build social understanding and appreciation for diversity.
The school environment features visual aids, such as posters and slogans promoting tolerance.	Visualisation subconsciously reinforces tolerance values in students' daily lives.	Stimulus-response theory (Thorndike, 1911) suggests that a positive environment strengthens the formation of desired behaviours, including tolerance.
Teachers model tolerance behaviour through concrete actions.	Teachers act as role models, demonstrating respect for diversity, such as acknowledging students from different backgrounds.	Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) emphasises that students are likely to imitate behaviours observed in authority figures, such as teachers.
Learning evaluations include attitude rubrics with clear and measurable indicators of tolerance.	These assessments ensure that students internalise tolerance values as part of formal evaluations.	Character-based evaluation strengthens the achievement of educational goals as suggested by multicultural education theory (Banks, 1994).

The findings of this research underscore the significance of embedding tolerance education within the daily life and routines of students. By integrating tolerance into

activities such as handshakes, prayers, and group exercises, SD Speak First Klaten has created an environment where tolerance is not merely taught but practiced. These activities help instill respect for diversity early on, shaping students into individuals who understand the value of living harmoniously with others, regardless of religious or cultural differences.

The importance of these findings lies in their practical application. Rather than treating tolerance as an abstract concept to be addressed only in specific lessons, SD Speak First Klaten ensures that tolerance becomes part of students' everyday experiences. This approach supports the idea that character education should be seamlessly integrated into all aspects of student life, as emphasized in previous research ([Gunawardena, M. & Brown, B., 2021](#); [Nurasiah et al., 2022](#); [Sirry et al., 2024](#)).

These findings also align with established theories in character education ([Lickona, 1991](#)) and social learning theory ([Bandura, 1977](#)), which suggest that consistent and contextual reinforcement of values like tolerance is essential for their successful internalization. By embedding tolerance in routine activities, teachers, and the environment, the school creates a comprehensive system for character development that can be replicated in other educational settings.

Conclusion

This study concludes that integrating religious tolerance-based character education in the daily routines, spontaneous interventions, teacher role modeling, and environmental conditioning at SD Speak First Klaten effectively promotes a culture of respect and mutual understanding among students. Through regular activities such as handshakes, prayers, and group exercises, students can practice and internalize tolerance values. Teachers are pivotal in guiding students through intentional teachings and real-time interventions when intolerant behavior arises.

The findings underscore the importance of embedding tolerance education within academic lessons and throughout the school environment. This holistic approach ensures that tolerance becomes a natural and continuous part of students' social interactions. Moreover, the role of educators as active role models cannot be overstated, as their behavior directly influences students' attitudes and actions.

This study is essential as it provides practical insights into how schools can foster an environment of inclusivity, especially in diverse settings. Integrating tolerance-based character education in routine school activities is a valuable strategy for combating intolerance and promoting social harmony. By situating these findings in the context of previous work, this study reaffirms the critical role of educational institutions in shaping children's moral and social development.

The implications of this research are significant for the broader educational community, offering a replicable model for schools aiming to enhance religious tolerance and social cohesion. The findings contribute to the growing literature on character education and provide a framework that can be adapted in diverse educational settings to build more inclusive, respectful, and harmonious societies.

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