

## Building Students' Social Awareness through Multicultural Education

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### ABSTRACT

Social awareness is a vital character trait shaped by educational patterns and internalized values. One of the most effective ways to cultivate this trait is through multicultural education, particularly when implemented in school settings. This educational approach fosters key attitudes among students—such as respect, acceptance of differences, and the ability to collaborate across ethnic and cultural boundaries. Through these attitudes, students develop a deeper national consciousness grounded in an appreciation for diversity. This study aims to explore effective pedagogical strategies for internalizing cultural diversity values and to identify the challenges educators face in this process. The goal is to move beyond merely recognizing differences as social realities and toward embracing them as strengths that support a harmonious and inclusive society. The outcome of this research is the development of a contextual multicultural education model tailored for school environments. This model seeks to equip students not only with knowledge about cultural diversity but also with the social competencies to act inclusively, fairly, and tolerantly. Multicultural education, therefore, serves as a foundational element in shaping a generation that is aware of human dignity and capable of coexisting peacefully within a pluralistic society. The study adopts a descriptive qualitative method, relying on conceptual analysis of previous research, relevant theories, and credible academic sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of how multicultural education can effectively nurture students' social awareness.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Education, Social Awareness, Building Students' Social Awareness

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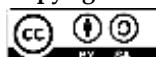
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## INTRODUCTION

Social awareness is a social behavior that is characterized by a value system that lives amid social entities and is formed into good behavior (Mulyawati et al., 2022). Understanding and concern for social conditions regarding the impact of a person's actions in society is a social awareness that involves empathy, social responsibility, and positive contributions based on shared welfare. Conceptually, the meaning of social awareness is in the empirical realm, with the scope of several conditions included in the normative empirical meaning (Isdiyanto, 2018). This attitude reflects an attitude of consistency from within a person, and that awareness is owned in its entirety through their rights and obligations in the community itself (Abute, 2019). The emergence of social awareness is also influenced by the educational factors received and taught. Social awareness through multicultural education refers to the approach of understanding and appreciating cultural, ethnic, and social diversity in the context of education. The direction of multicultural education is to instill the values of tolerance, inclusion, and respect for differences in society. Efforts to integrate these different perspectives into the curriculum and teaching practices, multicultural education encourages students to understand and appreciate different backgrounds, reduce stereotypes, and promote social justice.

Multicultural education is a pattern of educational approach to appreciate, integrate, and respond to cultural diversity in the teaching and learning process (Salman et al., 2023). This approach pattern is through the delivery of a curriculum that reflects cultural perspectives, as well as developing an attitude of tolerance and understanding of intercultural among students. Multicultural education is not only focused on introducing different cultures, but also on eliminating stereotypes, discrimination, and social injustice (Lasaiba, 2022; Lesatari et al., 2023). The goal is to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment, preparing students to function according to effective behavior amid the dynamics of a multicultural society (Phytanza et al., 2023). This concept is widely recognized in educational literacy as an important instrument for forming a harmonious society and understanding the complexity of intercultural relations. Social awareness is obtained from learning outcomes obtained through education to easily understand social institutions in a pluralistic society. Through multicultural education, the diversity that grows amidst social dynamics places social awareness as an important instrument for students themselves. Multicultural education is education that can produce intelligent students with a vision of understanding local culture, a high attitude of tolerance, and forming a mature and comprehensive perspective for students. Multicultural education can create a cultured and friendly learning environment without discrimination, even with the diversity of religious, racial, and cultural backgrounds (Lasaiba, 2022).

Implementation in schools has made multicultural education an important part of fostering students to appreciate differences more, inclusive in a harmonious framework. This condition can effectively strengthen empathy and sympathy among fellow students, to encourage each student to be able to understand a conducive social situation in mobilizing the values of togetherness that they have (Khoiriyah, 2023). Multicultural learning offers an alternative by using a learning method based on the diversity that is developing in its environment. For students in particular, the learning model not only increases cognitive knowledge but also builds social awareness amid multicultural entities (Mahendra, 2023).

Several studies related to this article have also been carried out, namely implementing a multicultural education pattern to build students' understanding of cultural differences to create an attitude of social awareness. Tareze (2022), in the results of his research on the SDGs Collaborative Learning Model in Formal Education as a Global Issue to Increase Social Awareness of Students, found that formal schools collaborating on SDGs can have a positive effect on increasing knowledge and social awareness. In addition, it also has a positive effect on the development of students' knowledge and skills and responsible attitudes as educated people (Tareze et al., 2022). Windayani (2024), with the research title Building Multicultural Awareness Through the Implementation of Inclusive Education Models in Schools, found that the multicultural education model can be an effective means of changing students' mindsets, encouraging tolerance, and building a broader understanding of cultural diversity. Teachers play a key role as the most important figures in the education system, including in the implementation of the curriculum (Windayani et al., 2024). The main problem in Building Students' Social Awareness Through Multicultural Education lies in the suboptimal integration of multicultural values in the curriculum and learning practices in schools. Many educational institutions are still normative and homogeneous in their approach, so they fail to respond contextually to the cultural, religious, and social diversity that exists in the students' environment. In addition, there are limitations in teacher competence in implementing multicultural education in a reflective and transformative manner, as well as a lack of evaluation facilities that can measure the development of students' social awareness holistically. This creates a gap between the ideal goals of multicultural education and the reality of educational practices in the field.

Related to the research results above, another aspect that needs to be studied and researched is students' social awareness when viewed in their social interactions. What kind of multicultural education approach is applied to students in building student awareness? The purpose of this study is to build students' social awareness through a multicultural education approach that can foster an attitude of tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for differences. In addition, this study also aims to identify effective pedagogical strategies in and at the same time

challenges in internalizing the values of cultural diversity into students, so that they not only understand differences as social realities, but also make them a strength to build a harmonious and inclusive life together. This study is the birth of a multicultural education model that can be applied contextually in the school environment, so that students not only have knowledge about diversity, but also develop inclusive, tolerant, and fair social attitudes. Thus, multicultural education is expected to be the foundation in forming a generation that is aware of human values and can live side by side harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

Research Building Students' Social Awareness Through Multicultural Education has strategic significance in responding to the challenges of globalization that demand the younger generation to have the ability to live in a pluralistic and heterogeneous society. Through this study, it is hoped that a solid pedagogical foundation will be formed to instill the values of tolerance, justice, and social solidarity from an early age, to create a harmonious and civilized social order. This research is important as a scientific and practical contribution in forming inclusive and transformative education amidst the dynamics of the world's multicultural society. Through multicultural education, students are invited to not only recognize but also appreciate differences, to reduce discrimination and social conflict. This research is important because it can provide real contributions in designing educational policies that support the formation of a more tolerant and competitive generation at the international level. This paper examines and explores students' social awareness obtained from multicultural education so that students can understand, integrate, and interact amidst their social diversity.

## **METHOD**

This descriptive qualitative research method uses a conceptual approach through secondary sources or library research. The materials used are secondary, namely research results, scientific works, and books written by experts. In descriptive qualitative research with a conceptual approach through library studies, data processing and analysis are carried out systematically with the following stages: Secondary Data Collection Data is collected from various relevant scientific sources, such as Indexed journal articles (national and international), Scientific books from education and multiculturalism experts, Research reports from credible institutions, and Education policy documents related to multiculturalism. Data is selected purposively, namely only sources that have strong relevance to the theme of social awareness and multicultural education.

Data Analysis The analysis was conducted using a content analysis approach, namely interpreting the meaning of the text content (articles, books, research reports) to understand how multicultural education is discussed and linked to students' social awareness. In addition, a thematic analysis was also conducted, namely by organizing data into main themes, such as the basic concept of multicultural education, strategies for strengthening social awareness, the role of teachers, and the school environment. Each theme was analyzed in depth to find relationships between concepts, gaps, and possible contributions to the development of educational theory or practice.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Construction of Students' Social Awareness and Implementation of Multicultural Education**

Social awareness is a form of inner attitude of the ability to read and understand the surrounding social conditions. Social awareness can be taught and developed in various ways, including learning that is instilled in students. Stimulation of students by fostering sensitivity to various environmental conditions and understanding social events that develop around them (Richi et al., 2023). Social awareness can be described as the result of the meaning of the ongoing contextual situation interaction process, about what is happening, what actions are taken, and decisions that are considered (Idrus et al., 2010). Social awareness is a reference in taking perspectives with others, respecting others with different backgrounds, and understanding social norms and environmental carrying capacity for existing welfare (Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017).

In a global landscape marked by the complexity of cultural identities and social inequalities, education has a historical and ethical responsibility to shape students' social consciousness as a foundation for a more just and inclusive society. Social consciousness – which includes empathy, collective responsibility, and understanding of social dynamics – needs to be constructed through a pedagogical approach that is not only informative, but also transformative. Multicultural education, in this case, becomes a strategic instrument in integrating the values of social justice, diversity, and tolerance into the learning process.

A recent study by Santoro & Smith (2021) confirms that multicultural education designed with a critical approach can increase students' social awareness, especially in the context of ethnic diversity and socio-economic backgrounds. Culturally responsive pedagogy must do more than simply acknowledge differences; it must also engage students in critical reflection on the socio-political structures that shape inequality (Santoro, N., & Smyth, 2021) (Caingcoy, 2023). This shows that multicultural education is not enough to be merely representative, but must be reflective and advocative.

Furthermore, research by Çoban et al. (2022) showed that students' participation in an inclusive multicultural curriculum significantly increased social empathy and critical thinking capacity towards global issues. Multicultural education not only fosters social cohesion but also a moral framework in which students learn to navigate ethical dilemmas in a diverse society. (Çoban et al., 2022).

Multicultural awareness is an important foundation in forming a tolerant, inclusive, and globally-minded generation. Amid the increasingly diverse society due to globalization, social mobility, and cross-cultural integration, multicultural education is no longer an option, but a necessity. Therefore, building students' multicultural awareness is one of the strategic priorities in the 21st-century education system.

Multicultural awareness is not just knowledge about ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural diversity, but deeper than that, including reflective attitudes, social empathy, and openness to differences as collective wealth. James A. Banks, a pioneer of multicultural education, stated that "multicultural education is a transformative process that helps individuals to develop a broader understanding of different cultural experiences, while simultaneously examining their cultural assumptions" (Banks, 2016). Thus, the construction of this awareness involves cognitive, affective, and axiological processes that are interactive and dynamic.

Social awareness for students has a strong construction divided into three main dimensions, namely:

- a. Tacit Awareness is an attitude of awareness that arises from the perspective of a person or other people.
- b. Focal Awareness is a form of objective awareness based on observations that come from within oneself or around oneself.
- c. While Content Awareness is an attitude of awareness that has been observed with attitudes through appearance or experience (Abute, 2019).

First, Tacit Awareness refers to knowledge and understanding that students have intuitively or unconsciously, often due to experience or practice. This knowledge and understanding is a form of knowledge that is difficult to express verbally, but influences how we behave and make decisions in certain situations. Tacit Awareness often involves sensitivity to subtle nuances and direct experiences that shape a person's abilities in a particular context.

Second, Focal Awareness is a mental state of students who focus intensely focused attention on certain objects or information, while other experiences are out of focus. This condition focuses on individuals to process information deeply and effectively. Focal Awareness is the key to cognitive processes such as problem solving and decision making when in social relationships.

Third, Content Awareness is the understanding or knowledge that students have about specific information, with full consideration. This includes awareness of the details, context, and meaning of the material obtained or studied. This ability is very urgent in learning and decision

making, because it can ensure that individual students process and assess the accuracy of information and details.

Social awareness can grow in line with the learning that occurs in the student's learning process. The ability to refer to recognize, empathize with others is a social awareness that understands the existence of major differences according to existing cultural history. The attitude of recognizing and agility in evaluating problems, both individually and in groups, in their interactions (CASEL, 2015).

According to Al Haikal, social awareness is not limited to the social aspects of each individual, but is also closely related to the personal side of a person who interacts with others, helps each other, and works together. In its achievements at the high school level, social awareness encompasses five aspects of categories, including; (1) the foundation of ethical behavior; (2) emotional maturity; (3) awareness of social responsibility; (4) self-development; (5) peer social relations (Hasbi et al., 2021).

In forming the construction of students' social awareness, it is also influenced by the learning obtained from multicultural education. The most important point of the objectives of multicultural education includes a method of teaching diversity that grows among students from natural situations, to raise an attitude of awareness of diversity, equal rights, humanity, justice, and the growth of democratic values in understanding and solving social problems (Mahendra, 2023).

Multicultural education is to apply the ability to read and master cultural literacy, namely relying on the limits of one's abilities and skills through reading, writing, speaking, calculating, and speed in solving problems (Herlanti et al., 2019; Islami et al., 2016).

Cultural literacy can also be interpreted as an effort to know, explain, and recognize the culture of the archipelago (national) and the preservation of local wisdom of a nation (Ahsani & Azizah, 2021). Therefore, a person's ability to understand diversity through social is the substance of the meaning of cultural literacy itself (Tohani & Sugito, 2019).

The application of multicultural awareness in education requires systemic integration at various levels, starting from the curriculum, teaching methods, to social interaction patterns in the school environment. First, the curriculum must be developed with an intercultural pedagogy approach, which places diversity as an integral part of the learning material. Not only studying other cultures superficially, but also analyzing power relations, the history of colonialism, and the social inequality that accompanies it.

Second, teachers, as the main actors in the educational process, must have multicultural competence. As stated by Nieto and Bode, multicultural teachers are those who not only understand the diversity of students but are also able to create safe, fair, and empowering classrooms of all cultural backgrounds. Continuous professional training and critical reflection on personal bias are crucial aspects in this regard (Nieto & Bode, 2018).

Third, multicultural education practices need to involve direct experience through cross-cultural activities, interfaith dialogue, and collaborative projects that stimulate interaction between students from various backgrounds. A study by UNESCO (2023) shows that participatory approaches and concrete experiences are more effective in forming empathy and reducing prejudice than conventional teaching methods (UNESCO, 2023).

Education is a process of changing attitudes, perspectives, and behavior of a person or group to mature attitudes of maturity through the process of teaching, training, behavior, and learning methods (Abildinova et al., 2024). In this perspective, the meaning of education is the process of cognitive instillation (transfer of knowledge). Meanwhile, etymologically, multicultural consists of two words, namely multi, which means many, diverse, and various, and the word cultural (culture) means culture, tradition, politeness, or maintenance. So the substance of the meaning of multicultural education is the teaching process to form and build students who understand the many differences in socio-cultural colors (people of color) (Maksum, 2011).

Multicultural education is expected to be able to produce a sustainable and harmonious life in the context of interactions in a pluralistic community life (Wilodati & Maftuh, 2023). In practice, multicultural education seeks to empower diverse educators and students (Mariyono,

2024), heterogeneous and plural, to understand and respect each other as a form of inclusive character or open to differences (Winata et al., 2020).

Ridhuanulloh explained that there are quite a lot of materials related to the values and meanings of multiculturalism, and some of them start with the introduction of ethnicity, religion, race, customs, and so on (Ridwanulloh et al., 2024). In the field of history and sociology, lessons are related to each other. In history lessons, students are taught how the origins or beginnings of a tribe, religion, or tradition developed, and then in sociology lessons, students are taught how to interact with individuals or groups. In addition, material is also provided on how one should respect one another or have a sense of tolerance to avoid conflicts that will trigger divisions between groups or individuals.

Normatively, multicultural education is in line with the principles of social justice and human rights. In a practical context, this is a preventive mechanism against radicalism, discrimination, and intolerance that have the potential to threaten social cohesion (Lawyer, 2018; Sleeter, 2014). An empirical study by Berry in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* proves that individuals with high levels of multicultural awareness tend to have more stable psychological well-being, lower levels of social anxiety, and better social skills (Berry & Ward, 2016).

The construction of students' multicultural awareness is not an instant process, but rather a continuous pedagogical transformation. Planned, reflective, and inclusive educational interventions are needed so that students not only understand diversity as a social fact, but also internalize it as a value that guides behavior and decisions (Tamang, 2023). Thus, multicultural education is not only an instrument of social integration but also the foundation of a civilized civilization.

### **The Role of Educators in Building Social Awareness**

Education plays a central role in shaping social awareness, which is the foundation for an inclusive, just, and sustainable society. Through the right pedagogical approach, education not only transfers knowledge but also fosters empathy, social responsibility, and awareness of diversity. In the architecture of 21st-century education, educators do not only act as transmitters of knowledge, but also as agents of social transformation who are responsible for shaping students' social awareness. Social awareness, which includes empathy, justice, and collective responsibility, does not grow naturally, but is constructed pedagogically through role models, reflective dialogue, and value-based learning.

According to Ladson-Billings (2021), effective teachers in the context of a pluralistic society must be able to apply culturally relevant pedagogy that not only values diversity but also teaches students to understand and challenge unfair social structures. He emphasized that teaching is never neutral; teaching supports the status quo or challenges it by fostering critical awareness in students (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Educational philosopher John Dewey emphasized that schools are social institutions that aim to prepare individuals to live in a democratic society. According to him, education should encourage active participation and critical reflection on social reality. In his work, Dewey stated that education is a regulatory process for sharing in social awareness, and adjusting individual activities based on this social awareness is a sure method for social reconstruction.

Research by Sarifin (2024) shows that the integration of sociology into the school curriculum can increase students' social awareness and responsibility. Through an understanding of social issues and diversity, students are invited to think critically and develop cultural competence (Sarifin et al., 2024). In addition, multicultural education in elementary schools is effective in increasing students' empathy and social awareness. Methods such as project-based learning and materials that reflect diversity encourage positive interactions between students from different backgrounds (Lubis et al., 2024).

Anhar in Wahid (2023) explains that in building social awareness for students, the role of educators is very strategic. Especially in the school environment because students experience growth and development in various aspects. The roles of educators include correctors,

inspirators, informants, organizers, motivators, initiators, facilitators, guides, demonstrators, class managers, mediators, supervisors, and evaluators (Riyadi & Adilah, 2022).

Teachers as educators and guides in the school environment, teachers have a strategic opportunity in patterning students' perceptions in responding to social issues. Teachers also have great potential to instill moral values, life ethics, and social responses to maintain harmony with fellow students and the community. Paulo Freire in Sumitro, three awarenesses are derived from the educational paradigm. The three consciousnesses are magical consciousness, naive consciousness, and critical consciousness (Sumitro & Yuliadi, 2019)

First, Magical Consciousness is a level of human (society) consciousness that is unable to see the connection between one factor and another. This level of consciousness for a person is the inability to act rationally, and his lifestyle is in a problem area. The inability to assess the correlation of social events makes him tend to interpret all events magically. This condition can form a form of biased behavior when interpreting various events in his daily life. Second, Naive Consciousness, namely the existence of self-change to adjust to the undeniable reality of life, towards correcting deviations in a person in a hard system. Naive consciousness can also be said to be a form of transitional consciousness. In the context of naive consciousness, each individual understands that social dynamics affect their socio-cultural facts, but there is no effort to improve the system. Each individual at this level of consciousness tends to position themselves more with the existing dynamic system. Third, Critical Awareness is divided into two forms, namely: First, acceptance or rejection of each individual towards the exploitative discriminatory behavior of the authorities, Second, behaving naturally, consciously, and systematically to make changes or improve the system for the better. If naive awareness blames itself, but in a critical awareness attitude, it tries more to make changes without blaming itself. The main actor in determining the success of student formation in schools is the teacher (Mizaniya & Muqowim, 2020). Of course, education in values and morality is needed, including honesty (Munif et al., 2021). Honesty is part of building students' social awareness (Suciati et al., 2023). Honesty is one of the main achievements that must be realized by educators in the learning process, as a foundation in equipping students with skills, character integrity, respect for the environment, and a tolerant attitude in every social interaction that is carried out every day (Elsayed, 2024; Sakti et al., 2024). Through the value of honesty, students' social awareness can grow significantly, enabling them to position themselves appropriately in distinguishing between rights and obligations, as well as fostering a sense of responsibility for every action taken.

Nunung Pertiwi (2021) describes several important points of teacher patterns and strategies as educators in forming honest character in building students' social awareness (Pertiwi, 2021), including; First, conduct intensive and continuous teaching to students. Building social awareness through teaching honest character should continue to be provided by all teachers in schools. If students are accustomed and accustomed to being taught to be honest, it will make them more trustworthy and always get good assessments from others. Building students' social awareness through instilling an honest attitude cannot be done in passing, but the learning must be intensive and ongoing. Second, get used to behaving honestly. Teacher educators in schools must provide examples of teaching students the habit of behaving honestly. Getting used to behaving honestly for teachers provides knowledge about honesty, getting used to being honest at school, especially when learning hours begin (Daniah, 2018). Teachers also need to provide rewards for students' honest behavior, for example, words of praise to students who do not cheat in learning, and are responsible for all their actions. This method can make students continue to maintain honest behavior, both at school and outside of school. Third, Exemplifying. In addition to being an educator, a teacher can exemplify an example that can be imitated by their students. Especially when giving examples of teaching honest character, a teacher does not just transfer and add knowledge, but much more importantly exemplifies honest behavior (Aprilianingsih & Lisnawati, 2019).

Fourth, provide punishment. The provision of punishment must still be useful as an evaluation for students and learning to be responsible for all the risks of their behavior. Punishment is a form of control to accustom students to be honest in building their social

awareness (Nuraisah et al., 2023). The punishment given is by the level of risk and should not be excessive according to the impact of the student's actions themselves. Fifth, always carry out honest reflection. Honest reflection is a way to evaluate students' attitudes while under the teacher's supervision regarding students' honest behavior. While at school, the figure of a teacher should also reflect this honesty. The purpose is to change students after honest reflection so that it can be applied in schools, families, and communities (Gonz & Ortiz, 2020). In the process, formal education aims to form self-awareness for students. Teachers have a strong and dominant role in strengthening self-awareness in each of their students (Harefa et al., 2022; Laoli et al., 2022). Teachers should be figures who carry out character formation and not only transfer knowledge, but are also strong in building students' personalities who obey legal norms (Zendrato & Lase, 2022). Character education that emphasizes values such as integrity, empathy, and social responsibility contributes significantly to the development of social awareness. Programs such as "Adiwiyata School" show that the integration of character values in school activities can encourage active participation of students in social and environmental activities (Judijanto & Purnama, 2024). Civic education also plays an important role in forming attitudes of tolerance and global awareness. Through relevant curriculum and inclusive learning environments, students are encouraged to understand democratic values and active participation in society (Andriani, 2024).

Emotional intelligence plays a role in shaping students' social behavior (Adiba & Latip, 2021). Studies show that high levels of emotional intelligence are positively correlated with social interaction skills, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skill development (Tika et al., 2024). Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs have been shown to increase empathy, reduce physical aggression, and improve students' academic performance. The implementation of SEL since elementary school can reduce the likelihood of students engaging in negative behavior in the future (Adiba & Latip, 2021; Cahill & Dadvand, 2020). Recent empirical studies by Zembylas (2022) show that emotionally and critically trained educators have a significant contribution in fostering students' social awareness through inclusive and reflective learning. Zembylas writes that emotionally responsive teaching can humanize education, making room for social awareness and ethical action among students (Zembylas, 2022). Thus, the role of educators in building social awareness goes beyond the cognitive dimension; it touches the affective and ethical realms. Educators become mediators of humanitarian values and social justice, which if implemented consistently, will produce a generation of learners who are not only intellectually intelligent but also sensitive to social realities.

Education has a strategic role in shaping socially conscious and responsible individuals. Through the integration of social values in the curriculum, the development of emotional intelligence, and a pedagogical approach that emphasizes active participation, education can be an effective tool for social transformation. Thus, investing in socially conscious education is an investment in the future of a more just and inclusive society.

### **Challenges of Multicultural Education in Building Social Awareness**

Multicultural education is very important in the lives of Indonesian people to contribute to maintaining harmony between humans. Multicultural education will see living beings as humans who will not be separated from the basic roots of cultural foundations and ethnic communities (Saptadi et al., 2023). The factual phenomenon of multicultural education in this era, a construction of paradigms, methodologies, and ideologies that are considered capable of exploring the diversity of the nation, diversity of language literacy, ethnic richness, differences in religious beliefs, culture, and other social pluralities. Multicultural education as a teaching of wisdom is very effective in anticipating in responding to negative impacts in the era of globalization (Aprilianto & Arif, 2019).

In the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, the polarization of social dynamics has faded, and the collapse of social humanities values has occurred. The growth of the current generation, as millennials who were present around the 1990s-2000s, has shown a tendency towards symptoms of moral decadence. The tendency towards a consumerist lifestyle, free association, being indifferent, not respecting differences, and the collapse of ethical behavior on social



media are evidence of a series of immoralities. Social media contributes to reversing students' behavior and way of thinking. Everyone becomes free and accustomed to commenting freely, criticizing through writing, and available publication media (Herlina, 2018). Multicultural education is a strategic approach in building an inclusive and tolerant society amidst cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. However, its implementation faces various complex challenges that require in-depth analysis and sustainable solutions.

- a. **Limited Teacher Competence.** One significant challenge is the lack of teacher training and understanding of the principles of multicultural education. According to Tira Nur Fitria (2023), the success of multicultural education is highly dependent on teacher innovation and concern in developing learning methods that respect diversity. Without adequate training support, teachers tend to adopt a homogeneous approach that is insensitive to students' cultural differences (Fitria, 2023).
- b. **Lack of Integration in the Curriculum.** Eko Suncaka (2024) identified the dilemma in integrating multicultural values into the education curriculum. Often, the approach used is symbolic, such as celebrating a particular culture, without touching on deeper aspects such as values, norms, and different world perspectives. This can lead to shallow understanding and be ineffective in building multicultural awareness (Suncaka, 2024).
- c. **Social and Political Resistance.** The implementation of multicultural education often faces resistance from the community and policymakers who view diversity as a threat to national identity. A study by Rahmawati et al. (2024) shows that without strong policy support and collective awareness, multicultural education efforts can be hampered by conservative political and social dynamics (Rahmawati et al., 2024).
- d. **Digital Divide and Neocolonialism.** Technological developments, especially the use of artificial intelligence (AI), bring new challenges to multicultural education. Nyaaba et al. (2024) highlighted that AI developed with a dominant cultural perspective can reinforce bias and marginalization towards local cultures, creating a form of digital neocolonialism in education (Nyaaba et al., 2024).

The dynamics of this era of change have also led to the entry into the periodization stage of internet-based technology, or referred to as the era of revolution 4.0. This era is a situation where rapid development of technology and information occurs. The impact is that the industrial revolution 4.0 has influenced the paradigm, behavior, and patterns of human life (Ekasari & Dharmawan, 2012). The factual conditions of the industrial revolution 4.0 show that the role of multicultural education is urgently expected to be able to ward off and minimize all the impacts it causes. Of course, every student can be wise in using social media carefully, not reckless in conveying words, writings, and criticisms (Seben Zatkova et al., 2022; Winata et al., 2020). Multicultural education is faced with a challenge of globalization that is structured and massive. Globalization, which gives birth to digitalization, has become a homogenization of people's patterns and lifestyles. Multicultural education is very important to accommodate to build social awareness for students, which also becomes capital to overcome several inevitable challenges of globalization (Firmansya, 2024; Lonto & Umbase, 2020).

James A. Banks, a leading figure in multicultural education, emphasizes the importance of balance between national unity and cultural diversity. He stated that "without diversity, unity can turn into cultural oppression; without unity, diversity can lead to social fragmentation" (Banks, 2016). Mohammad Mahatir in Mu'min (2016) is of the view that the globalization situation has given birth to multiple new realities that must be addressed, including the shift in society from modernity to postmodernity (Mu'min, 2016). All humans living in this modern era are beginning to feel a behavioral crisis, which is marked by theoretical-philosophical issues to practical-empirical issues. Another form of challenge is the reality of the plurality of the Indonesian nation as a vast archipelagic country with 13,000 islands, a population of 282,477,584 people consisting of 200 languages and 300 different tribes, and inhabited by various religious beliefs embraced by the Indonesian people. This fact is certainly an important note that multicultural education is an urgent instrument in answering all these facts.

All societies in the world have been approached by globalization with all the impacts found between acceptance (positive) and rejection (negative). The positive impact in this era is at the point of development of information and communication technology. While the negative impact is that almost most humans have fallen into the trap of the object of globalization. Based on this condition, various preparations are needed, namely mental and intellectual, to overcome the era of globalization as a social phenomenon. The ability to choose and sort, and filter from the form of change has become a challenge for multicultural education itself. Anita Lie said that globalization has three challenges for multicultural education in Indonesia, namely: First, the phenomenon of hegemony in our educational climate, there is a situation of elasticity between excellence and affordability. Students are carried away by the current to separate themselves from school by adjusting their socio-economic, religious, and ethnic conditions. Second, the curriculum is based on socio-economic status, local culture, gender, and geography. This provides a direction of imbalance in forming students' multicultural awareness. Third, teachers. The ability and competence of teaching staff, especially teachers in Indonesia, need to be improved, especially in providing multicultural learning (Lie, 2019). At a macro level, the educational climate is faced with challenges in the global-multicultural era by presenting education as an important identity, to produce students who have high competitiveness (qualified) or become blind consumers who are unable to face the massive globalization attacks. Global-multicultural is full of competition, intrigue, and ideological threats. In other social institutions, especially the real economy and financial systems, the challenge of consumerism in multicultural education also affects the formation of students' social awareness. In dealing with all these challenges, the implementation of teaching patterns given to students must be able to facilitate improving the quality of knowledge levels on a national scale. The diverse learning conditions of students also provide a broader understanding and experience. Students can communicate with various ethnic cultures and become a harmonious bridge in the future when facing job opportunities (Mahmudah & Tamjid Noor, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

To build students' social awareness in understanding cultural diversity and the strong current of globalization pressure, multicultural education in schools is very urgent in exploring cultural and racial differences among students. Students need to be equipped with an inclusive educational approach to support students' different backgrounds. Social awareness for students that is expected through multicultural education is not just tacit awareness, namely intuitive awareness according to their personal views, but can also form the emergence of focal awareness, namely mental awareness with their own and others' perspectives, and content awareness in the form of awareness that can integrate all existing perspectives with confirmation through experience and understanding.

There are several strategic recommendations offered in this article related to multicultural education, namely; Organizing intensive training for teachers to improve their competence in managing culturally diverse classes. Integrating multicultural perspectives in depth into the curriculum, including in teaching materials, teaching methods, and evaluation. Inclusive Policy. Encourage governments and educational institutions to formulate policies that support diversity and inclusion in all aspects of education. Critical Use of Technology. Develop and use educational technology that is sensitive to local cultural contexts, and avoid the dominance of certain cultures in digital content. Multicultural education is key to forming a just and harmonious society in the era of globalization. However, the challenges faced require a holistic approach that involves all stakeholders. With a shared commitment, education can be an effective tool for social transformation in weaving diversity into a national strength.

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