

The Effectiveness of Multicultural Communication in Child Development at the Early Age of Buah Hati in Kapuas District

Lisnawati¹

Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangkaraya, Indonesia,

Correspondent: lisnawati17@gmail.com¹

Received : October 20, 2023

Accepted : November 28, 2023

Published : November 30, 2023

Citation: Lisnawati (2023). The Effectiveness of Multicultural Communication in Child Development at the Early Age of Buah Hati in Kapuas District. Sinergi International Journal of Communication Sciences.

<https://doi.org/10.61194/ijcs.v1i3.474>

ABSTRACT: This research departs from the social reality of the Kapuas community, which has cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. In this context, multicultural communication is an important aspect of early childhood learning and social interaction. The effectiveness of multicultural communication in this study is defined as the extent to which cross-cultural interactions can enhance children's social, emotional, and cognitive development in a heterogeneous environment. This study aims to analyze the role of multicultural communication in shaping early childhood character by examining key indicators such as increased adaptability, empathy, and social interaction. The results show that children actively engaging in cross-cultural interactions have better adaptability in various social situations, show higher empathy towards peers from different cultural backgrounds, and have more effective communication skills. In addition, this study offers a new perspective in understanding the role of multicultural communication in early childhood development, especially in areas with high levels of cultural heterogeneity. Previous studies have focused more on early childhood education in general without highlighting how multicultural communication plays a role in children's interaction and learning from an early age. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the importance of implementing multicultural communication in educational and family settings. Therefore, educators and parents are advised to create an environment that supports multicultural communication through joint play activities, cross-cultural discussions, and the use of diverse media as interactive learning tools. Thus, children can grow up in an inclusive environment and have strong social skills early on. This study uses descriptive qualitative methods and data collection techniques such as interviews, observation, and documentation. Multiculturalism plays an important role in improving the effectiveness of early childhood social and emotional skills. Early on, children exposed to cross-cultural interactions have better social adaptability and show higher empathy in interactions with peers from different cultural backgrounds. Multicultural communication's effectiveness was shown to positively impact early childhood social and emotional development in Kapuas district. This finding confirms the importance of implementing diversity-based communication strategies in early childhood education to improve children's social skills and readiness to face heterogeneous environments.

Keywords: Multicultural Communication; Child Development; Early Childhood Education.



This is an open access article under the CC-BY 4.0 license

INTRODUCTION

Multicultural communication in early childhood education plays an important role in shaping children's social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Children who grow up in a diverse environment have a greater opportunity to understand differences, develop an attitude of tolerance, and improve adaptability in

social interactions. For this reason, a communication approach is needed to help children interact well amid the cultural diversity around them. Children familiar with cross-cultural communication from an early age will find it easier to understand diversity and build more harmonious social relationships (Rahman, 2018).

Multicultural communication in early childhood education can be applied through various strategies, one of which is the use of technology in learning (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). Digital-based educational videos, such as interactive books and animated videos, can help children understand diversity more easily and interestingly (Lisnawati, 2023). Technology allows children to recognize various cultures through interactive images, sounds, and stories to have a more enjoyable and meaningful learning experience (Sari et al., 2023).

In addition, an arts and culture-based approach is also an effective strategy in shaping children's understanding of diversity. Through dance, music and folklore from various regions, children can learn about the values contained in each culture, making it easier for them to appreciate differences. This approach can also improve children's motor skills and creativity in their social environment (Rosala et al., 2021). The role of teachers is crucial in creating a learning environment that supports multicultural communication (Palchykova et al., 2019). Teachers who deeply understand cultural diversity can help children adjust and interact positively with peers from different backgrounds. Educators who apply inclusive communication methods can build a comfortable learning atmosphere, so that children are more confident in developing their social skills (Basri, 2021).

However, multicultural communication in early childhood education also faces challenges. One of the main obstacles is language differences, which can hinder children's social interactions. When children come from different language backgrounds, they may have difficulty understanding instructions or communicating with peers. Therefore, a bilingual or multilingual approach to learning is a solution to help children overcome communication barriers and adapt more easily to diverse environments (Sanah et al., 2024).

In addition to language barriers, the lack of training for educators on multicultural communication is also a challenge (Wagner & Byram, 2018). Teachers with insufficient understanding of cultural diversity may find it difficult to guide children to understand and accept differences. Therefore, training programs that provide insights and skills for educators to apply effective communication methods in multicultural environments are needed (Wardana & Astuti, 2022).

In addition to formal education, learning based on religious moderation can strengthen tolerance values in multicultural communication. Children who understand that diversity is part of life will more easily appreciate differences, both in social, cultural and religious aspects. Inclusive religious education can be a bridge in building harmony in diversity, so that children not only recognize their spiritual values, but also understand and appreciate the beliefs of others (Arini, 2024). Multicultural communication can be applied in the family environment through interactions that support an open and inclusive attitude towards cultural differences. Children raised in families that instill diversity values will be more open to accepting differences and have better social skills. Parents who apply parenting based on inclusive communication can help children develop a sense of empathy and respect for others in their social environment.

A more comprehensive approach is needed to optimize the application of multicultural communication

in early childhood education. Training programs for teachers, strengthening the diversity-based curriculum, and parental involvement in building an inclusive environment are important factors in shaping children who can adapt to a multicultural environment. This approach helps children in the learning process and shapes their character to be more tolerant, adaptive, and mutually respectful in social life (Gatot, 2023).

This research aims to analyze the effectiveness of multicultural communication in early childhood education in Kapuas district. By understanding how communication strategies can support children's social and emotional development, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive education policies as well as to guide teachers and parents in creating a harmonious learning environment that is responsive to cultural diversity (Sari et al., 2023).

METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods using data collection techniques such as interviews, observation and documentation.

This research uses the Descriptive Qualitative method, in which researchers seek to understand the effectiveness of multicultural communication in early childhood growth and development through systematic data collection. The data collection techniques used include interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore the perspectives of teachers, parents and related parties regarding the application of multicultural communication in early childhood education (Creswell, 2018). Observations were made to observe children's social interactions in a multicultural environment to understand how they adapt to diversity (Spradley, 2016).

This research was conducted in Kapuas District, which has a high cultural diversity, making it an appropriate location to examine the effectiveness of multicultural communication in early childhood development. The population in this study consisted of individuals directly involved in early childhood education, including early childhood teachers, parents and education personnel with experience in managing multicultural learning environments (Banks, 2015).

The sample selection was conducted using purposive sampling technique, which selects informants based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives. This technique is used to ensure that the data obtained comes from individuals with sufficient insight and experience in multicultural communication (Zhao, 2023). The main informants in this study consisted of:

PAUD “Buah Hati” teachers are important in implementing multicultural communication in school and shaping children's social interaction patterns. Teachers were selected based on their experience handling classes of children from different cultural backgrounds. Teachers play a role in adjusting learning methods to accommodate the needs of children from other cultures, which is very important in multicultural education (Gay, 2020)

Education personnel and the head of PAUD “Buah Hati” were selected to provide insight into school policies to support multicultural communication and the challenges faced in implementing diversity-based education strategies. Schools have a strategic role in building an inclusive environment for early childhood, so it was important to include the school principal in this study (Nieto, 2017).

Parents of young children living in multicultural environments were selected to understand how communication within the family can influence children's understanding of diversity. Parental involvement in multicultural education is crucial as the home environment is the first place for children to learn about diversity values (Epstein, 2018).

Early Childhood - Although children are not the main informants interviewed directly, observations of their social interactions are made to understand how they adapt and communicate in a multicultural environment. Observation is an effective method in early childhood research because it allows researchers to see children's social behavior in natural situations (Corsaro, 2020).

The number of informants in this study is adjusted to the principle of data saturation, which is when the information obtained is sufficient to describe the phenomenon under study and no significant new findings are found. This approach ensures that the research produces rich and in-depth data, which is a key principle in qualitative research (Creswell, 2018). With the right sample selection and appropriate data collection techniques, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of multicultural communication in early childhood education.

This research was conducted at Buah Hati Early Childhood Education (PAUD), which is located at Jalan Tambun Bungai, Selat Tengah Village, Selat Sub-district, Kapuas Regency, Central Kalimantan Province.

The data collection process in this study began with one week of observation at PAUD “Buah Hati” in Kapuas Regency to observe how children interact in a multicultural environment and the communication strategies teachers apply. After the observation stage was completed, interviews were conducted on different days with the main informants, namely teachers, parents, and education personnel, for 30 to 60 minutes per session. This interview explores multicultural communication's experiences, challenges, and effectiveness in supporting early childhood development. After the data from the interviews were collected, the researchers documented various aspects that supported the research, including school policies, learning materials, and activities that reflect the application of multicultural communication. If information is still lacking, researchers can conduct additional clarification through online communication with informants to ensure that the data obtained is complete and accurate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show that multicultural communication plays an important role in supporting early childhood development, especially in improving their social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Children who are used to interacting in a multicultural environment are more adaptable to understanding cultural differences and building harmonious social relationships (Fan et al., 2015).

Positive Impact of Multicultural Communication

Multicultural-based education has proven effective in shaping tolerance attitudes in early childhood. Children can understand differences without prejudice through learning methods that integrate local and global cultures (Jackson, 2019). In the Kapuas District PAUD “Buah Hati”, interactions between

children from different cultural backgrounds show that multicultural communication helps to increase empathy and inclusiveness from an early age. Children who frequently interact with peers from other cultures show a broader understanding of the values of diversity (Bennett & Hammer, 2017). In addition, multicultural communication also improves children's verbal and nonverbal communication skills, allowing them to participate in their social environment actively (Neuliep, 2016).

The Role of Teachers and Parents in Multicultural Communication

Teachers play a major role in building inclusive communication in the “Buah Hati” PAUD environment. This study found that teachers' strategies in delivering diversity-based materials greatly influenced children's understanding of cultural differences (Hoff, 2020). Teachers who apply open and inclusive communication methods tend to have students who interact more actively with peers from various backgrounds (Jandt, 2017). In addition to teachers, parents also have an important role in supporting multicultural communication at home. Parenting that instills tolerance and respect for diversity helps children develop a positive attitude in dealing with differences (Epstein, 2018). This study found that children raised in families that teach an open attitude towards cultural differences tend to have better social skills and adapt more easily to multicultural environments (Gu, 2016).

Challenges in Implementing Multicultural Communication

Although it has many benefits, multicultural communication faces challenges, especially in language and understanding different cultures. Some children have difficulty communicating with peers who speak a different mother tongue, necessitating a bilingual approach to learning (Çiftçi & Savaş, 2018). In addition, cultural stereotypes that still exist in society are also an obstacle in creating an inclusive learning environment (Gkaintartzi et al., 2020). Educators' limited understanding of multicultural communication strategies is also an inhibiting factor in their implementation. Teachers without training in multicultural classrooms tend to face difficulties in creating a harmonious learning environment (Slot & Leseman, 2021). Therefore, teachers need training programs to have adequate skills in managing diversity in the classroom (Nakayama, 2018).

Strategies to Improve the Effectiveness of Multicultural Communication

To overcome these challenges, a more comprehensive approach is needed to implement multicultural communication in PAUD. One strategy that can be implemented is strengthening a diversity-based curriculum that includes values of inclusivity and tolerance (Sorrells, 2020). In addition, integrating technology in learning can also help children understand cultural differences through interactive and interesting media (İlter, 2015). Using culture-based educational game methods can also be a solution to increase the effectiveness of multicultural communication. By involving children from various regions in games, they can more easily understand and appreciate cultural differences in a fun atmosphere (Rosala et al., 2021). In addition, collaboration between schools and families in supporting multicultural communication is also very important so that children get a consistent learning experience at school and home (Barrett, 2018).

The Effectiveness of Multicultural Communication in Child Development at the Early Age of Buah Hati in Kapuas District

Lisnawati

The results of this study show that multicultural communication contributes significantly to early childhood development, especially in social and emotional aspects. Children who engage in multicultural interactions tend to have higher levels of tolerance, better communication skills and a broader understanding of cultural differences. However, challenges in language, stereotypes, and limited educators are still obstacles that need to be overcome. Therefore, more innovative strategies and support from various parties are required to improve multicultural communication's effectiveness in early childhood education.

Table 1. Key Findings from Reviewed Literature

No	Author(s)	Year	Study Focus	Key Findings	Moderating Factors	Geographic Context
1	Bennett & Hammer	2017	Model sensitivitas komunikasi antarbudaya	Pendidikan multikultural meningkatkan empati dan keterampilan komunikasi sosial pada anak.	Pendekatan berbasis pengalaman	Global
2	Hoff	2020	Peran komunikasi dalam pembelajaran anak usia dini	Komunikasi efektif meningkatkan interaksi sosial dan kecerdasan linguistik anak.	Strategi komunikasi dalam pengajaran	Eropa
3	Epstein	2018	Peran orang tua dalam komunikasi multikultural	Pola asuh yang terbuka meningkatkan pemahaman anak tentang keberagaman.	Keterlibatan orang tua dalam pendidikan	Global
4	Barrett	2018	Pengaruh pendidikan inklusif terhadap komunikasi anak	Pendidikan inklusif meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi dan adaptasi sosial anak.	Kebijakan pendidikan inklusif	Inggris
5	Setyono & Widodo	2019	Representasi nilai multikultural dalam buku teks EFL	Buku teks berpengaruh terhadap pemahaman anak mengenai multikulturalisme.	Kurikulum berbasis nilai multikultural	Indonesia

The results show that multicultural communication is crucial in early childhood development, especially in shaping social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Interaction in a diverse environment allows children to understand cultural differences better, increase empathy and build inclusive attitudes from an early age. In the context of PAUD “Buah Hati” in Kapuas District, it was found that children who are used to interacting with friends from different cultural backgrounds have better adaptability. They easily establish social relationships and show high tolerance in their daily interactions. This indicates that diversity in the school environment positively impacts shaping children's character. In addition, the role of teachers in creating an inclusive learning environment is also very influential on the effectiveness of multicultural communication (Hoff, 2020; Holliday, 2021). Teachers who use culture-based learning methods can help children better understand and accept differences without prejudice. In the learning

process, strategies that combine various cultural aspects through stories, songs, and educational games have proven effective in improving children's understanding of diversity.

However, there are several challenges faced in implementing multicultural communication. The language barrier is one of the main obstacles, especially for children from different mother tongue backgrounds. This can cause limitations in their communication and social interaction. Therefore, a bilingual approach or a more inclusive language is needed so that every child can feel comfortable communicating. In addition, the role of parents is also very important in supporting multicultural communication at home. Children who get an understanding of diversity from their families tend to be more open in accepting differences in the school environment. Therefore, the synergy between school and family needs to be strengthened so that multicultural values can be applied consistently in children's daily lives. From the results of this study, it can be concluded that multicultural communication not only helps children build social skills but also contributes to their character development (Liu et al., 2023). Although there are still challenges in its implementation, with the right strategies, the educational environment can be an effective place to instill the values of diversity and tolerance from an early age.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The results of this study show that multicultural communication plays a significant role in early childhood development, especially in building social and emotional skills. Children accustomed to interacting with friends from different cultural backgrounds show better adaptability and more easily establish social relationships. This indicates that diversity in the learning environment provides positive benefits for children's development, especially in increasing their understanding of differences and strengthening attitudes of tolerance.

In addition, this study revealed that culture-based learning methods significantly impact the effectiveness of multicultural communication. Strategies such as folktales, traditional songs, and culture-based educational games are proven to help children better understand diversity in a fun and accessible way. Teachers who apply these methods can create a more inclusive learning atmosphere and allow each child to participate actively in the learning process.

However, this study also found some challenges in implementing multicultural communication, especially regarding language barriers. Children from different language backgrounds often experience difficulties communicating with peers, which can hinder their social interactions. Therefore, a more flexible approach is needed in the use of language in the PAUD environment so that each child feels more comfortable and confident in communicating. In addition to the role of the teacher, support from the family is also an important factor in the success of multicultural communication. Children who receive education on diversity values from their families tend to be more open and accepting of differences in the school environment. This shows that synergy between school and family is needed so that multicultural communication can be applied sustainably in children's daily lives.

Comparison with Previous Studies

This study's results align with several previous studies that highlight the importance of multicultural communication in early childhood development. This study found that children exposed to cross-

cultural interactions had better social skills, which is in line with the findings of Fan et al. (2015), who found that multilingual environments contribute to improving children's communication skills. In addition, this study also supports Bennett & Hammer's (2017) results which show that multicultural-based education can improve children's empathy and social communication skills. In the context of learning, this finding is consistent with Jackson's (2019) research, which revealed that integrating local and global cultures in the curriculum can improve children's understanding of diversity.

Compared to previous studies, this research provides a more in-depth perspective by focusing on the ECD context in Kapuas district, highlighting how cultural diversity affects children's communication dynamics. The results of this study strengthen the evidence that culture-based approaches and support from families and educators are crucial in ensuring the success of multicultural communication in early childhood education (Olsson, 2022).

Limitations and Cautions

This study has some limitations that need to be considered. The scope of the study was limited to one PAUD institution in Kapuas District, so the results cannot be generalized to all early childhood education contexts with different levels of diversity. In addition, the qualitative method emphasizes in-depth understanding rather than statistical measurement, so this study does not provide quantitative data on the impact of multicultural communication (Piller, 2017). Language barriers are also a challenge, especially for children who are not fully fluent in the language of instruction used at school. This can affect communication fluency and the completeness of data obtained from interviews and observations. As a precautionary measure, the results of this study should be interpreted following the research context and not generalized without considering the different social and cultural factors in each educational environment. Further research with a broader scope and diverse approaches is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of multicultural communication in early childhood education (Martin & Nakayama, 2018).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should include more educational institutions with diverse cultural backgrounds to make the results more representative. In addition, a quantitative approach can be applied to measure the impact of multicultural communication on children's development in a more measurable way. Future studies can also explore technology-based learning strategies and interactive methods that are more effective in supporting multicultural communication. In addition, the role of parents in shaping children's communication patterns in the home environment needs to be further investigated to understand how family involvement can strengthen diversity values from an early age. With a broader scope and more innovative approaches, future research is expected to provide more concrete recommendations in creating an inclusive learning environment for early childhood.

CONCLUSION

Multicultural communication is important in early childhood development, especially in shaping social,

emotional and cognitive skills. Children accustomed to interacting in a diverse environment show a better adaptation, a higher tolerance attitude, and more developed communication skills. However, challenges such as language barriers and educators' lack of understanding of multicultural communication strategies still hinder their implementation (Samovar et al., 2015).

Therefore, concrete steps are needed to overcome these obstacles, one of which is developing more inclusive education policies. The early childhood education curriculum needs to include multicultural communication strategies as part of the learning approach, for example, through strengthening materials about cultural diversity and training for educators to apply more effective communication methods.

In addition, collaboration between schools, parents, and policymakers is key in creating a learning environment that supports positive cross-cultural interactions. With more targeted policies and a diversity-oriented curriculum, multicultural communication can be a strategic tool in shaping children's character to be more inclusive. This will prepare them to live in an increasingly diverse society and build a more open mindset and respect for differences from an early age.

REFERENCES

- Arini, R. (2024). Pendidikan moderasi beragama untuk anak usia dini dalam konteks masyarakat multikultural. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 12(1), 45–60.
- Banks, J. A. (2015). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Barrett, M. (2018). The impact of inclusive education on children's communication skills. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 46(3), 245–260.
- Basri, H. (2021). Peran guru dalam membangun lingkungan belajar inklusif berbasis komunikasi multikultural. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 8(2), 78–92.
- Bennett, M. J., & Hammer, M. (2017). Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. *Intercultural Communication Journal*, 12(2), 115–130.
- Çiftçi, E. Y., & Savaş, P. (2018). The effect of multicultural education on children's self-expression skills. *Early Childhood Research Journal*, 21(1), 89–104.
- Epstein, J. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Fan, X., Zhang, L., & Wang, Y. (2015). Bilingual environment and early childhood communication skills. *Journal of Multilingual Education*, 8(2), 99–112.
- Gkaintartzi, A., Tsokalidou, R., & Nikolarea, E. (2020). Parental involvement in multicultural communication in early childhood education. *International Journal of Multicultural Studies*, 27(3), 150–166.
- Gu, X. (2016). Assessment of intercultural communicative competence in early childhood education. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 16(2), 236–255.
- Hoff, H. E. (2020). The evolution of intercultural communicative competence: Implications for classroom practice. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 3(2), 264–283.
- Holliday, A. (2021). *Intercultural communication: An advanced resource book for students* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- İlter, B. G. (2015). The role of digital media in promoting multicultural education in early childhood. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 311–316.
- Jackson, J. (2019). *Introducing language and intercultural communication* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Jandt, F. E. (2017). *An introduction to intercultural communication: Identities in a global community* (9th ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Lisnawati. (2023). The impact of the latest communication technology on social interaction according to the perspective of Employee Lecture Program (P2K) students at Muhammadiyah University of Palangkaraya. *JTIK: Jurnal Tingang Ilmu Komunikasi*, 1(1), 1–12.
<https://journal.umpr.ac.id/index.php/jtik/>
- Liu, X., Gallois, C., & Volcic, Z. (2023). Teaching intercultural communication in early childhood settings. *Journal of Educational Research*, 30(1), 45–60.
- Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2018). Reconsidering intercultural communication competence in multicultural classrooms. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 25(1), 12–28.
- Nakayama, T. K. (2018). Challenges in multicultural communication in early education. *International Review of Education*, 64(4), 423–440.
- Neuliep, J. W. (2016). *Intercultural communication: A contextual approach* (7th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Olsson, U. (2022). Multicultural education in preschool: A Scandinavian perspective. *Early Childhood Studies*, 19(2), 78–96.
- Palchykova, L., Ivanova, M., & Sokolova, T. (2019). The role of foreign language learning in intercultural competence development. *Journal of Language Education*, 24(1), 100–115.
- Piller, I. (2017). *Intercultural communication: A critical introduction*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Rosala, D., Masunah, J., & Narawati, T. (2021). The integration of cultural arts in early childhood education. *Journal of Early Childhood Development*, 15(3), 56–72.
- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R., & Roy, C. S. (2015). *Intercultural communication: A reader* (14th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Setyono, B., & Widodo, H. P. (2019). Representation of multicultural values in EFL textbooks. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(1), 1–13.
- Slot, P. L., & Leseman, P. P. (2021). Professional development of teachers in multicultural classrooms. *Early Years Education*, 29(4), 412–429.
- Sorrells, K. (2020). *Intercultural communication: Globalization and social justice* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Spradley, J. P. (2016). *Participant observation*. Waveland Press.
- Ting-Toomey, S., & Dorjee, T. (2018). Understanding intercultural communication in early education. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Communication*, 22(2), 99–115.
- Wagner, M., & Byram, M. (2018). The role of language learning in intercultural competence development. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51(1), 140–150.
- Wardana, I. K., & Astuti, P. S. (2022). Language attitudes of teachers as a model for early childhood education. *Journal of Language Studies*, 18(2), 78–91.
- Zhao, H. (2023). Digital media and cross-cultural communication in preschool education. *Educational Technology Review*, 35(1), 89–102.