

Teachers' Strategies in Building Tolerance in Early Childhood

Cut Salfitri Ria¹, Hijriati²

¹²Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

¹210210021@student.ar-raniry.ac.id ²hijriati@ar-raniry.ac.id

*Corresponding Author

Submission November 27, 2024	Revised January 19, 2025	Accepted April 17, 2025	Publish 05 May, 2025
------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	----------------------

ABSTRACT

Early childhood education is crucial for instilling empathy, tolerance, and social values through creative methods, while Aceh Flexi School addresses inclusion challenges with teacher strategies and training to foster harmony. This study examines teachers' strategies in fostering tolerance and the challenges faced in the learning environment. Using a qualitative case study, it explores teachers' methods through interviews, observations, and documentation, validated by source and method triangulation. Results show teachers use adaptive, contextual, and experiential approaches, introducing diversity via stories, play, and cooperation. Strategies are tailored to children's character, emphasizing healthy social interaction and positive emotions. Teachers model inclusivity and fairness, supported by the learning environment and parental involvement. Challenges include external influences, child conflicts, and limited facilities and training. Children need time to adjust. Teachers overcome obstacles through restorative approaches, experiential learning, and emotional support. The synergy among school, children, and community strengthens tolerance practices despite limited resources. In conclusion, fostering tolerance in children requires adaptive approaches, direct experience, and environmental support, with active roles from teachers, parents, and the community to overcome challenges and build inclusive character.

Keywords: Teacher Strategies, Tolerance, Early Childhood Education.

Copyright © 2025 by Authors, Published by STAI Publisistik Thawalib Jakarta

A. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is crucial in supporting children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, serving as a foundational pillar for long-term academic success and well-being (Sindhu & Gupta, 2024). Quality early education helps children acquire fundamental skills such as language, executive function, and socio-emotional competence (Davies et al., 2024). Birth to eight years is critical for brain development (Richter et al., 2021). Early childhood education also supports school readiness, reduces social disparities, provides ongoing benefits even during pandemics, promotes professional development for teachers, and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in ensuring universal access to quality early childhood education (Chattopadhyay, 2025; Davies et al., 2021; Eadie et al., 2021; Alaníz-Hernández, 2024; Spiteri, 2022).

Early childhood education is also vital in shaping social skills, empathy, and moral values as the basis for a tolerant attitude (Badea & Suditu, 2024). Activities such as creative drama and role-playing can enhance social awareness and acceptance of differences (Güven &

Adıgüzel, 2015). In addition, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has been found effective in instilling the values of tolerance, as it incorporates social principles (Atamturk, 2018). Early social studies education helps children understand democratic values, family diversity, and special needs, strengthening an inclusive and tolerant mindset (Kimzan & Acer, 2025). Tolerance is essential in creating a peaceful and inclusive life in multicultural societies through early education that instills values of cooperation and respect for differences (Rokhmansyah, 2017; Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Tolerance is a complex concept crucial for fostering peaceful coexistence in diverse societies. It encompasses various aspects such as culture, politics, ethnicity, religion, gender, and social life (Costantini et al., 2024). Measuring tolerance is challenging due to varying definitions and applications in different social contexts (Verkuyten, 2022). In cultural and social contexts, tolerance helps balance relations between majority and minority groups (Sayama & Yamanoi, 2020; Obratsov & Marchenko, 2022). However, religious tolerance is often criticized for being superficial, as it does not always promote genuine dialogue and mutual understanding (Smith, 2017; Rüpke, 2023).

Aceh Flexi School, an inclusive school in Aceh Province, applies a learning system that integrates students from diverse backgrounds, including children with special needs. Learning experiences at this school reveal that implementing tolerance is a normative requirement and a practical challenge. Initial observations show that teachers at Aceh Flexi School face complex social dynamics, where differences in learning styles, communication abilities, and cultural and religious backgrounds lead to interactions that are not always harmonious. In many cases, misunderstandings among students trigger minor social conflicts in class, which require specific strategies from teachers to prevent discrimination or marginalization.

Teaching tolerance to students requires various strategies, such as using local cultural stories, engaging films, and field trips to foster understanding of diversity (Zakiah et al., 2023). Teachers play a crucial role, with those with 4–7 years of experience generally showing higher tolerance levels than those with 20–40 years, possibly due to professional fatigue. Personal traits such as emotional stability and patience also enhance their effectiveness (Goncharevich et al., 2019). Methods used include Islamic Religious Education and EFL classes that promote inclusive values (Anwar et al., 2024; Atamturk, 2018). However, challenges remain, such as limited interfaith education and the need for teacher training (Sirry et al., 2024; Lukashova, 2016).

Research by Sayyidatul Munawwarah shows that at Pelita Hati Integrated Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Banjarmasin, teachers instill tolerance among regular children and children with special needs through educational activities such as storytelling and the "Breakfast Program." These strategies foster positive interaction, although there are still obstacles such as limited facilities and underutilized roles of special education assistants (Munawwarah, 2023). Meanwhile, character-based learning in inclusive schools contributes to developing mutual respect among students (Fayza et al., 2024). Role modeling, class discussions, and seating arrangements also support the development of tolerance (Mursyidah et al., 2022).

This study aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of teacher strategies in inclusive education. However, its uniqueness lies in its context, conducted at Aceh Flexi

School, which features the socio-cultural characteristics of Banda Aceh and implements a flexible learning system. This provides a distinct perspective on understanding the approaches used. The primary focus of this research is to explore in depth the strategies teachers use to instill tolerance in children and to identify the various challenges that arise during the process in an inclusive and adaptive school environment.

This study aims to uncover the strategies teachers use to instill tolerance in students within the inclusive environment of Aceh Flexi School, as well as identify the challenges faced in the process. The findings are expected to offer practical contributions to developing tolerance-based and inclusive teaching strategies and serve as a reference for teachers, schools, and policymakers. The research reveals that teachers use approaches tailored to the students' characteristics and the flexible learning system. However, they continue to face obstacles such as limited resources and the need for training to address student diversity.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' strategies in instilling tolerance in early childhood students (Moleong, 2019). The case study was conducted at Aceh Flexi School, Jalan Ahmad Tuha No. 1, Gampong Ceurih, Ulee Kareng Subdistrict, Banda Aceh City. The research subjects included teachers working in the inclusive education environment and students from the "Tumbuh Kembang" class. The primary informants were selected purposively from the "Tumbuh" class, as they were considered the most relevant and capable of providing in-depth information regarding implementing tolerance values in the school environment (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data collection techniques in this study included semi-structured interviews with the "Tumbuh" class teacher to explore their strategies for teaching tolerance to children. In addition, students were interviewed to assess their understanding of and responses to the value of tolerance. Participant observation was conducted during classroom learning activities, particularly on social interactions among students from diverse backgrounds. The researcher closely examined teachers' attitudes, language, and methods when conveying the value of tolerance. Documentation was also collected, including students' work, classroom activity photos, and school records or archives relevant to the theme of tolerance.

Data analysis in this study followed an interactive analysis technique consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. During the data reduction stage, information from interviews, observations, and documentation was selected, categorized, and simplified according to the research focus. Data was then presented using descriptive narratives and matrices to facilitate understanding of emerging patterns. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verification, in which the researcher interpreted the overall meaning of the data and ensured its validity through triangulation and rechecking with informants and field notes.

To ensure data validity, this study used source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation involved comparing data from different informants, such as teachers and students. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, participant observations, and school documents. This approach enabled cross-validation of data, thereby increasing the reliability of the findings. Through this method, the researcher obtained a more comprehensive and complete picture of the strategies used to instill tolerance

at Aceh Flexi School, while minimizing bias and misinterpretation of the data.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of a study on the strategies used by teachers to instill tolerance in children at the inclusive PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh. The research involved teachers as the main implementers of learning strategies, as well as the children as recipients of tolerance values in their daily school life. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation, which depicted the direct interaction between teachers and children in building an inclusive environment. All findings are organized based on the research focus to provide a comprehensive overview of how teachers instill tolerance in children at PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh. The results are then compared with relevant theories and previous research findings to strengthen the analysis scientifically.

1. Teachers' Strategies in Instilling Tolerance in Students at Flexi School Banda Aceh

a. Building Understanding of Tolerance

Based on the interview results, teachers at PAUD Flexi School understand tolerance as the ability to accept differences and live together with mutual respect. In the context of early childhood education, this understanding is not only conceptual but also serves as an important foundation in creating a learning environment that is welcoming to diversity. This aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which states that children's social development is greatly influenced by their interactions with people around them, including teachers, who are the figures they interact with the most within the school environment (Siregar, 2020).

One of the teachers stated that *"tolerance is the ability to accept differences and live together with mutual respect. In the context of early childhood, this is very important because each child has different backgrounds, characters, and needs"* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025). This understanding reflects the teacher's awareness that diversity is not an obstacle in the learning process, but rather a valuable richness that should be introduced to children from an early age so that they grow into inclusive and empathetic individuals.

Furthermore, the teacher emphasized that early childhood is a crucial stage in shaping children's perspectives on differences. In the statement, the teacher mentioned: *"If from an early age they are not taught about tolerance, they may easily judge or reject friends who are different"* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025). In other words, instilling the value of tolerance from an early age is believed to prevent the emergence of discriminatory attitudes and to foster children who are more open to diversity.

The observations conducted support the teacher's statement. It was evident that in daily learning activities, teachers often involved students in activities that fostered attitudes of helping and respecting one another. For instance, in fine motor art activities such as cutting and pasting, the teacher guided children who were already skilled to assist their peers who still needed support. There was no special treatment or exclusion based on the children's abilities or conditions. All children were treated equally and given space to interact collaboratively. The classroom atmosphere appeared warm and open, where every child was given the opportunity to express themselves without feeling discriminated against.



Documentation 1: It can be seen that the teacher is explaining the meaning of tolerance in front of the class, using simple language so that it is easy to understand for all students, including those with special needs.

In addition, the teacher introduced diversity through a simple yet meaningful approach. Activities such as storytelling, role-playing, and small group discussions were used as media to instill the values of tolerance. The teacher stated, *“Children who already understand better are usually asked to help their friends. for example, during cutting activities, those who are able will accompany friends who are still learning”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025). Empathy was also nurtured, such as when a child was sensitive to noise, the teacher guided the other children to lower their voices in order to create a comfortable environment for everyone. This not only fostered tolerance but also sharpened children’s social sensitivity toward the feelings of others.

The strategies implemented by the teacher are in line with the findings of Handayani and Munandar (2019), which emphasize that tolerance education in early childhood is more effective when delivered through concrete experiences rather than merely through lectures or instructions. The teacher acts as the primary role model, consistently demonstrating attitudes of compassion, patience, and acceptance toward all students. In this context, the teacher’s role is not only as an educator but also as a shaper of students’ fundamental values and character, which will have a long-term impact.

b. Tolerance Teaching Strategies

The strategies applied by teachers at PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh are adaptive and contextual, tailored to the psychological conditions, backgrounds, and unique needs of each child. Teachers do not merely instill the value of tolerance through verbal explanations but place greater emphasis on direct experiences in healthy social interactions. For example, when dealing with children who are either dominant or overly shy, teachers do not use a uniform approach but instead adjust their interventions in a subtle and personalized manner. The teacher stated, *“Our strategies are flexible, depending on the needs of the children. We believe that tolerance grows from healthy and respectful interactions in the classroom”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

This approach reflects a connection with the principles of social-emotional learning (SEL), which emphasize the importance of emotion regulation, empathy, and social relationships in shaping students’ character (Putri & Suharti, 2022). In learning activities, the teacher intentionally creates social moments that allow children to practice role-sharing, self-control, and respect for peers who are different.

Classroom observations revealed that the values of tolerance were not explicitly taught through lectures but were instead integrated into daily activities. For example,

during group discussions, children were guided to take turns speaking and to respond to their peers' opinions. In motor and play activities, the teacher organized groups on a rotating basis and ensured diversity of characters within them. This was done so that children would not only play with the same group but also learn to accept friends who are different.



Documentation 2: Group learning activities are guided by the teacher to ensure accessibility for all students without exception, including students with special needs who participate in the learning process alongside their peers.

The teacher explained, *"Every time we arrange groups, we make sure there is diversity of characters. From that, they learn to care and not be judgmental"* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

In addition to group activities, the teacher also incorporated reflective discussions carried out naturally as part of classroom routines. On many occasions, the teacher encouraged children to understand social situations around them, for instance, when a friend was struggling or feeling uncomfortable. The teacher stated: *"We teach them with simple sentences that are easy to understand, such as: 'Our friend is not feeling comfortable, let's help'. Over time, the children begin to understand and even tell us when one of their friends needs help"* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025). Based on observations, this approach successfully created a more cooperative classroom atmosphere, where children actively demonstrated empathy and willingness to help their peers without direct instructions from the teacher.

These strategies reflect an experience-based character education approach, which is highly relevant in early childhood education. The teacher's role as the primary model in demonstrating inclusive, fair, and open attitudes also becomes a key factor. The teacher stated, *"If the teacher themselves cannot accept children who are different, then the children will follow"* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025). In this regard, the success of instilling tolerance lies not only in the methods or learning programs but also in the teacher's own exemplary attitude.

These findings are reinforced by the study of Ramadhani et al. (2021), which emphasizes the importance of teacher role modeling in shaping children's moral character from an early age. In addition, Wahyuni and Kurniawan (2020) also assert that a learning environment that values diversity and fosters positive interpersonal relationships will enhance children's prosocial attitudes, including tolerance and empathy.

Overall, the strategies for teaching tolerance at PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh are designed based on the principles of inclusivity and direct experience. Activities such as rotational group work, reflective discussions, and assigning social roles to children serve as concrete means of fostering the value of mutual respect. The teacher acts not only as a facilitator but also as a role model who reflects tolerance values through daily attitudes. A learning environment built with this approach can provide a strong foundation for students in developing an inclusive, empathetic character that respects differences.

c. Meaningful Activities Provided by Teachers

The activities of students in the inclusive classroom for ages 4–6 at PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh demonstrate that the values of tolerance are not only understood cognitively but have also begun to be embedded in their daily behavior and interactions. Based on interviews and direct classroom observations, it was evident that the children had already developed social awareness to accept differences and to interact positively within a diverse environment.

When asked about their response to differences of opinion, the students expressed that they tried to listen first before responding or sharing their own perspective. One student stated, *“If a friend has a different opinion, I usually listen first without immediately arguing. For me, differences are normal”* (interview with Student, May 22, 2025). In classroom observations, similar situations were also found. When differences of opinion arose during group discussions, the teacher guided the children to express their views in turn. The children appeared to begin understanding that not everyone thinks in the same way, and that this does not hinder collaboration.

Group work activities serve as a concrete platform for students to directly practice tolerance. The children appeared enthusiastic when given the opportunity to collaborate with peers who were different from themselves. One student stated, *“I enjoy working with friends who are different because they have diverse ways of thinking. group work becomes more enjoyable”* (interview with Student, May 22, 2025). During observations of these activities, the children did not display exclusive tendencies but instead actively helped one another and exchanged ideas. This indicates that collaborative activities have successfully become a means of internalizing the values of tolerance through social interaction.

Not only in group activities, but the understanding of differences was also evident when students participated in lessons that contained values of respect for diversity. One of the subjects most favored by the students was Civics Education (PPKN), as it often discussed living in harmony and respecting one another. *“The teacher also told stories about figures who fought for unity despite coming from different backgrounds,”* said one student (interview with Student, May 22, 2025). These stories served as an effective bridge to introduce social values in language and contexts that were easy for children to understand.

The experience of sharing stories about family traditions also became one of the activities that demonstrated the growth of tolerance. In this activity, students were asked to share their household practices. One child said, *“I came to know that my friends have different ways of celebrating special days”* (interview with Student, May 22, 2025). This activity not only introduced the concept of cultural diversity but also fostered curiosity and appreciation for differences, as expressed by another student: *“I feel happy and curious when learning about my friends’ cultures”* (interview with Student, May 22, 2025).

From the perspective of social interaction, the students also described their adaptation process with different peers as positive. *“At first it felt a bit awkward, but over time we became close and helped each other,”* said one student (interview with Student, May 22, 2025). This indicates significant social development in children’s ability to mingle, collaborate, and build healthy relationships.

Students’ perceptions of their teacher’s attitude also reflect indicators of success in developing an inclusive and fair learning environment. *“In my opinion, our teacher is very fair. Every child is given the opportunity to speak, and no one is treated differently”* (interview with Student, May 22, 2025). Classroom observations reinforced this statement; the teacher was consistently seen giving balanced speaking time to each child and always using positive and inclusive language.

These findings are in line with the concept of social-emotional learning developed by CASEL (2021), particularly within the domains of social awareness and relationship skills. Children who are accustomed to being in diverse and inclusive learning environments tend to develop stronger empathy and social skills. This is further supported by Hidayat (2021), who stated that collaborative interactions in early childhood contribute to the growth of prosocial attitudes such as empathy and mutual respect.

Thus, the daily activities of students in the growth and development class at Flexi School Banda Aceh have reflected the implementation of tolerance values in a concrete and contextual form. An inclusive learning environment, combined with the teacher’s fair approach and encouragement of diversity, provides space for children to grow as open-minded, empathetic individuals who are able to live harmoniously within diversity.

2. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Strategies to Instill Tolerance in Children at Flexi School Banda Aceh

a. Obstacles in the Teaching Process

Efforts to instill tolerance in early childhood at inclusive schools such as PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh present various challenges that arise not only within the classroom but also from the external environment. Based on interviews conducted with several teachers, the greatest challenge arises when students have to interact outside the school setting. One teacher explained, *“The challenge is actually felt more when we take the children outside, interacting in environments that do not yet understand our school’s concept. Sometimes there are children from outside who don’t understand, so we feel sorry when our students, who are already used to understanding differences, end up feeling confused or uncomfortable”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

This condition was also confirmed through observations during outdoor activities. It was seen that some children became more withdrawn when interacting with groups outside the school community. This indicates that the surrounding environment, which is not yet accustomed to inclusive practices, can create social confusion for the children and at the same time become an obstacle to the consistent development of tolerant character.

Conflicts among students also still occur within the classroom learning context. The teacher explained that a restorative approach is the primary method used to address such conflicts. *“Usually, when children are playing and a minor conflict arises, we as teachers step in to find out the details who started it, what happened and then the children are asked to explain. We emphasize that no actions that hurt or belittle friends are allowed. This is part of directly practicing tolerance within play activities,”* explained one teacher (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

The observations supported this, showing that teachers were actively facilitating when misunderstandings occurred among children. Instead of immediately giving

punishment, teachers preferred to guide the children in recognizing their emotions and expressing their opinions openly. This approach aligns with the practice of restorative teaching, where conflict resolution is carried out through communication and reflection rather than through pressure or unilateral prohibition.

The next challenge lies in supporting children with special needs, who have diverse requirements and characteristics. In this regard, teachers are required to be more patient and flexible in their approach. One teacher stated, *“It really takes extra effort and attention, especially for children who are not comfortable mentally or physically. Teachers also need to be mentally strong, because it requires patience. But we still make every effort, because every child here has different needs”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

Observationally, teachers were seen dividing their attention between groups of children with regular learning needs and those with special needs. In practice, they provided longer learning breaks for certain children and carried out learning in a more individualized manner. This reflects pedagogical flexibility in a challenging situation.

In terms of facilities, PAUD Flexi School, which is community-based, also faces challenges in providing adequate learning resources. Limitations in classroom space, teaching aids, and learning materials pose significant obstacles. One teacher explained, *“Since we are a community-based school, learning activities and training are usually conducted on weekends. Sometimes the available space or tools are limited, but we still strive to ensure that all children can participate and feel valued”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

Field observations showed that some learning activities were carried out using simple tools. Nevertheless, the learning atmosphere remained conducive and full of enthusiasm. This demonstrates that limited facilities do not entirely become an obstacle, as long as there is commitment and creativity from the teachers.



Documentation 3: Collaborative learning using simple writing tools, which can develop cognitive intelligence while fostering the values of kinship and social care.

The main strategy applied by teachers in dealing with students who find it difficult to understand the concept of tolerance is by providing real-life examples in daily routines. Teachers strive to build children’s understanding of the importance of accepting differences through small actions, such as encouraging them to greet new friends, help peers in need, or work together in heterogeneous groups. *“We start with small things. For example, when a child refuses to cooperate, we invite them to discuss and give direct examples. Sometimes it is also supported by parental involvement.*

Parents here are very supportive,” (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

Observations also showed that parents played an active role in school activities. During several weekend programs, parents were seen participating in games together and sharing stories in front of the class. This reinforced the values taught by teachers and created consistency between the home and school environments.

Overall, the challenges in the process of teaching tolerance values at PAUD Flexi School include the influence of a less inclusive external environment, the potential for conflicts among children, diverse student needs, and limited learning facilities. Nevertheless, teachers continue to strive to create a fair and supportive learning environment through dialogic approaches, concrete practices, and support from parents.

b. Factors Influencing Tolerance Education

The implementation of strategies for instilling tolerance values at PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh is influenced by various interrelated factors. These factors include the diversity of students’ backgrounds, support from parents and the community, availability of teacher training, school policies, and the indicators of success used in evaluating the outcomes of these strategies.

Based on the interviews, teachers explained that cultural, religious, and ability differences among children are not seen as obstacles but rather as a starting point for instilling tolerance values. *“In terms of differences in background, we have emphasized from the beginning that all children are different. Here, no one is exactly the same. Children learn that differences are normal,”* one teacher explained. The more significant challenge, however, arises when children interact with environments outside the school that do not yet understand the concept of inclusivity. *“The challenge is more about how to help them naturally get used to understanding this, especially when outside of school they see things that are different”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

Parental and community support also plays a crucial role in the success of this strategy. Based on the interviews, teachers emphasized that parental involvement is not limited to formal school activities but also extends to children’s daily social interactions. *“Parental support is truly remarkable. If a child feels shy or is not yet accustomed, the parents help explain. Some even directly encourage other children to be friendly or greet each other so that the atmosphere remains warm”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025). This is reinforced by observations during weekend activities, where active interactions among parents, children, and teachers were evident in various group play activities. The school community demonstrated a positive response in maintaining an inclusive atmosphere.

Another influencing factor is teacher training. Teachers revealed that formal training related to tolerance education is still very limited. However, they gain significant benefits from regular internal training sessions as well as from direct field experience. *“In terms of formal training, there hasn’t been much yet. But from field experience, as well as internal training we conduct on Saturdays or during community activities, those really help us understand children’s character and how to convey values like tolerance”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025). Observations showed that teachers frequently shared best practices during informal discussions and community activities, making the teaching and learning process more reflective and adaptive.

In addition, school policy plays a crucial role in supporting the strategy of instilling tolerance values. Since its establishment, PAUD Flexi School has set inclusion as a core principle. One teacher stated, *“The school policy is actually very supportive. From the very beginning, it has been instilled that every child is unique*

and must be respected. There is no discrimination, and all of our programs are designed so that children feel accepted, heard, and able to develop according to their individual abilities” (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

The indicators of success for tolerance strategies are qualitative in nature, focusing more on changes in children’s behavior rather than cognitive aspects. The teacher stated that success is measured through the children’s daily social interactions. *“We observe their everyday behavior. For example, how they greet friends who are different, how they cooperate when a friend is struggling, or when they show care and concern. Success is not measured by exam scores, but by the attitudes they demonstrate toward their peers”* (interview with Teacher, May 22, 2025).

The observation results support this statement. The children were seen actively interacting without regard to their friends’ backgrounds, as well as demonstrating helpfulness and respect for differences during group play activities. This indicates that the strategies implemented by the teacher have begun to yield results in the form of behavioral changes that reflect the values of tolerance.

Thus, the implementation of tolerance strategies at PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh is influenced by the synergy between an inclusive school culture, the involvement of parents and the community, experience-based training, and consistent policy support. Although the external environment sometimes presents challenges, the school’s internal strengths enable the values of tolerance to remain firmly embedded.

c. Children's Response to Tolerance Education

The students at PAUD Flexi School Banda Aceh showed a positive response to the dynamics of diversity they encountered in their daily learning and play activities. Through interviews and observations, it was found that the children’s adaptation process occurred gradually, yet made a significant contribution to the development of tolerant attitudes from an early age.

In the initial stage, some students admitted that they felt somewhat confused when interacting with peers from different backgrounds. However, this feeling gradually shifted to comfort and joy as the intensity of interaction increased. *“At first, I felt happy but also a little confused. Yet, after getting to know them better, I became more accustomed. Friends who are different actually make playtime more enjoyable because we can share stories,”* expressed one of the students (interview with Student, May 22, 2025). Observations during group play activities also showed that the children were actively interacting and demonstrated interest in their friends’ stories and habits.

When faced with conflicts or differences of opinion, most students chose to calm themselves first before resolving the issue verbally or with the help of the teacher. This reflects the children’s tendency to adopt a non-confrontational approach and begin developing empathetic communication skills.

The role of the teacher was perceived as highly significant by the students in resolving conflicts and helping them understand differences. One child expressed, *“Yes, the teacher often helps. When disagreements or misunderstandings occur, the teacher invites us to sit together and gives each of us the opportunity to share one by one”* (interview with Student, May 25, 2025). Observations also revealed that the teacher actively facilitated small discussions when misunderstandings arose among the children, while providing simple explanations and encouraging empathy.

Furthermore, cross-cultural interactions within the classroom are regarded as enhancing children’s social experiences. In activities involving the sharing of family habits or traditions, students exhibit considerable interest in the differences observed in everyday practices. The observations also indicate that children respond to such

differences with enthusiasm and openness, reflecting the emergence of an initial understanding of diversity as a natural and positive aspect of social life.



Documentation 4: The students appear to be playing together, with the interaction occurring naturally and joyfully, reflecting the creation of an inclusive and empathetic environment.

Overall, students' responses to the challenges of diversity in the classroom demonstrate a process of habituation and the development of a positive attitude of tolerance. Children are not only able to adapt to a diverse social environment but also begin to show the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, understand differences, and build harmonious social relationships. This achievement cannot be separated from the role of teachers as fair facilitators, as well as the supportive school environment that fosters inclusive learning.

D. CONCLUSION

Teachers at Flexi School Banda Aceh instill tolerance in early childhood through adaptive, contextual, and experiential approaches. Children are introduced to diversity early on through storytelling, games, group activities, and the habitual practice of empathy and cooperation. Teaching strategies are tailored to each child's character, emphasizing the importance of healthy social interaction and positive emotions reinforcement. Teachers also serve as role models by demonstrating inclusive, fair, and open attitudes, strengthening tolerance values within the learning environment. Nevertheless, teachers face several challenges, such as the influence of a non-inclusive external environment, interpersonal conflicts among students, limited facilities, and a lack of formal training in tolerance education. Children also require time to adapt to diverse settings. To address these challenges, teachers apply restorative approaches, create meaningful learning experiences, and provide consistent emotional support. Gradual strategies, parental involvement, and synergy between the school

and community are key to success. The implication is that tolerance education strategies must continue to evolve through ongoing teacher training and school policies that support inclusive approaches. The learning model at Flexi School can serve as a reference for other schools in building an educational ecosystem that respects diversity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors extend their deepest gratitude to all parties supporting and assisting during this research. Special thanks are conveyed to the teachers and students at Aceh Flexi School who kindly agreed to participate as respondents and share their valuable experiences regarding implementing tolerance in an inclusive environment. Appreciation is also directed to supervisors and colleagues for their guidance, feedback, and motivation, which greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study. It is hoped that the findings of this research can offer practical contributions to the development of tolerance- and inclusivity-based learning strategies and serve as a source of inspiration for teachers, schools, and policymakers.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

- Author 1 : Responsible for designing the research framework, collecting data through interviews and observations, and composing the analysis and discussion sections of the study.
- Author 2 : Conducted the literature review, assisted in data processing, drafted the background and methodology sections, and formulated conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings.

LITERATURE

- Abdurrohman, I. M. P., Mudana, I. W., & Margi, I. K. (2025). The role of the hidden curriculum in fostering tolerance: A case study of public high schools in Mataram City. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 15, e2025160. <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.15.160>
- Ainna, A. F. N., Putri, S. A. K., Amiruddin, Yapid, B. M., Burhanuddin, & Nurdin, N. H. (2019). Multicultural education and student tolerance at Islamic senior high school in Bali, Indonesia. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 9(11), 77–88.
- Anwar, S., Fakhruddin, A., Faqihuddin, A., Sudirman, & Romli, U. (2024). Understanding tolerance: Student perceptions of Islamic religious education in public universities. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 10(2), 294–307. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i2.38649>
- Atamturk, N. (2018). The role of English as a foreign language classes in tolerance education in relation to school management practices. *Quality and Quantity*, 52, 1167–1177. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0575-7>
- Awang-Hashim, R., Kaur, A., & Valdez, N. P. (2019). Strategizing inclusivity in teaching diverse learners in higher education. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 16(1), 105–128.
- Badea, M., & Suditu, M. (2024). *Modern early childhood teacher education: Theories and practice*. IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/9798369309568>
- Capodiec, A., Rivetti, T., & Cornoldi, C. (2019). A cooperative learning classroom intervention for

increasing peer's acceptance of children with ADHD. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 23(3), 282–292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1087054716666952>

Casel. (2021). *Social and emotional learning (SEL) framework*. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

Chattopadhyay, P. (2025). Tracing the trajectory of ECCE in India in the context of NEP 2020:

Opportunities and challenges. In *New education policy, sustainable development and nation building: Perspectives, issues and challenges* (pp. 298–316). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003607380-21>

Costantini, H., Al Mujahid, M. A. A., Hosaka, K., Ono, T., & Nihei, M. (2024). Instruments to assess people's attitude and behaviours towards tolerance: A systematic review of literature. *Societies*, 14(7), Article 121. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14070121>

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Davies, C., & Kong, S. (2024). Sustained benefits of early childhood education and care (ECEC) for young children's development during COVID-19. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 22(2), 238–257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X231213488>

Davies, C., Hendry, A., Gibson, S. P., Gliga, T., McGillion, M., & [Last author]. (2021). Early childhood education and care (ECEC) during COVID-19 boosts growth in language and executive function. *Infant and Child Development*, 30(4), e2241. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2241>

Dražanová, L. (2017). *Education and tolerance: A comparative quantitative analysis of the educational effect on tolerance* (pp. 1–2886). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b10889>

Dursun-Bilgin, M., Çelik, M. U., & Kasımoğlu, E. S. (2018). The role of communication in tolerance education. *Quality and Quantity*, 52, 1179–1186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0628-y>

Eadie, P., Levickis, P., Murray, L., Page, J., Elek, C., & [Last author]. (2021). Early childhood educators' wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 49(5), 903–913. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01203-3>

Fayza, A. M., Isnawati, & Abdullah, A. (2024). Penanaman nilai toleransi melalui pembelajaran berbasis karakter di sekolah inklusif. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 14(1), 12–25. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpk.v14i1.62100>

Goncharevich, N. A., Shaidurova, O. V., Kovalevich, I. A., Pomazan, V. A., & Rostovtseva, M. V. (2019). Dependence of teachers' tolerance level on their teaching experience and some personality traits. *Science for Education Today*, 9(4), 214–230. <https://doi.org/10.15293/2658-6762.1904.13>

Goncharevich, N. A., Shaidurova, O. V., Kovalevich, I. A., Pomazan, V. A., & Rostovtseva, M. V. (2019). Dependence of teachers' tolerance level on their teaching experience and some personality traits. *Science for Education Today*, 9(4), 214–230. <https://doi.org/10.15293/2658-6762.1904.13>

Güven, İ., & Adıgüzel, Ö. (2015). Developing social skills in children through creative drama in education. In *Drama and theatre with children: International perspectives* (pp. 55–65). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315716985-17>

Handayani, R., & Munandar, A. (2019). Strategi pembelajaran nilai toleransi pada anak usia dini. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 10(1), 45–56.

Hidayat, R. (2021). Kolaborasi dalam kegiatan bermain sebagai penguatan sikap toleransi anak usia

- dini. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, 23(2), 66–75.
- Hurlock, E. B. (2000). *Perkembangan anak*. Erlangga.
- Isac, M. M., Sandoval-Hernández, A., & Miranda, D. (2018). Teaching tolerance in a globalized world: Final remarks. In *IEA Research for Education* (Vol. 4, pp. 125–135). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78692-6_8
- Khamzina, K., Stanczak, A., Brasselet, C., Desombre, C., Legrain, C., Rossi, S., Guirimand, N., & Cilia, F. (2024). Designing effective pre-service teacher training in inclusive education: A narrative review of the effects of duration and content delivery mode on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 36(1), Article 13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-024-09851-8>
- Kimzan, İ., & Acer, D. (2025). Action research through art: Social studies in early childhood. *Journal of Educational Research*, 118(3), 201–220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2025.2454686>
- Lickona, T. (2013). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility* (Edisi Terjemahan). Bumi Aksara.
- Lukashova, S. (2016). The relationship between teachers' communicative tolerance and their styles of pedagogical communication. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 2016(December Special Issue), 1077–1083.
- Lundberg, E. (2018). School, friends, or a matter of personality?: A multidimensional approach to exploring sources of tolerance among students. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 38(2), 155–173. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-5949-2018-02-05>
- Mamat, N., Hashim, A. T., Razalli, A. R., & Awang, M. M. (2022). Multicultural pedagogy: Strengthening social interaction among multi-ethnic pre-school children. *New Educational Review*, 67(1), 56–67. <https://doi.org/10.15804/ner.2022.67.1.04>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Moleong, L. J. (2019). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Edisi Revisi). Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Munawwarah, S. (2023). Strategi guru dalam menanamkan sikap toleransi terhadap anak reguler dan anak berkebutuhan khusus di PAUD Terpadu Inklusi Pelita Hati Banjarmasin. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 8(1), 45–54. <https://ejournal.ulm.ac.id/index.php/paud/article/view/15687>
- Mursyidah, A., Nuryadi, & Anwar, A. (2022). Strategi guru dalam menanamkan nilai toleransi di sekolah inklusi. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar*, 13(2), 135–146. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um020v13i2p135-146>
- Nagovitsyn, R. S., Bartosh, D. K., Ratsimor, A. Y., & Maksimov, Y. G. (2018). Formation of social tolerance among future teachers. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 7(4), 754–763. <https://doi.org/10.13187/ejced.2018.4.754>
- Nosheen, K., & Gaad, E. (2025). Towards inclusive education: A critical analysis of inclusive education practices in Pakistan. In *Lecture Notes in Civil Engineering* (Vol. 587, pp. 479–488). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-84371-6_39
- Nurhadi, D., & Isnaini, N. (2020). Keterbatasan fasilitas tidak selalu menjadi penghambat selama guru mampu melakukan inovasi dalam proses pembelajaran. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 11(1), 1–12.

through digital learning resource at professional education institutions. *Perspektiv Nauki i Obrazovania*, 57(3), 174–190. <https://doi.org/10.32744/pse.2022.3.10>

Putri, L. A., & Suharti, N. (2022). Pendidikan karakter berbasis pembelajaran sosial emosional di PAUD. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 12(2), 89–98.

Rachmawati, I., & Yusuf, M. (2023). Peran guru sebagai teladan dalam membentuk karakter anak. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 14(1), 77–85.

Ramadhani, S., Widodo, W., & Astuti, D. (2021). Implementasi pembelajaran berbasis nilai dalam pendidikan anak usia dini. *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 40(1), 11–13.

Richter, L. M., & Behrman, J. R. (2021). Measuring and forecasting progress in education: What about early childhood? *npj Science of Learning*, 6(1), 27. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-021-00106-7>

Rokhmansyah, A. (2017). Multikulturalisme dalam pendidikan: Upaya membangun toleransi di tengah keberagaman. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam-Ta'lim*, 15(1), 23–36. <https://doi.org/10.29313/talim.v15i1.2310>

Rüpke, J. (2023). Tolerance and lived religion. In *Tolerance and intolerance in religion and beyond: Challenges from the past and in the present* (pp. 54–65). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003082484-6>

Sakalli, Ö., Altinay, F., Altinay, M., & Dagli, G. (2021). How primary school children perceive tolerance by technology supported instruction in digital transformation during COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 752243. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.752243>

Sayama, H., & Yamanoi, J. (2020). Beyond social fragmentation: Coexistence of cultural diversity and structural connectivity is possible with social constituent diversity. In *Springer proceedings in complexity: Vol. NetSci-X 2020* (pp. 171–181). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38965-9_12

Sindhu, K., & Gupta, N. (2024). An analysis of the factors affecting access to the early childhood education and care: A systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. *Early Years*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2024.2417229>

Siregar, N. (2020). Teori Vygotsky dalam pendidikan anak usia dini. *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan*, 18(1), 34–41.

Sirry, M., Suyanto, B., Sugihartati, R., Tri Kartono, D., & Yani, M. T. (2024). Teachers' perspectives on tolerance education in Indonesian high schools. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 46(4), 505–519. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2024.2345213>

Sitanggang, A. O., Lubis, D. P., Muljono, P., & Pramono, F. (2025). A systematic literature review: Character education to build tolerance. *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 8(10), e2025201. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2025201>

Smith, S. E. (2017). Before Hegel and beyond Kant: Risto Saarinen's *Recognition and Religion*. *Harvard Theological Review*, 110(2), 301–313. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816017000098>

Spiteri, J. (2022). Contextual, cultural or what? Influences on children's environmental perceptions. In *International explorations in outdoor and environmental education* (Vol. 11, pp. 171–189). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-23182-7_9

Sugito, S. (2020). Strategi pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman dalam menanamkan nilai sosial pada

- Sugiyono. (2019). *Metode penelitian kualitatif, kuantitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Suparno, S. (2021). Keterlibatan orang tua dalam pendidikan karakter anak usia dini. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(1), 1–8.
- Suryana, Y., & Wiyani, I. (2022). Peran contoh langsung guru dalam menyelesaikan konflik dan memberikan teladan empati pada anak usia dini. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 10(1), 23–34.
- Terlouw, G., van'T Veer, J. T. B., Prins, J. T., Kuipers, D. A., & Pierie, J.-P. E. N. (2020). Design of a digital comic creator (it's me) to facilitate social skills training for children with autism spectrum disorder: Design research approach. *JMIR Mental Health*, 7(7), e17260. <https://doi.org/10.2196/17260>
- Verkuyten, M. (2022). The meanings of tolerance: Discursive usage in a case of 'identity politics'. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 52(2), 224–236. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12339>
- Wahyuni, R., & Kurniawan, A. (2020). Pendidikan inklusif dan pembentukan karakter sosial anak. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Inklusif*, 8(2), 101–110.
- Zakiah, L., Sarkadi, & Marini, A. (2023). Teachers' strategies in teaching social tolerance to elementary school students in Jakarta, Indonesia. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(2), 839–855.

