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## ARTS AND CULTURE IN DEVELOPING ATTITUDES OF TOLERANCE: A CASE STUDY OF DANCE EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of dance in increasing tolerance attitudes in MI/SD students. The object of the study involved 60 students from two schools, namely MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin and MI Kanzul Huda Ponorogo. The methods used were observation, interviews and surveys before and after involvement in dance activities. The results showed that involvement in dance, such as introduction to traditional and contemporary dance, group collaboration, and multicultural performances, was effective in increasing students' tolerance attitudes. They became more open to cultural differences, increased cooperation, empathy, and the ability to resolve conflicts. The challenges that emerged included differences in students' understanding of diversity and the limited time of the curriculum. In conclusion, dance has proven to be an effective learning medium in instilling tolerance values in students.

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### Keywords

Dance Art, Tolerance Attitude, MI Age Children.

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## INTRODUCTION

Tolerance is one of the main values in building a harmonious society, especially in the context of a multicultural country like Indonesia. However, at the elementary education level, the implementation of an attitude of tolerance often faces various challenges. The phenomenon of intolerance among students, such as discrimination and lack of respect for differences or cultural views, shows the need to strengthen the values of tolerance from an early age. An attitude of tolerance is not only important as a moral aspect, but also as a provision for students to live in an increasingly diverse social environment (Handayani, 2023).

Current conditions show that the education system in Indonesia tends to focus more on cognitive aspects, while character building, including tolerance, is still less than optimal. Empirical data and previous research reveal that elementary school students often do not deeply understand the meaning of diversity and the importance of tolerance. In some cases, students still show gaps in accepting and appreciating differences, both in the school environment and in the social environment (Hamami & Nuryana, 2022). This is exacerbated by the lack of innovative and relevant learning approaches to instill the values of tolerance.

Multicultural education emerged as a response to the diversity of society that often gives rise to injustice, whether economic, racial, or gender, due to the dominance of Western culture. The goal is to overcome this dominance by highlighting cultural diversity as a way to strengthen national identity (Cahya Anasta, 2021). The success of character education through dance art is highly dependent on the teacher's ability to choose and apply the right approach. Dance art as a learning medium can be used to instill character values, such as discipline, cooperation, and tolerance. Teachers can choose one of eight approaches to character education, such as *evocation* to bring out cultural values through traditional dance, *inculcation* to instill a disciplined attitude in dance practice, or *value clarification* to help students understand and appreciate cultural values in dance art. With the right approach, dance art can be an effective means to develop students' character holistically (Zubaedi, 2015).

Although character education has been a priority in the national curriculum, there are still gaps in its implementation. Existing methods still focus on delivering theory, without providing direct experiences that can help students internalize social values. Several studies have shown that arts and culture, especially dance, can be an effective learning alternative. However, there is still little research that evaluates in depth how dance can be integrated into character learning to build

tolerance in elementary school students (Hartini et al., 2016; Rosala, 2016) .

This study offers something new by exploring dance as a learning medium for tolerance that combines practical approaches and social interaction. Unlike previous studies that focused more on aspects of art and culture in general, this study emphasizes the development of a character-based dance learning model that is relevant to the context of cultural diversity in Indonesia. This study also evaluates the impact of dance on students' tolerance attitudes through methods that focus on direct experience, collaboration, and reflection.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of dance in improving the tolerance attitudes of elementary school students and to develop a learning model that can be adapted to improve tolerance values in the character education curriculum. This study also aims to identify relevant dance teaching strategies and the challenges faced in their implementation. With this approach, this research is expected to provide practical and theoretical contributions in the development of art and culture-based character education, especially in instilling an attitude of tolerance in elementary school students.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative research design with a case study approach to explore the effectiveness of dance in building tolerance attitudes of elementary school students. The case study was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of the dance learning process that took place in two elementary schools, namely MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin and MI Kanzul Huda, Ponorogo. The main data in this study include the results of observations, interviews, and pre-post surveys of dance activities. Data sources include students participating in dance activities, dance teachers, and guardians of students. Additional data were obtained from documentation of dance activities carried out at the school. Data collection techniques were carried out through direct observation of dance activities, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and surveys to measure changes in students' tolerance attitudes.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-qualitative approach using Albert Bandura's interactive model. The analysis process includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Bandura, 1977) . Survey data were analyzed descriptively to show trends in student attitude changes before and after involvement in dance activities. Furthermore, data triangulation was conducted to ensure the validity of the research findings.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

#### **1. The Role of Dance in Developing an Attitude of Tolerance**

The results of the observation showed that dance has a significant role in building tolerance among elementary school students. At MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin, extracurricular dance activities involve 40 students from grades 1 to 6, with various types of dances such as peacock dance, plate dance, jathil dance, bujang ganong dance, gambyong dance, and contemporary dance. Meanwhile, at MI Kanzul Huda dance activities involving more than 20 students are scheduled in two sessions to accommodate the needs of lower and upper grade students. Mrs. Y, a dance teacher at MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin, emphasized the importance of dance as a means to instill values of tolerance among students. She explained: Dance is a form of cultural expression that involves various unique movements, values, and traditions. Through dance, students can learn to appreciate cultural differences and understand diversity, so that dance can be an effective means of instilling values of tolerance (Y, 2023). In line with this, the dance teacher of MI Kanzul Huda, Mrs. N, also saw a positive impact of dance on students' attitudes of tolerance. She stated: Diversity in dance teaches students to accept differences and work together as a team. By uniting movements from different cultures, they learn to respect each other and understand that every difference is part of the whole (N, 2023).

This dance activity also provides an opportunity for students to learn and appreciate differences in a fun way. One of the 5th grade students, A, shared her experience by saying: Dancing with friends from different backgrounds is amazing. I get a lot of experience, there is a sense of togetherness and mutual respect, and the opportunity to learn from each other (A, 2023). This change was also observed by parents, where their children became more interested in culture and better able to understand differences. According to one parent, Mrs. S: My child has become more open and respectful of other cultures. He often tells me about what he learned from the dances he performed at school and how each movement taught them to respect each other (S, 2023). With dance activities designed to involve various cultures, students learn dance movements while internalizing social values, such as tolerance. This experience helps them develop into individuals who value and respect diversity.

## **2. Changes in Students' Attitudes Towards Friends After Participating in Dance Arts Activities**

The results of observations and interviews showed positive changes in students' attitudes towards peers after participating in dance activities. At MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin and MI Kanzul Huda, students appeared more cooperative, empathetic, and respectful of each other. Dance activities encouraged them to work together in teams, overcome differences, and achieve harmony in every movement, which directly formed attitudes of tolerance and empathy among them.

Dance teacher at MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin, Mrs. Y, observed these changes in students who were involved in dance activities. She explained: I saw an increase in cooperation and empathy among students after they participated in dance activities. They were more open to differences and began to understand that each student has different abilities. This helped them learn to respect each other and work together more harmoniously in groups (Y, 2023).

A 5th grader, A, also shared the changes she felt when dancing with friends from different backgrounds. She stated: Dancing with friends from different backgrounds was amazing. I gained a lot of experience, there was a sense of togetherness and mutual respect, and I had the opportunity to learn from each other (A, 2023). Another student, R, added that this experience helped her appreciate friends in the class who may have different abilities and learning styles. She said:

I learned to respect my friends; through dance, I can understand other people's views and feelings, and learn how to support them in group activities (R, 2023). Parents also saw positive changes in their children's attitudes after being involved in dance activities. Mrs. S, one of the parents, shared her observations: My child has become more patient and willing to listen to his friends. He began to understand that everyone has strengths and weaknesses, and it is important to support each other, especially in group activities such as dancing (S, 2023). The changes in attitudes observed in students indicate that involvement in dance teaches technical skills while reinforcing social values, such as empathy and cooperation, which support the formation of attitudes of tolerance.

## **3. Dance Arts Teaching Methods that Emphasize the Value of Tolerance**

Dance teachers at MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin and MI Kanzul Huda implement various learning strategies designed to instill values of tolerance in students. This approach emphasizes the development of dance skills and prioritizes social aspects such as collaboration, mutual respect, and appreciation of diversity.

Mrs. Y, a dance teacher at MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin, uses an approach that combines traditional and contemporary dance and involves students in reflective discussions after each practice session. She explains the method she applies as follows: I use an introduction to various dances, both traditional and contemporary, so that students can understand and appreciate different cultures. In addition, we also often do group collaborations where they create dances together, discuss and reflect after practice, and exchange roles in the dance to train their sense of tolerance (Y, 2023).

In addition, Mrs. N, a dance teacher at MI Kanzul Huda, adopted the “Observe, Ask, Try, Conclude, and Communicate” method as a dance teaching approach that emphasizes the value of tolerance. She stated: With this method, students not only learn dance movements, but also practice the ability to respect friends' opinions, try new movements with different guides, and communicate well. This approach helps them internalize the values of cooperation and respect for others' views, which strengthens their tolerance (N, 2023).

Students also benefit from teaching methods that involve collaboration and reflection. A 5th grader, A, explained that through this activity, he learned more about how to work in a team and accept differences. He said: We often discuss after dancing. From this I learned that each friend has a different style, and that is a good thing. I learned that we can complement each other (A, 2023).

Parents also see the impact of this teaching method. Mrs. S, a parent of a student, noted that teaching methods involving collaboration and discussion have helped her child become more open and respectful of others' opinions: My child has become more open and willing to listen to his friends. He often tells stories about how they work together in dancing, and how everyone has a different role (S, 2023).

This dance teaching method focuses on performance and teaches students to appreciate differences, collaborate, and communicate effectively. Through this approach, students develop dance skills and foster an attitude of tolerance that is important in a diverse environment. By emphasizing collaboration and communication, this method naturally encourages students to better understand and appreciate the differences among them, thus creating an inclusive learning environment.

#### **4. Effectiveness of Dance Arts Activities in Increasing Tolerance Attitudes**

The results of interviews and observations showed that dance activities were effective in increasing tolerance among students. Dance teacher, Mrs. Y, explained that to assess the effectiveness of the activity, she used various evaluation approaches. She said: We conducted pre- and post-activity surveys to measure changes in students' attitudes before and after participating in the dance activity. Thus, we can see how much this activity influenced their views on tolerance (Y, 2023).

In practice, Mrs. Y also observed student interactions during the exercises. She noted that students who were initially hesitant to collaborate were now more active in group discussions. This was reflected in how they helped each other and provided feedback during the exercise sessions. "Students showed changes in the way they communicated and supported each other, which is a positive indicator of increasing tolerance," she added (Y, 2023). At MI Kanzul Huda, Mrs. N also applied a similar method. She observed group dynamics during the exercises and used self-reflection to encourage students to share their experiences. She stated:

Self-reflection after the exercise is very important. I asked students to tell me how they felt during the exercise and what they learned about cooperation and tolerance. This gave them the opportunity to understand more deeply about their attitudes towards their friends (N, 2023). Students also felt the positive impact of the dance activity. A 6th grade student, R, explained:

After taking dance classes, I feel more able to appreciate differences. We often practice together and it makes us closer. I understand friends from different backgrounds better (R, 2023). Parents also noted visible changes. Mrs. S observed that her child became more confident and had the ability to interact with different types of friends. She explained: My child has become more confident and is more sociable with anyone. He no longer feels awkward when interacting with friends from different cultures or ways of thinking (S, 2023). From all these data, it can be concluded that dance activities improve students' artistic skills and contribute significantly to increasing attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and cooperation among students, so that they are better prepared to face diversity in society.

#### **5. Challenges in Integrating Tolerance Values in Dance Arts Activities**

Although dance activities have proven effective in building tolerance, several challenges were also seen during the process of integrating these values into learning. Mrs. Y, a dance teacher at MI Ma'arif Sabilul Muttaqin, explained that one of the main challenges was the difference in

students' understanding of the concept of tolerance. She said: We face differences in understanding among students. Some students are more open to differences, while others still need time to understand the meaning of diversity. This often affects group dynamics during practice (Y, 2023).

Mrs. N, a dance teacher at MI Kanzul Huda, also highlighted the challenges faced, especially related to the cultural background of the students. She stated: Each student brings a different background. There are students who do not yet understand the values of diversity and tolerance, so a more in-depth approach is needed to explain this to them (N, 2023). In addition, there are challenges related to differences in students' ability levels in dancing. Mrs. Y observed that: Some students have more experience in dancing, while others are new to it. This can sometimes make it difficult to integrate movements and make all students feel involved (Y, 2023). Parents also noted that their children sometimes had difficulty accepting criticism or feedback from their peers. Mrs. S said:

My child sometimes still feels offended when his friends give him feedback on dance moves. I think this is part of the learning process, but they do need support to be more open (S, 2023). Time constraints in the curriculum are also a significant challenge faced by teachers. Mrs. Y explained that: Sometimes, we don't have enough time to go into depth on every value that we want to instill. We want to make sure that students not only learn dance, but also the social values that accompany it (Y, 2023). Through these observations and interviews, it can be concluded that although dance can be an effective tool in instilling the value of tolerance, this challenge requires special attention and strategies from educators to ensure that all students can learn and develop in a supportive atmosphere.

## **6. The Impact of Dance on Social Attitudes Outside School**

Dance activities not only have an impact on the growth of tolerance in the school environment, but also have a positive impact on students' social attitudes outside of school. The results of observations and interviews with parents of students show that children who are involved in dance activities become more confident and are able to interact well with various social groups. Mrs. S, a student's guardian, explained that after participating in dance activities, her child became more active in socializing with his friends:

My child has become more confident, and can easily socialize with anyone without feeling inferior. They often gather to imitate dance movements together and remind each other if there are wrong movements, so that a sense of complementarity is formed (S, 2023). Students also feel the

positive impact of this activity. R, one of the students, stated: I feel more comfortable socializing with friends from different backgrounds. Dancing together makes me appreciate differences more, and I become more adaptable (R, 2023). Mrs. N, another guardian, added that dance has helped children learn about cooperation and mutual respect. She said:

Dance activities make my children appreciate teamwork more. They learn that success in dancing is the result of a collaborative effort, not just individual effort. This also applies outside of art activities, they find it easier to work together on group assignments at school (N, 2023). In addition, dance activities also provide opportunities for students to develop their interest in local culture. This is shown by the increasing curiosity of children to learn dances and customs from other regions. Mrs. S said:

My child has become more interested in other cultures, and often tells stories about the dances he has learned. He even searches for videos on YouTube to learn more about traditional and contemporary dances (S, 2023). Involvement in dance improves students' artistic skills and develops positive social attitudes. This shows the important role of dance in helping students become more tolerant individuals and appreciate diversity in their society.

## **Discussion**

This study shows that dance plays an important role in shaping the tolerance attitude of elementary school students. In dance activities, students learn to appreciate the beauty of cultural diversity through movements inspired by various traditions. This process allows students to be more open to differences, increase empathy, and strengthen cooperation. This finding is relevant to the theory of tolerance attitudes that underscores the importance of direct experience in building acceptance of differences. According to (Bandura, 1977), tolerance is influenced by exposure to positive diversity, which in the context of this study is manifested through students' experiences in dance.

The results of this study are also in line with the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) which emphasizes that learning through observation and social interaction can internalize positive values. In dance activities, students learn through observation and collaboration that reflects the social learning model. This can be seen from changes in students' attitudes who become more appreciative of diversity and are able to work together effectively in groups.

In addition, the results of this study support previous findings by (Hartini et al., 2016) which stated that cultural arts, including dance, have the potential to strengthen students' character through the development of empathy, discipline, and responsibility. Specifically, this study shows that local wisdom-based dance can be an effective medium for instilling values of tolerance in a multicultural environment. Research by (Rosala, 2016) also confirms that cultural arts help students understand the value of diversity, which is relevant to the finding that students involved in dance activities become more sensitive to cultural differences.

However, this study also found several challenges, such as differences in students' understanding of the concept of tolerance and time constraints in the curriculum. These challenges are similar to the results of the study by Hikmah & Hakim (2019) which suggested the use of character-based art modules as one solution to increase the effectiveness of arts and culture learning. With a more structured approach, the values of tolerance can be more easily internalized by students. Overall, this study strengthens the understanding that dance not only functions as an art medium, but also as a means of character education that can shape students' attitudes of tolerance. By integrating dance into the character education curriculum, students not only acquire art skills, but also social values that support harmony in a diverse society. The results of this study provide a significant contribution to the development of more inclusive and culture-based learning strategies.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that dance has a significant role in increasing the tolerance of elementary school students. Through dance activities, students not only acquire artistic skills but also develop social values such as empathy, cooperation, and appreciation for cultural diversity. The dance learning process involving interaction, collaboration, and reflection has proven effective in helping students understand and accept differences, both in cultural and personal contexts. By utilizing dance as a medium for character learning, students become more open to diversity, are able to build harmonious social relationships, and have the ability to adapt in a multicultural environment. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating dance into the character education curriculum as a strategic step to support the creation of a more tolerant and inclusive young generation. Based on these findings, further research can further explore dance teaching methods that can increase tolerance values in a broader context. Additional research is also needed to evaluate the long-term impact of dance activities on students' social attitudes outside the school environment.

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