



## **EFL Students' Views of the Multicultural Education in an Indonesian Islamic Higher Education**

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### **Abstract**

Education cannot be separated from culture. It is possible to provide learning and be tolerant of other cultures. Multicultural education offers diverse cultures, ethnicity, and religion. The study aims to explore students' views of multicultural education in learning at an Indonesian Islamic higher education. It employs a descriptive study by applying a quantitative approach. By considering the ethnic and study program, respondents in this study were determined through the purposive sampling technique by involving 25 students from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training UINSI Samarinda, each representing five different study programs in the faculty. They enrolled as Ma'had Al-Jami'ah students obligated to study English in their initial semester. They were chosen from various study programs because they came from different ethnic backgrounds. This study collects data with a questionnaire instrument distributed online through a Google Forms. Descriptive statistics were used to tabulate and present the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire. The findings in this study provide an overview of the different perspectives of students at Islamic higher education on multicultural education in their learning. This study groups students' views of multicultural education in learning at Islamic higher education into three categories, (1) Highly Supportive on Multicultural Education, (2) Moderately Supportive on Multicultural Education, and (3) Lowly Supportive on Multicultural Education. Most of them have understood the values of multicultural education and are very supportive of its implementation in every lecture and campus policy but there are still students who do not understand the values of this multicultural education. Continuous studies are necessary to support the application of this

multicultural education from time to time according to the needs of each institution.

**Keywords:** multicultural education, students' views, Islamic higher education

## A. Introduction

Indonesia is a country that has ethnic and cultural diversity. In simple terms, Indonesia can be called a multicultural society with no less than 1,330 ethnicities, 370 languages, six religions, and religious beliefs recognized by the state (Dokhi et al., 2016). The Indonesian nation's cultural diversity is an undeniably historical and social reality. The uniqueness of these diverse cultures impacts personal behavior and character as a living tradition in society. The ethnicities differ from one tribe to another. In addition, diversity continues to expand and change throughout time. We cannot deny that we live in a diverse world. As a result, the Indonesian nation upholds the slogan " *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* " as a means of bridging all racial, ethnic, religious, and other distinctions inside the country (Nurhayati, et al., 2021).

Indonesian people live in a very diverse culture. This diversity brings two perspectives, namely horizontal and vertical. Religion, race, regional language, geography, and culture are some of the contrasts that illustrate the horizontal variety of our country (Abidin, 2016). Meanwhile, the variety of our country can be observed from a vertical view in the disparities in education level, economics, employment, settlement, and social culture level (Noor & Sugito, 2019).

Multiculturalism refers to variety, distinction, and cultural diversity, including race, ethnicity, and religion. In another context, multiculturalism is an ideology that emphasizes that a pluralistic nation is one in which diverse cultures coexist peacefully and demonstrate an openness to tolerate the cultures of others (Wahid, 2001). In line with multiculturalism, (Idris et al., 2012) explain the role of education as a medium for forming human resources, both individually and socially, so they have the ability. This education is closely related to the individual, society, and cultural environment. Based on the reasons above, education cannot be separated from culture. It is possible to provide learning and be tolerant of other cultures. Multicultural education offers diverse cultures, ethnicity, and religion.

Multicultural education is an approach that suits Indonesian society, which has cultural diversity. This approach offers cultural transformation through an educational mechanism that respects cultural, ethnic, and religious differences. Multicultural education discourse has continued to rise for at least two decades since the era of national and democratic reform. Multicultural education becomes a tool that unites the nation, provides opportunities, and develops each student's potential to the maximum (Rahmawati, et al., 2014; Normuslim, 2021; Sudarsana, et al., 2020; Jayadi, et al., 2022).

Furthermore, there are still many issues related to multicultural education that are urgent to be applied to the education curriculum in Indonesia. At the same time, some studies show the importance of this research. Rahmawati, et al (2014) shows that multicultural issues are essential to be discussed in Indonesia, given the uniqueness and

diversity of cultures in Indonesia. It described the importance of national identity in multicultural education as an issue of education reform in Indonesia. Regarding the importance of this issue, they stressed the need for efforts to maintain the content of cultural diversity in education in Indonesia. This is supported by Jayadi, et al (2022), who identified essential themes in the multicultural education paradigm. Their research identifies unity in diversity, equality, cultural identity, and social justice as vital themes in multicultural education. In the development of multicultural education in Indonesia, they recommend an in-depth investigation of how the value of multicultural education is applied by educators, students, policymakers, and the community to create a peaceful and harmonious life.

Even the addition of multicultural education values in this learning material has become essential, which is an issue in learning in general and in Islamic education (R'boul, 2021). In short, adjusting the content of multicultural education in the education curriculum in Indonesia is needed to understand students' roles in history, culture, and the contribution of various groups to society and the nation. With this understanding, cultural conflicts that occur because of inconsistencies, differences in interests, and differences in beliefs can be minimized. In addition, no more conflicts arise because of differences between individuals or communities that are likely to occur in Indonesian society. Multicultural education allows people with diverse backgrounds to live together in peace and harmony (Jayadi, et al., 2022; Normuslim, 2021; Sudarsana et al., 2020).

The findings from the research above show the role of multicultural education in forming a positive perspective on society regarding differences and diversity in society. Several studies describe how multicultural education can reduce social disparities (Muslih, 2017; Elkader, 2015; Ngamkajonviwat et al., 2015), although further studies on multicultural education need to be applied according to the needs of policymakers (Jayadi, et al., 2022).

This study intends to fill the gap that focuses to examine Multicultural Education-Based Learning for Indonesian Islamic Higher Education. It deals with students' views of Multicultural Education-Based Learning at an Indonesian Islamic Higher Education.

## **B. Literature Review**

Multicultural education, referred to as multiethnic education, anti-racist education, or multiracial education, has been used worldwide. Multicultural Education strives to inculcate values more positively about pluralism and increase the potential for learning for all students. Four fundamental premises about multicultural education can be gleaned from the literature: mature and sensitive teachers; culture as the unit of analysis; education in a democratic society requiring teachers to respect the rights of students from different cultures; and multicultural education strategies requiring the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures (Karatekin, et al., 2019).

Multicultural education is the process of students from several groups getting equal prospects and education in harmony with their reconstruction. (Kahraman & Sezer, 2017). Multicultural education is concerned with all students' cultural significance (Parker, 2019).

Multicultural education terminology may express descriptive and normative difficulties relating to challenges in a multicultural society (Gîncu, 2021). Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students should have an equal opportunity to learn in school regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics (Banks & Banks, 2016).

In other words, Multicultural Education is a reform movement that seeks to transform schools and other educational institutions so that students of all social classes, genders, races, languages, and cultures have equal opportunities to learn. Multicultural education involves a total change in the school or educational environment, not limited to curricular changes.

Principally, multicultural education respects differences. Through multicultural education, everyone can express the culture they have. From this definition, we can conclude that multicultural education respects differences and tolerance between communities to form a unity in social relations. Multicultural education includes subjects regarding injustice, poverty, oppression, and underdevelopment of minority groups in various fields, be it social, economic, cultural, educational, and so on. Multicultural education goals have never been fully achieved. All must work continuously to improve all students' educational equity. Multicultural education is a continuous process for targeted multicultural education reform.

UNESCO (2007) published worldwide standard-setting instruments and other publications emanating from international conferences illustrates the international community's perspective on intercultural education concerns. It identified the guidelines of intercultural education into three principles.

1. Principle I Intercultural Education respects the cultural identity of the learner by providing excellent education that is culturally relevant and responsive for everyone.
2. Principle II Intercultural Education equips all students with the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and abilities required for full and active engagement in society.
3. Principle III Intercultural Education equips all students with cultural knowledge, attitudes, and abilities that allow them to contribute to respect, understanding, and unity among people, ethnic, social, cultural, and religious groups, as well as countries.

Banks offer a multicultural education concept with five different and essential dimensions. Educating practitioners can use this dimension as a guide for school reform when trying to implement multicultural education. These dimensions are (1) content integration, (2) knowledge construction process, (3) reduction of prejudice, (4) equality pedagogy, and (5) empowerment of school culture and social structures (Banks & Banks, 2013).

Tilaar stated that the educational model is very much needed in Indonesia and pays attention to six things: (1) Multicultural education must have the dimensions of rights to culture and local identity. (2) In Indonesian culture, it is necessary to optimize local culture along with the appreciation of national culture. (3) Normative multicultural education is an educational model that strengthens the existing national identity without eliminating the

current local cultural identity. (4) Social reconstruction must not be trapped in xenophobia, fanaticism, and fundamentalism, be it ethnic, ethnic, or religious. (5) Pedagogic equality is needed between individuals, ethnicities, religions, and differences in empowerment pedagogy and equality pedagogy. (6) National ethics needs to be done to develop ethical (moral) principles of Indonesian society that are understood by all the plural socio-cultural components (Tilaar, 2002).

The view is closely related to behavior or attitudes. It is how organisms interpret and organize feelings to produce a meaningful world experience (Lindsay & Norman, 1977). In other words, a person is challenged with a situation or stimuli. The person takes the incentives into something meaningful to them constructed on prior experiences. However, what an individual understands or perceives may differ significantly from reality (Pickens 2005).

The view process follows four stages: stimulation, registration, organization, and interpretation.

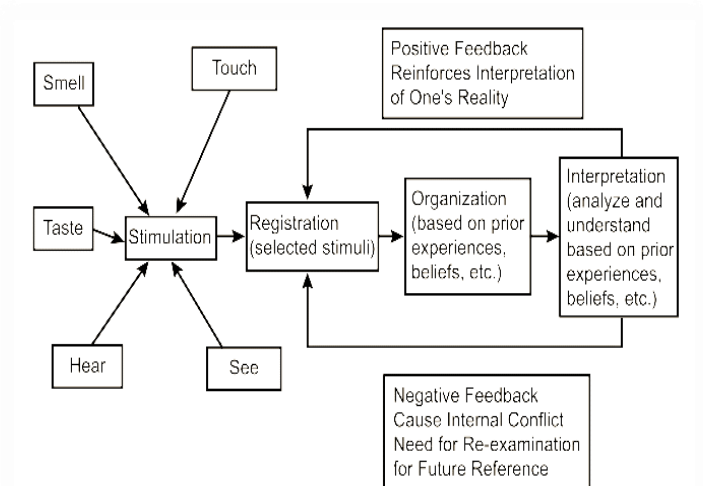


Figure: 1 Social perception is how an individual "sees" and how to perceive others person

### C. Research Methodology

This study aims to find out how students view diversity, respect, and tolerance for differences in ethnicity, social class, and culture, which are packaged in the form of multicultural education that is applied to every learning process by the lecturers.

#### 1. Research Design

This study employs a descriptive study by applying a quantitative approach. Descriptive quantitative is a type of research used to analyze data by describing the data that has been collected as it is (Creswell, 2014). The selection of descriptive quantitative approach research in this study is based on the purpose of this study, which is to examine Multicultural Education-Based Learning for Indonesian Islamic Higher Education. It deals

with students' views of Multicultural Education-Based Learning at an Indonesian Islamic Higher Education.

## **2. Respondents of the Study**

Respondents in this study were determined through the purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique is used to ensure that the respondents involved in this study are knowledgeable and reliable (Tongco, 2007). The target respondents were 25 students from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda, each representing five different study programs in the faculty. They enrolled as Ma'had Al-Jami'ah students obligated to study English in their initial semester. They were chosen from various study programs because they came from different ethnic backgrounds.

## **3. Instruments**

This study collects data with a questionnaire instrument distributed online. An online questionnaire was applied in the data collection process of this study with considerations of flexibility, time efficiency, innovation, convenience, ease of data input and analysis, minimal cost, and ease of follow-up (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

This questionnaire in this study used a Likert scale which was compiled by adopting the concept of multicultural education (Karacabey, et al., 2019). The scale ranged from 1 to 5 scales (1 is Strongly Disagree; 2 is Agree; 3 is neutral; 4 is Agree; 5 is Strongly Agree. This questionnaire is sent privately to each participant through a Google Forms link. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section covered the student's background, such as age, sex, race, and origin, which was displayed on the respondents' background data. The second section was about students' view of multicultural education-based instruction in teaching English in Indonesian Islamic higher education.

Validation of the questionnaire involved two experts with qualifications in English education and multicultural education. The validation from the experts covered the suitability and clarity of the content, compliance with the content, language clarity, and layout.

## **4. Data Analysis Techniques**

Descriptive statistics were used to tabulate and present the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire. The data collected will be analyzed based on the concept of multicultural education. Questionnaire data is submitted to answer the views of Islamic higher education students towards multicultural-based learning in the classroom. Grouping data based on variables and categories of respondents, describing data, and validating analyst requirements defined data analysis procedures. The data analysis showed the greatest and lowest scores, as well as the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation.

## D. Findings

The study explores the view of students about lecturers' multicultural competencies, students' preparation for cultural diversity, and the benefit of multicultural education for students, as well as the institutional support for multicultural education-based instruction in teaching English in Indonesian Islamic higher education based on their experiences in the classroom.

The topics in the questionnaire are divided into three parts to describe how students experience the value of multicultural education. The first topic is students' understanding of cultural education related to cultural diversity and the benefits of multicultural education. The second topic is how lecturers demonstrate multicultural education in their learning. The third topic is the policy used by the campus in implementing multicultural education in its learning system.

As an indication of the extent to which students' views regarding multicultural education-based learning in Islamic higher education, of the total 25 respondents involved, most respondents (84%) stated that they understood how the value of multicultural education was taught, students understand that multicultural education includes racial, ethnic and cultural differences in the application of multicultural education in the classroom. Some students (52%) feel that their lecturers have implemented this multicultural education well. In addition, some students (52%) think that the policies implemented on campus have considered the values of multicultural education. Table 1 below shows the positive mean level of students' views of multicultural education-based learning in Islamic higher education (Mean = 3.47).

Table: 1 The Rate of Students' view of Multicultural Education-Based Instruction

Items	x	Mean
Perceive on Cultural Diversity	18.52	3.70
1. The lecturers often teach about diversity in the subjects being taught.		3.64
2. You are able to work in groups with students of different races, ethnicities, cultures		3.68
3. Multicultural education can increase student's understanding diversity		3.68
4. Multicultural education teaches you about the positives of diversity		3.72
5. Multicultural education makes you understand, respect, and tolerate students of different ethnicities, social classes, and cultures		3.80
Implementation of Multicultural Education in the Classroom	6.84	3.42
6. The lecturers have an interest and enthusiasm in creating positive conditions for student multicultural understanding		3.36
7. The lecturers have a multicultural understanding of communicating with students		3.48
Institution Policy on Multicultural Education	6.60	3.30
8. Campus policy considers equality and equal opportunities for all students		3.32
9. Multicultural education manifest in norms, policies, curricula, and student organizations		3.28
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.47</b>
<b>* N=25</b>		

### 1. Perceive Cultural Diversity

The topic of students' views of cultural diversity has five items of related questions that aim to find out students' understanding and views on multicultural education. Items in this topic include learning materials that contain the value of difference, diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture. Furthermore, students' views regarding mutual understanding, respect, and tolerance are essential points on this topic.

Chart: 1 Perceive on Cultural Diversity

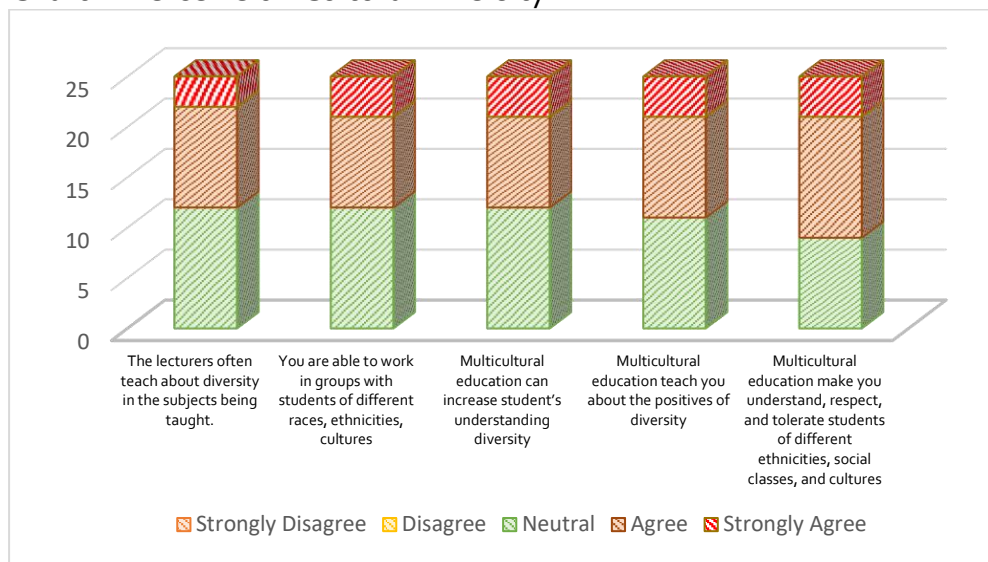


Chart 1 above shows that the lecturers often teach about diversity in their classes. The methods of Multicultural education applied by lecturers in teaching could increase students' understanding of diversity, respect, and tolerance for students of different ethnicities, social classes, and cultures. Therefore, the students were able to work in groups with students of other races, ethnicities, and cultures.

Cultural diversity was perceived positively by respondents. When students perceive cultural diversity, it makes them more culturally aware and knowledgeable through exchanges with diverse students. It also facilitates students to adjust to the challenges of a globalized and multicultural world (Jeannin 2018).

### 2. Implementation of Multicultural Education in the classroom

The topic concerns students' views on implementing multicultural education in their learning process in the classroom. This topic has items related to the interest and enthusiasm of lecturers in providing a supportive learning environment to convey the values of multicultural education. In addition, some items describe the multicultural insight possessed by lecturers when communicating with students.



Chart: 2 Implementation of Multicultural Education in the Classroom

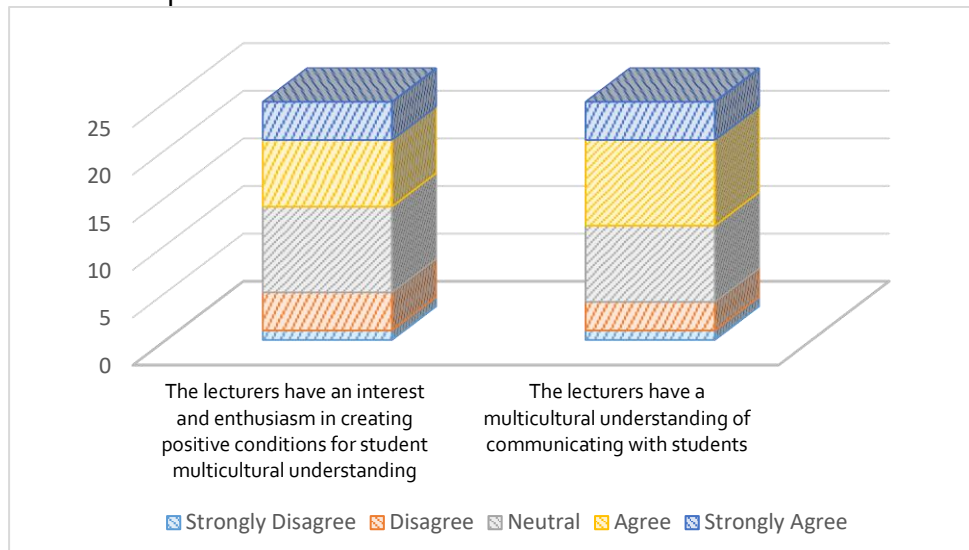


Chart 2 above shows that most of the students did not determine their attitude regarding the implementation of multicultural education carried out by lecturers in the classroom (Mean=3.42). Of a total of 25 respondents, only 36% agreed that lecturers are interested and enthusiastic about creating a positive atmosphere to provide students with a multicultural understanding. The rest did not determine their attitude and even stated that they disagreed if the lecturer had implemented a multicultural understanding process. Furthermore, only a tiny proportion of the respondents agreed (32%) with the existence of lecturers who were able to communicate multicultural understanding to students, the rest did not determine their attitude or were neutral, and some even disagreed. The students perceived that their teacher showed a reluctant attitude in implementing a multicultural education.

The students perceived that the lecturers were hesitant to apply multicultural education in their classes. Teachers should also demonstrate their interest and enthusiasm in teaching multicultural education, encouraging students to have a positive attitude toward diversity. According to Kalyava, et al (2007), teaching in multicultural classrooms requires specific competencies in creating positive teacher-student relations and achieving student engagement. Teachers' positive attitudes toward multicultural students facilitate inclusion in a mainstream setting because positive attitudes are closely and positively related to motivation to work with and teach ethnically diverse students. To acquire the competencies, the teacher needs professional development training on multicultural education, which can help lecturers improve their teaching effectively in diverse cultural communities.

Parla (1994) proposed three significant components to prepare all teachers to instruct culturally diverse and limited English proficient students. These three components are (a) theoretical base, (b) linguistic and cultural diversity base, and (c) experimental base. The theoretical base establishes the foundation of standard definitions, knowledge of

issues, and self-identity upon which the trainee can effectively build the skills to implement a multicultural program. The linguistic and cultural diversity base provides the trainee with needed competencies in second language acquisition and development, knowledge of the relationship between language and culture, and an increased ability to affirm diverse students' cultures. Cultural diversity awareness is needed to provide trainees with the knowledge of, and experience with a variety of racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Limited or no experience with culturally and linguistically diverse groups in their communities makes it more difficult for teachers to accept and affirm diversity as a part of the American mosaic.

Fueyo & Bechtol (1999) recommend that to have instructional effectiveness in a culturally diverse classroom. Teachers must respect cultural differences and diversity; be culturally aware and competent and able and willing to incorporate students' cultures into their classroom curriculum, and modify instruction for the success of culturally diverse students. Besides, Costa (1997) recommends that it is necessary to approach teacher training from moral and attitudinal perspectives and understand multicultural education implications from academic, methodological, and political positions. It is essential to involve students' cultural diversity as one of the objectives of progressive education for variety.

### 3. Institution Policy on Multicultural Education

The topics in this section relate to the policies implemented by the campus based on the values of multicultural education. Each item in this topic describes how the determination of institutional policy can provide equal opportunities for students. In addition, some items represent the values of multicultural education seen in norms, policies, curricula, and student institutions.

Chart: 3 Institution Policy on Multicultural Education

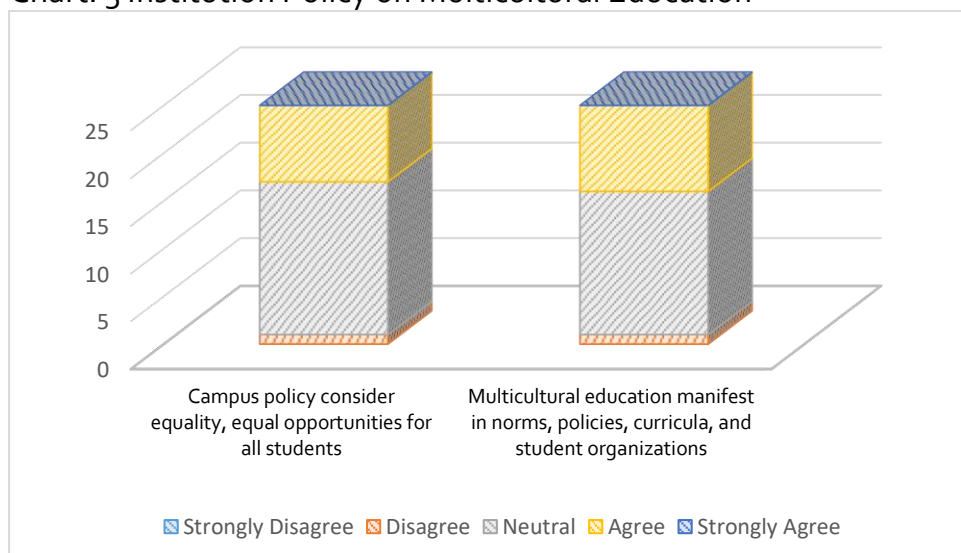


Diagram 3 above shows that most students have not felt the values of multicultural education in the policies implemented on campus. This is indicated by the majority of students (64%) who answered neutrally or did not show an attitude regarding implementing multicultural education in institutional policies. Moreover, there are (4%) who disagree if the policies implemented by the campus take into account the aspect of equality. This is in line with the second item, where most students did not determine their attitude regarding whether the application of multicultural education values had been seen in norms, policies, curriculum, and student institutions (60%). In response to this, the institution should anticipate the students' less positive response by providing a curriculum that emphasizes multiculturalism (Muhammad et al., 2019; Richardson et al., 2016; Sleeter & Carmona, 2017). In line with this, Parekh argues that the most crucial strategy for multicultural education is working on developing curricula that teach cultural diversity and understanding to students (Parekh, 2006).

The students also disagree about campus policy considering equal opportunity for all students. According to (Aydin, 2016), the primary responsibility in the implementation of multicultural education includes notions like equality, respect, peace, and an equal opportunity for success for all students. Besides, (Sharma 2005) recommended that effective teaching in a multicultural classroom necessitates cultural sensitivity strategies and equal opportunities for academic success and personal development for all students.

## E. Discussion

This study shows three differences in how students perceive multicultural education-based learning in Islamic higher education in Indonesia. This difference is related to the understanding of the value of multicultural education, the implementation of multicultural education by lecturers in the classroom, and the application of the value of multicultural education in institutional policies.

Based on this, students' view regarding multicultural education are classified into three categories: (1) Highly Supportive on Multicultural Education, (2) Moderately Supportive on Multicultural Education, and (3) Lowly Supportive on Multicultural Education. This category of students related to student views of multicultural education-based learning is compiled based on interval data from a questionnaire involving 25 Islamic higher education students as follows:

Table: 1 The Categories of Students' View of Multicultural Education

Interval	Items	<i>f</i>	%
73-100	Highly Supportive on Multicultural Education	12	48
67-72	Moderately Supportive on Multicultural Education	10	40
0-66	Lowly Supportive on Multicultural Education	3	12
<b>Total</b>		25	100

### **1. Highly Supportive on Multicultural Education**

Students determine the first category with score intervals ranging from 73 to 100. They are categorized as "Highly Supportive" students. There are 12 students in this category (48 %). These students have a good understanding of multicultural education in the classroom. They also positively understand the content of multicultural education delivered by lecturers in class and implemented in institutional policies.

Furthermore, students in this category have a positive understanding of cultural diversity. They are more responsive and insightful, more open to the differences around them. They also feel that the content of multicultural education delivered by lecturers can increase understanding of cultural diversity, mutual respect, and tolerance for differences in ethnicity, social class, and culture. Therefore, students in this category are more supportive of working in groups with fellow students from different backgrounds.

### **2. Moderately Supportive on Multicultural Education**

Students determine the second category with score intervals ranging from 67 to 72. They are categorized as "Moderately Supportive" students. There are ten students in this category (40%). Students in this category have a moderate understanding of multicultural education carried out in their classrooms. This group tends not to take a stand regarding the content of multicultural education delivered by lecturers during the learning process. In addition, they tend not to understand the value of multicultural education in institutional policies. Therefore, students in this category tend not to determine the attitude between supporting or not the values of multicultural education applied in the institution.

Groups of students in this category tend not to determine attitudes regarding the understanding of multicultural education, the implementation of multicultural education in the classroom by lecturers, and its implementation in institutional policies. They did not study further the application of these multicultural educational values in the lecture process, student activities, and policies in institutions.

### **3. Lowly Supportive on Multicultural Education**

Respondents determine the last category in this study with score intervals below 67. They are categorized as "Lowly Supportive". Students in this category commonly understand the values of multicultural education in their classrooms. Apart from understanding multicultural education, several assessment criteria fall into this category, such as not seeing the implementation of multicultural education values in lectures delivered by lecturers and not supporting the application of these multicultural educational values in institutional policies. Of the 25 respondents involved, three students (12%) met these criteria.

Students in this category tend to have a negative view of understanding the values of multicultural education, their implementation in lectures, and their application in campus policies. More comprehensive socialization is needed for students in this category because their assessment may be influenced by a lack of understanding related to multicultural

education, even their lack of involvement in every process of activities on campus that contains multicultural education content.

## **F. Conclusion**

The findings in this study provide an overview of the different perspectives of students at Islamic higher education on multicultural education in their learning. Most of them have understood the values of multicultural education and are very supportive of its implementation in every lecture and campus policy. The application of this multicultural education content helps them understand the meaning of cultural diversity and tolerance for different social backgrounds. In its application on campus, multicultural education allows them to interact with diverse classmates. This study groups students' views of multicultural education in learning at Islamic higher education into three categories, (1) Highly Supportive on Multicultural Education, (2) Moderately Supportive on Multicultural Education, and (3) Lowly Supportive on Multicultural Education. In the implementation of multicultural education, there are still students who do not understand the values of this multicultural education. It is indicated by the existence of groups of students categorized as students who do not support multicultural education. Further studies are needed on students grouped in "Lowly" to determine whether there is a lack of understanding or student involvement.

Given the importance of implementing multicultural education in educational reform in Islamic higher education in Indonesia, this study suggests the need for a structured and comprehensive understanding that is not only given to students but also to campus leaders and lecturers who play an essential role in the process of transferring the values of this multicultural education. A systematic implementation will undoubtedly help students understand the process of multicultural education on campus. By the same token, multicultural education should focus on creating a school and its environment as a place for students from various backgrounds to experience equally good quality education. In this dimension, every student, regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, and class, is provided an equal opportunity to develop their potential.

Further research is needed to strengthen studies on the implementation of multicultural education in Islamic higher education. Continuous studies are necessary to support the application of this multicultural education from time to time according to the needs of each institution. In addition, a forum is needed that provides teachers and leaders with an understanding of multicultural education so that the implementation process on campus can run effectively.

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