

Strengthening Multicultural Values in Early Childhood Education Through a Collaborative Approach Based on Indonesian Local Wisdom

Farida Ilmiasari 1 ^{a.1,*}, Ida Zahara Adibah 2 ^{b.2}

^{*ab} Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman GUPPI

^{*1} idazaharaadibah@gmail.com; ²mutiarainsan2015@gmail.com;

^{*}idazaharaadibah@gmail.com

Received: 03-08-2026

Revised: 24-08-2026

Accepted: 13-9-2026

KEYWORDS

Multiculturalism 1
Early Childhood Education 2,
Collaborative Approach 3,
Local Wisdom 4,
Character Development 5.

ABSTRACT

Indonesia is a multicultural nation with over a thousand ethnic groups, languages, and diverse cultural identities. This diversity serves as both a national treasure and a challenge in the field of education, particularly in early childhood education (ECE), which plays a strategic role in shaping the foundational character of children. This study aims to analyze the strengthening of multicultural values in early childhood through a collaborative approach based on Indonesia's local wisdom. The research method employed is a literature study using a descriptive-qualitative approach, reviewing 20 relevant academic sources, including journals, books, and previous research findings. The results of the study show that the implementation of multicultural values such as tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity can be effectively instilled through the integration of local cultural practices into ECE learning. A collaborative approach involving teachers, parents, and local communities has proven to strengthen children's cultural identity and foster an inclusive learning environment. This study recommends the development of a contextual and participatory ECE curriculum as a strategic effort to embed multicultural values from an early age.

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) license.



Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic country with a remarkably high level of cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. This diversity represents a national treasure that must be preserved and nurtured through various efforts, one of which is education. Early childhood education (PAUD) serves as the primary foundation for shaping the character of future generations who are aware of the importance of living in diversity. During the golden age, children possess a high capacity to absorb values that develop within their social and cultural environment (Firdayanti et al., 2025). Therefore, strengthening multicultural values from an early age is crucial to help children grow into tolerant, open-minded individuals capable of living harmoniously amid differences.

Multicultural values such as respect for diversity, tolerance, empathy, and social justice must be internalized through a systematic and contextual educational process. In the context of early childhood education, this process must align with the developmental stages of children and the environment in which they grow. Here, local wisdom plays a highly relevant role. Local wisdom reflects social and cultural values that have been passed down through generations and are consistent with the principles of multiculturalism (Armansyah et al., 2024). For instance, practices

such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), and inter-community tolerance deeply rooted in local traditions are values that can be integrated into early childhood learning processes.

However, a content-based approach alone is not sufficient. It requires a pedagogical strategy that is collaborative, where the educational process is not only carried out by teachers in the classroom but also involves the active participation of parents and the local community. This collaborative approach can create a more contextual and participatory educational ecosystem. Collaboration among teachers, parents, and community figures in transmitting local cultural values strengthens children's understanding of diversity and their cultural identity (Ulfadilah et al., 2025). In practice, community involvement in learning activities—such as introducing traditional dances, folklore, local games, or regional cuisines not only makes learning more engaging but also fosters children's pride in their own culture.

This approach supports the creation of an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment that accommodates the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of learners. A study by Idhayani et al. (2023) found that innovation in early childhood learning through the use of local wisdom can foster meaningful, enjoyable learning experiences and strengthen children's character. Moreover, Rahmawati and Pratama (2025) emphasize the importance of developing learning models that are not only based on universal values but also on local values, so that children can comprehend humanistic values within the context of their own lives.

Based on this background, this paper aims to analyze the strengthening of multicultural values in early childhood education through a collaborative approach grounded in Indonesian local wisdom. This study is essential as an effort to build a strong foundation for character education from an early age and to support the creation of a harmonious Indonesian society within its rich diversity.

The Theory/Literature (write the name of theory or concept that uses in the study)

1. The Concept of Multiculturalism in Early Childhood Education

Multiculturalism is an outlook that recognizes and values the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, religions, and other identities existing within society. In the educational context, multiculturalism is not merely understood as a teaching topic but also as a pedagogical approach emphasizing acceptance of differences, social justice, and respect for diversity. This approach is highly relevant to early childhood education (PAUD), as this stage is when children begin forming fundamental understandings of the values and social norms around them. Firdayanti et al. (2025) emphasize that values such as tolerance, justice, and empathy can be internalized in children through interactive and contextual learning activities. In an inclusive environment that values diversity, children learn to coexist, collaborate, and develop empathy toward others.

Sholeh et al. (2025) support this view, asserting that children raised in environments that instill multicultural values from an early age tend to have stronger social resilience and a more tolerant attitude toward differences. Early childhood is also known as a critical phase in moral and social development when the ability to absorb social values from the environment is at its peak. This is further reinforced by Jamilah and Lukman (2021), who state that early childhood is the most appropriate time to instill inclusive values and social awareness because children are in the formative stage of personality development and are highly receptive to environmental influences. Therefore, multicultural learning strategies in PAUD should be designed creatively and culturally based. Ramadan et al. (2023) show that multicultural values can be introduced through various media, such as folktales from different regions, traditional songs representing diverse local cultures, traditional games emphasizing togetherness, and learning activities that enable positive cross-cultural interaction.

Efforts to strengthen inclusive and contextual learning through the adoption of local wisdom have also proven effective in creating diversity-friendly learning environments. As explained by Ananda and Santoso (2025), integrating local cultural elements in PAUD learning not only enriches the teaching content but also strengthens children's awareness of identity and

tolerance toward differences. Thus, a multicultural approach in PAUD not only enhances children's learning experiences but also lays the foundation for strong character development in living within a plural society.

2. Local Wisdom as the Basis for Character Education

Local wisdom refers to a set of values, knowledge, and social practices that live and develop within a community, passed down through generations as part of its collective cultural identity. Values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberation), tolerance, and social harmony are integral aspects of local wisdom that align closely with the principles of multiculturalism (Armansyah et al., 2024). Even in contemporary learning contexts, combining traditional and digital methods based on local culture provides new opportunities to convey these values meaningfully (Wati, 2024). This is also supported by Fathurrozi (2023), who argues that character education based on local culture in the digital era can establish a solid moral foundation for children without losing the essence of native traditions.

In early childhood education, integrating local wisdom values into the learning process serves not only as a means of cultural preservation but also as a grounded and contextual character education strategy. Through learning activities that engage children with their cultural realities, they not only recognize their cultural identity but also gradually learn to appreciate the existence of other cultures around them. Project-based learning models integrating local wisdom elements have been proven to enhance children's engagement in learning activities and strengthen their understanding of social values (Kandi et al., 2025).

A study by Idhayani et al. (2023) shows that learning approaches based on local wisdom positively influence children's sense of love toward their social environment and reinforce their national identity. This aligns with the findings of Lubis et al. (2025), who affirm that character education is more effective when rooted in local values embedded in children's daily lives. In other words, integrating local wisdom into the learning process makes education more contextual, meaningful, and relevant to children's realities, enabling moral and social values to be internalized more naturally and comprehensively.

3. The Collaborative Approach in Early Childhood Learning

A collaborative approach in education emphasizes the importance of cooperation among various stakeholders teachers, parents, and the community in the learning process. In early childhood education (PAUD), this approach is highly relevant and effective since a child's development is profoundly influenced by their immediate environment. Education for young children does not occur solely in the classroom but holistically throughout their lives, both at home and within the community. Collaboration between the school and the family provides continuity of values and meaningful learning experiences for children (Ulfadilah et al., 2025). Lestari and Tirtoni (2025) emphasize that the implementation of multicultural education based on local wisdom will be far more effective if carried out through synergy among educational institutions, parents, and local communities. Such collaboration can take various forms, including parents' involvement in thematic learning activities, participation of local cultural figures in teaching traditional knowledge, and field visits to cultural heritage sites. These activities not only enrich children's experiences but also strengthen their understanding of the cultural diversity around them.

The collaborative approach also plays a crucial role in strengthening the integration between the formal school curriculum and the social values deeply embedded in community life. Learning grounded in social and cultural realities makes the educational process more contextual, meaningful, and relevant to children's everyday experiences. Thus, children learn not only through academic instruction but also through real social interactions that reflect the practice of living in diversity. Syahrani et al. (2025) argue that cross-cultural interactions experienced by children in collaborative learning environments help broaden their perspectives and shape open-minded, tolerant, and cooperative characters capable of coexisting with differences.

4. Related Studies

Several previous studies have reinforced the urgency and relevance of integrating multicultural values and local wisdom into early childhood education. Firdayanti et al. (2025) found that developing a contextually multicultural curriculum strengthens children's cultural identity by aligning learning materials with their social and cultural environment. This finding aligns with Rahmawati and Pratama (2025), who emphasize that learning models rooted in local values greatly support children's character development within the framework of Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) policy. Their study shows that learning based on local culture not only enriches children's educational experiences but also makes them more meaningful and relevant to everyday life.

Alim et al. (2024) highlight the importance of reconstructing early childhood curricula oriented toward religious and local cultural values. They argue that such approaches not only enrich educational content but also strengthen children's early social values, such as empathy, care, and tolerance. In a more specific context, Hatima et al. (2025) demonstrate how integrating Sundanese culture into Indonesian language learning at the elementary level can serve as a model applicable to early childhood education as well. This practice not only introduces children to cultural diversity but also fosters love for their local heritage. Overall, these studies provide strong empirical foundations for the importance of a collaborative approach based on local wisdom as an effective strategy for instilling multicultural values in early childhood.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach based on library research with the aim of exploring and deeply analyzing how multicultural values can be strengthened in early childhood education (PAUD) through a collaborative approach grounded in local wisdom in Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is well-suited for examining social phenomena, values, and educational practices within complex and dynamic cultural contexts. The purpose of this research is not to test hypotheses but rather to understand the meaning and relevance of educational approaches within the framework of diversity and locality.

Data in this study were obtained through a systematic review and analysis of relevant literature sources. The primary sources include 20 scholarly references, consisting of accredited national journal articles, academic books, and previous research findings discussing topics related to multicultural education, early childhood education, collaborative approaches, and local wisdom. In addition, several educational policy documents and academic institutional publications were used as supporting references. The selection of literature sources was conducted purposively, considering factors such as publication recency, topic relevance, and credibility.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic content analysis. The stages of analysis include: (1) identifying key themes related to multicultural values, collaborative approaches, and local wisdom; (2) categorizing the contents of each reference based on its contribution to the identified themes; and (3) conducting interpretive synthesis to build inter-theme relationships and produce in-depth conceptual findings. This approach allows the researcher to uncover thought patterns and strategies that have been proven effective or recommended in multicultural educational practices in Indonesia.

Research validity was ensured through source triangulation, which involved comparing and verifying information across various literature sources used. Additionally, the researcher applied a critical content analysis to ensure that the resulting synthesis is objective, in-depth, and contextually grounded. The findings derived from this methodology are presented in narrative and conceptual form and are further analyzed in the discussion section.

Result

1. Multicultural Values in the Context of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education represents the most fundamental stage in shaping the personality and character foundation of children. At this stage often referred to as the golden age children experience rapid cognitive, affective, and social development, making it a crucial period

for instilling fundamental life values. In Indonesia's multiethnic and multicultural society, multicultural values such as tolerance, mutual respect, justice, empathy, and equality are essential to be cultivated from an early age. Multiculturalism is not merely a social concept but also an educational principle that should be applied in early childhood education to help children grow into open-minded individuals capable of coexisting in diversity.

Firdayanti et al. (2025) state that implementing multicultural education at the early childhood level can naturally foster inclusive attitudes and appreciation for differences, particularly when value internalization is carried out using approaches appropriate to children's developmental stages. These values should not only be delivered verbally but also internalized through concrete and enjoyable learning experiences. Through collaborative play activities, children learn to share and cooperate with peers from different cultural backgrounds. Storytelling using folktales from various regions, introducing traditional clothing, local foods, and engaging in school-based *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) activities are effective strategies to nurture multicultural sensitivity in children's daily experiences.

Ramadan et al. (2023) reveal that using textbooks containing Indonesia's cultural richness within the *Merdeka Curriculum* significantly broadens children's cultural awareness. Children are not only introduced to their own culture but also to cultures from other regions of Indonesia, allowing them to appreciate differences and feel proud of the nation's diversity. Such approaches enrich learning materials and strengthen children's national identity from an early age. Therefore, multicultural education in early childhood serves as a strategy that develops not only cognitive skills but also inclusive, adaptive, and culturally rooted character.

2. Collaborative Strategies in Implementing Multicultural Education

The implementation of multicultural education in early childhood education (PAUD) requires a comprehensive approach that cannot be carried out partially. One proven effective approach for consistently internalizing multicultural values is the collaborative approach, which involves the active participation of three key elements: teachers, parents, and the community. Through such collaboration, synergy between school and home environments is created, fostering children's understanding of diversity. This approach not only increases educational effectiveness but also ensures the continuity of multicultural values beyond the classroom setting (Agus, 2024). Parental involvement plays a vital role in collaborative strategies. When parents are engaged in learning activities for example, through storytelling of local folktales, introducing customs, or participating in art and cultural events at school children gain experiences that are both academic and cultural. Lestari and Tirtoni (2025) note that this form of participation strengthens children's understanding of diversity and fosters openness toward differences from an early age. Similarly, Sidabutar (2024) emphasizes that teachers hold a strategic role in designing integrative thematic learning activities that promote multicultural values while encouraging active parental participation in the learning process.

Teachers act as the main facilitators in designing lessons that place cultural diversity at the core of the material. Meanwhile, local communities can contribute by providing authentic learning experiences, such as inviting cultural figures into classrooms, conducting traditional craft workshops, or organizing visits to cultural heritage sites. Such collaboration enriches learning content and deepens children's connection to their cultural environments. In line with this, Ulfadilah et al. (2025) assert that a collaborative approach based on local wisdom can create learning experiences that are contextual, relevant, and meaningful. Similarly, Ariani (2024) highlights that multicultural education strategies in plural societies demand adaptive and inclusive cooperation among all stakeholders. Children are not only taught about diversity in theory but also exposed to it directly through interactions with cultural resources in their surroundings.

3. Integration of Local Wisdom in Early Childhood Learning

One of the most effective strategies for strengthening multicultural values in early childhood education is integrating local wisdom into the learning process. Local wisdom embodies educational values that are contextual and deeply rooted in community life—such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), politeness, respect for elders, love for the homeland, and togetherness.

These values are not merely normative but can be authentically taught through enjoyable cultural activities suited to children's developmental levels. Idhayani et al. (2023) state that applying local wisdom in early childhood learning can enhance children's social sensitivity and strengthen their sense of national identity from an early age. For example, activities such as performing traditional dances, playing traditional games like *engklek* or *congklak*, and wearing traditional attire during Kartini Day celebrations allow children to directly experience and appreciate local cultural richness in a positive and inclusive environment.

Armansyah et al. (2024) emphasize that preserving local culture through educational activities not only serves as an effort to maintain cultural heritage but also as a means to build children's identity as members of a specific community. When children actively engage in living cultural practices, they not only learn about their cultural roots but also develop a sense of belonging to those values. Therefore, the integration of local wisdom in early childhood education is not only relevant for cultural preservation but also serves as an effective bridge for developing holistic and sustainable multicultural character in children.

4. Positive Impacts on Children's Development

Strengthening multicultural values through a collaborative approach based on local wisdom has been shown to positively affect early childhood development across cognitive, social, and emotional domains. Children engaged in learning activities rich in diversity and local culture tend to demonstrate greater openness, higher levels of empathy, and healthier social relationships with peers from diverse backgrounds. This aligns with findings by Syahrani et al. (2025), who reveal that multicultural education implemented from an early age significantly enhances children's awareness of the importance of respecting differences and strengthens their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully and wisely.

This approach also plays a vital role in reinforcing children's cultural identity. By engaging directly with cultural practices such as folktales, traditional games, and local celebrations, children become more confident and better prepared to embrace and appreciate other cultures. Cultural internalization thus serves as an initial foundation for building inclusive and adaptive personalities in a pluralistic society. Lubis et al. (2025) emphasize that character education grounded in *Pancasila* values and local wisdom is not only relevant in the educational context but also represents a long-term and effective strategy for supporting sustainable and harmonious national development amidst diversity.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that strengthening multicultural values in early childhood education serves as a crucial foundation for shaping a generation that is tolerant, inclusive, and aware of diversity. A collaborative approach involving teachers, parents, and local communities has proven effective in creating a learning environment that supports the internalization of multicultural values. The integration of local wisdom into learning practices provides a strong cultural context, enabling children not only to learn about other cultures but also to take pride in their own cultural identity.

As a follow-up, it is necessary to develop an early childhood education (PAUD) curriculum that explicitly incorporates multicultural and local cultural values. Teachers should be equipped with training to design collaborative learning based on local contexts, while the active involvement of parents and communities must be continuously facilitated. Furthermore, the government and policymakers are encouraged to promote educational policies that position diversity and locality as essential strengths in shaping children's character from an early age.

References

- Agus, N. W. (2024). *Meningkatkan Efektivitas Pendidikan Multikultural Melalui Pendekatan Kolaboratif Dalam Komunitas Lokal*.
- Alim, M. L., Syamsudin, A., Rizka, N., & Joni, J. (2024). Rekonstruksi Kurikulum Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Berbasis Keagamaan dan Budaya Lokal. *Indonesian Research Journal on Education (IRJE)*, 4(4), 2192–2196.
- Ananda, B. C., & Santoso, A. P. (2025). Pengembangan Pembelajaran Inklusif yang Mengadopsi Kearifan Lokal di Tingkat PAUD. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan & Sosial Humaniora (MURADIK)*, 1(2), 1–15.
- Ariani, D. (2024). Integrasi Nilai Etnopedagogik dalam Pendidikan Multikultural di Indonesia: Systematic Literature Review. *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 11(2), 52–57.
- Armansyah, A., Ramadhan, W., & OK, A. H. (2024). Pendidikan Multikultural Berbasis Kearifan Lokal (Melestarikan Budaya Tari Daerah sebagai Warisan Budaya Bangsa). *MODELING: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI*, 11(2), 436–451.
- Fathurrozi, F. (2023). Harmoni di Pesantren, Model Pendidikan Multikultural Berbasis Kearifan Lokal. *INNOVATIVE: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 3(6), 10222–10237.
- Firdayanti, A., Meilina, M., & Warohma, L. (2025). Analisis Pengembangan Kurikulum Multikultural Di Indonesia: Telaah Teoritis Berbasis Study Pustaka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia: Teori, Penelitian Dan Inovasi*, 5(3), 41–46. <https://doi.org/10.59818/jpi.v5i3.1533>
- Hatima, Y., Ummah, I., & Saputra, E. E. (2025). Integrasi Nilai Kearifan Lokal Budaya Sunda dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia melalui Pendekatan Sastra di Sekolah Dasar. *Sulawesi Tenggara Educational Journal*, 5(1), 484–492.
- Idhayani, N., Nurlina, N., Risnajayanti, R., Salma, S., Halima, H., & Bahera, B. (2023). Inovasi Pembelajaran Anak Usia Dini: Pendekatan Kearifan Lokal Dalam Praktik Manajemen. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(6), 7453–7463. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v7i6.5624>
- Jamilah, S., & Lukman, L. (2021). Pendidikan Multikultural pada Anak Usia Dini. *Pelangi: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 3(2), 16–28.
- Kandi, K., Zari, N., Apriyanto, H., Nusir, L., Arma, M. S., Djumat, I., Sapriyanti, T., Tangahu, W., Ismet, S., Bunta, A. F., Abdy, I., Ardiansyah, W., & Supriyadi, S. (2025). *PENDIDIKAN MULTIKULTURAL PADA ANAK USIA DINI*. Lingkar Edukasi Indonesia.
- Lestari, D., & Tirtoni, F. (2025). Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Untuk Meningkatkan Karakter Toleransi Pada Sekolah Inklusi. *Edukasiana: Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan*, 4(3), 827–835. <https://doi.org/10.56916/ejip.v4i3.1195>
- Lubis, M., Harahap, S., Anneu Fitriyanti, S. P. G., & Fathurrahman, I. (2025). *Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Pancasila Dan Kearifan Lokal*. EDU PUBLISHER. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=jvhQEQAQBAJ>
- Rahmawati, A., & Pratama, R. (2025). Penerapan Pendidikan Multikultur Dengan Media Digital Untuk Pemberdayaan Nilai Lokal Di Sekolah. *Jurnal Dinamika Pendidikan Islam*, 1(2), 35–46.
- Ramadan, C. S., Sapro'ah, R., Rahmatullah, W. F., Nurpitasari, E. S., Ranimah, R., & Maulana, I. F. (2023). Analisis Nilai-Nilai Multikultural pada Buku Ajar IPAS Kelas 4 Sekolah Dasar Kurikulum Merdeka. *Journal of Innovation in Primary Education*, 2(2), 1–7.
- Sholeh, M. I., Sokip, S., Syafi'i, A., Habibulloh, M., Sahri, S., Nur'azah, N., & Farisy, F. Al. (2025). Integrasi Nilai-Nilai Islam Dan Kearifan Lokal Dalam Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Berbasis Karakter. *ABDUSSALAM: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Islam*, 01(01), 59–72.
- Sidabutar, I. M. (2024). Nilai-nilai Kearifan Lokal dalam Karya Sastra Nusantara: Implikasi bagi Kurikulum Merdeka. *BORASPATI: The Journal of Bilingualism, Organization, Research, Articles, Studies in Pedagogy, Anthropology, Theory, and Indigenous Cultures*, 1(1), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.31004/boraspatti.vxix.xxx>
- Syahruni, N., Najamuddin, N., & Alwi, A. (2025). Peran Pendidikan Lintas Budaya Terhadap Penguatan Karakter Multikultural Siswa: Kajian Literatur. *Bestari: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan*

- Kebudayaan*, 6(2), 239–246. <https://doi.org/10.46368/bjpd.v6i2.4660>
- Ulfadilah, U., Alfiya, L., Muksin, M., Amaliati, S., & Fitriani, E. (2025). Strategi Implementasi Pendidikan Islam Multikultural Pada Anak Usia Dini: Systematic Literature Review. *WALADI: Wawasan Belajar Anak Usia Dini*, 3(2), 12–35.
- Wati, S. A. (2024). Perbandingan Pembelajaran Tradisional Versus Digital. In *TRANSFORMASI PEMBELAJARAN Anak Usia Dini Di Zaman Digital* (pp. 143–160).