

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL CULTURE IN INTERNALIZING THE UNDERSTANDING OF TOLERANCE AT STATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 2 PERCUT SEI TUAN

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Diterima: 05 September 2026 Direvisi: 10 September 2026 Disetujui: 18 September 2026 Tersedia Daring: 04 Oktober 2026 Keywords: School Culture, Internalization of Values, Tolerance, Multicultural Education, High School Students	<i>This study aims to analyze school efforts, describe the implementation of school culture, and examine the role of school culture in supporting the internalization of understanding of tolerance among students at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation with the principal, subject teachers, religious teachers, and students from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. Data analysis was conducted using Edgar H. Schein's three-level organizational culture theory, namely artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. The results show that the school strives to build a culture of tolerance through various policies and programs that support the creation of an inclusive school environment. At the artifacts level, a culture of tolerance is reflected in the anti-bullying program, Religious Thursday activities, commemorations of religious holidays, the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), historical sociodramas, and the formation of heterogeneous study groups. At the espoused beliefs and values level, these programs are based on the values of equality, respect for diversity, inclusivity, and cooperation instilled by the school and exemplified by teachers. Meanwhile, at the basic underlying assumptions level, the value of tolerance has been internalized, so that differences in religion, ethnicity, and culture are seen as normal in social interactions. This study concludes that an inclusive school culture plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding and practice of tolerance. Therefore, schools need to conduct regular evaluations and strengthen the integration of tolerance values into all school activities to ensure a culture of tolerance is maintained.</i>

ABSTRACT
Keywords: Budaya Sekolah, Internalisasi Nilai, Sikap Toleransi, Pendidikan Multikultural, Siswa SMA Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis upaya sekolah, mendeskripsikan wujud implementasi budaya sekolah, serta mengkaji peran budaya sekolah dalam mendukung internalisasi pemahaman sikap toleransi antarsiswa di SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi terhadap kepala sekolah, guru mata pelajaran, guru agama, serta siswa yang berasal dari latar belakang agama dan etnis yang beragam. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan teori budaya organisasi tiga tingkatan Edgar H. Schein, yaitu artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, dan basic underlying assumptions. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sekolah berupaya membangun budaya toleransi melalui berbagai kebijakan dan program yang mendukung terciptanya lingkungan sekolah yang inklusif. Pada tingkat artifacts, budaya toleransi tercermin dalam program anti-bullying, kegiatan Kamis Keagamaan, peringatan hari besar keagamaan, pelaksanaan Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5), sosiodrama

sejarah, serta pembentukan kelompok belajar heterogen. Pada tingkat *espoused beliefs and values*, program-program tersebut didasarkan pada nilai kesetaraan, penghargaan terhadap keberagaman, inklusivitas, dan kerja sama yang ditanamkan oleh sekolah serta dicontohkan oleh guru. Sementara itu, pada tingkat *basic underlying assumptions*, nilai toleransi telah terinternalisasi sehingga perbedaan agama, suku, dan budaya dipandang sebagai sesuatu yang wajar dalam interaksi sosial. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa budaya sekolah yang inklusif berperan penting dalam membentuk pemahaman dan praktik sikap toleransi antarsiswa. Oleh karena itu, sekolah perlu melakukan evaluasi secara berkala dan memperkuat integrasi nilai toleransi dalam seluruh kegiatan sekolah agar budaya toleransi dapat terus terpelihara.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a true reflection of the diversity of Indonesian society. This rich cultural heritage is spread throughout the archipelago. Specifically, it is one of the regions with the greatest cultural richness in Indonesia, one of which is reflected in North Sumatra Province. According to the 2010 population databox page, the ethnic composition of this province is very diverse. The Batak tribe is the dominant group with a total of 44.75%, consisting of Toba Batak (25.62%), Mandailing (11.27%), Karo (5.09%), Simalungun (2.04%), and Pakpak (0.73%). Meanwhile, ethnic groups from Java Island (Javanese, Sundanese, Betawi, Banten, Madurese) reached 33.4%. Other ethnicities include Nias (6.36%), Malay (5.86%), Chinese (2.71%), Minangkabau (2.66%), and Aceh (0.97%). This diversity is accepted by society as a form of tolerance, care, and a valuable asset that must be maintained and preserved (Afdhal et al., 2024).

Indonesian society's acceptance of cultural diversity is not merely passive tolerance, but rather an acknowledgment of the existence of valuable local wisdom within each ethnic group (Agung, 2022). This local knowledge, which serves as a guide to life, intrinsically fosters tolerance and mutual care within communities. Values embedded in local wisdom, such as the kinship system, established as a principle in life and a fundamental foundation for thought and action, reaffirm that differences are a source of wealth (Bogdan & Biklen, 2017). This aligns with the principle that tolerance is an open and appreciative attitude toward various differences in life, including those in religion, ethnicity, culture, and other social contexts (Akhyar et al., 2023).

Tolerance is an open and appreciative attitude toward various differences in life, including discrepancies in religion, ethnicity, culture, and other social conditions. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines tolerance as respect, acceptance, and appreciation for the rich diversity of world cultures, forms of expression, and the way we are human. Tolerance, as a form of respect for

differences, can be demonstrated through sympathy and empathy for each individual in the social environment. The practice of tolerance in the social life of a diverse society must involve all levels and elements of society. Currently, the younger generation plays a crucial role in playing a strategic role in building an inclusive and tolerant social order (Effendi et al., 2021). Adolescents, as part of the next generation, are strongly influenced by local and evolving global cultures. The internalization of local cultural values in adolescents' social lives is a crucial factor determining the quality of their social tolerance. As expressed by Tumanggor & Mularsih (2020), a nation will progress if its adolescents receive adequate guidance. However, current conditions indicate that adolescents are engaging in intolerant behavior as a result of environmental influences. Cases of intolerance are a serious problem and can be fatal if not addressed immediately (Erlanda et al., 2021).

The level of tolerance in Indonesia remains alarming, as evidenced by the increasing trend of intolerant practices. Data from the SETARA Institute reveals that throughout 2023-2024, the number of violations of the Freedom of Religion (KBB), or cases of intolerance in Indonesia, showed an increasing trend, with a total of 477 incidents and 731 acts. Specifically, 2023 recorded 217 incidents and 329 acts, while in 2024 the figures increased to 260 incidents and 402 acts. This increase indicates that intolerant practices in Indonesia and violations of the Freedom of Religion (KBB) remain a worrying and unresolved issue. More broadly, between 2007 and 2022, there were 573 cases of intolerance, including the rejection of places of worship, the disbandment of religious activities, intimidation, and even vandalism. These figures indicate that intolerance in Indonesia is an ongoing problem that requires serious attention, particularly through strengthening attitudes of acceptance of diversity (Ginting & Aryaningrum, 2009).

Cases of intolerance in Indonesia represent a form of discrimination against cultural differences. Intolerance manifests as a low level of acceptance of differences and diversity among society, particularly among the younger generation. Therefore, an educational approach is a relevant solution for fostering tolerance among the younger generation. In practice, cultivating tolerance within each individual can be realized through multicultural education. The multicultural education system was implemented in Indonesia by Ki Hajar Dewantara. The importance of multicultural education for the implementation of education is well known among the diverse Indonesian people (Hasan et al., 2025). This system seems to be an inseparable element and a bridge to the realization of advanced and cultural education. Thus, the multicultural education system can be used as a system to support and sustain Indonesian culture.

Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of accepting and respecting diversity as the foundation for character formation in the younger generation, making schools the primary setting where multicultural values are implemented and internalized through school culture, embodied in daily routines, rules, and interaction patterns. School culture is not simply a collection of old habits, but rather a comprehensive system of values, beliefs, basic assumptions, and behavioral patterns shared by all members of the school community, including the principal, teachers, staff,

and students, which consciously or unconsciously guide daily interactions and decision-making. Rahayuningsih & Iskandar (Havita & Sa'diyah, 2024) define school culture as a set of values that underlie behavior, traditions, daily habits, and symbols implemented by the principal, educators/teachers, educational/administrative staff, students, and the community surrounding the school. Sukadari (2020) states that school culture is the values, traditions, and school policies implemented by the entire school community. Therefore, school culture plays an important role in building an attitude of tolerance and respect for multicultural values in students.

In the context of multicultural education, school culture is not only understood as the social background inherent in educational institutions, but as a dynamic process that shapes the way all school members think, behave, and act in response to diversity. School culture operates through various interrelated elements, including shared values, norms and rules that govern school life, daily practices in learning and social interactions, and symbols and traditions that are collectively interpreted. Through the mechanisms of habituation, role models, and ongoing social interactions, these values are internalized by students, thus forming attitudes of mutual respect, empathy, and openness to differences. Thus, school culture functions to foster an attitude of tolerance, especially in school environments with diverse religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds, because the value of tolerance is not only taught normatively, but also experienced and practiced in everyday school life.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the importance of school culture in shaping student character. Research by Erlanda et al. (Islamudin et al., 2024) places school culture within an Islamic religious framework. Furthermore, Mastina & Imtihana (2022) demonstrates the fostering of religious tolerance from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education teachers. Meanwhile, Akhyar et al. (2023) emphasize that Minangkabau Natural Culture (BAM) education remains highly relevant today as a means of maintaining local wisdom values and implementing character education. However, these three previous studies are still conducted within a relatively homogeneous cultural context, so they have not yet examined in depth how school culture functions in situations of identity diversity that demand flexibility and cultural adaptation in senior high school units with geographical, cultural, and social diversity such as in Percut Sei Tuan. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap (Lestari & Ain, 2022).

SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan was chosen as the research location because it represents a diverse and dynamic school social space, where religious and ethnic diversity is part of the daily life of the school community. Based on school document data, the number of students reached 820 students with a religious composition that includes 722 Muslim students, 97 Christian students, and 1 Sikh student, and comes from various ethnic backgrounds, both local ethnicities in the Sumatra region and immigrant ethnicities such as Javanese, Manadonese, Ambonese, Nias, Tamil, and others. This condition gives rise to dynamics regarding how this quantitative difference is managed so as not to cause majority bias or marginalization of minority groups. SMAN 2 Percut Sei Tuan is an important locus for study because this quantitative imbalance can be managed through accommodative school management policy practices, fair activity space

arrangement, and the protection of the rights of minority students in practicing their beliefs (Milles & Huberman, 2013). The existence of inclusive governance amidst the striking numerical differences between religious communities is a crucial starting point for examining how the contribution of managerial policies and various daily habituation programs in this school operates in reducing the potential for sociological conflict, while at the same time internalizing a deep understanding of tolerance at the student level (Mastina & Imtihana, 2022).

Based on the above background, school culture plays a central role in shaping students' attitudes of tolerance, especially in a diverse educational environment such as Deli Serdang. Therefore, using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study aims to explore three main aspects in depth: the efforts undertaken by school management, the implementation of cultural elements through various habituation programs, and the role of school culture in internalizing an understanding of tolerance among students at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan. The findings of this study are expected to not only provide a concrete picture of how the values of respecting differences are absorbed by the school community but also have a concrete positive impact going forward. The results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for the school in developing an official module on tolerant school culture as a standard guide, as well as serve as a reference material in the implementation of annual program evaluations to maintain the consistency of existing inclusive habits. Furthermore, this research is expected to enrich the development of character education and contribute to the local government in formulating educational policies that are responsive to diversity to create a harmonious school climate (Mulyasa, 2012).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research use method qualitative with approach descriptive. Researcher do observation directly on location research and implementation interview deep with informant. The data collection process is carried out through technique interviews, observations field, and documentation. The data obtained aim For produce valid and reliable information trusted, so that findings study reflect condition facts that occur in the field (Muqtafia et al., 2023).

Research location This is located at State Senior High School 2 Percut Sei Tuan which is located at Jalan Pendidikan/Rahayu Pasar XII, Bandar Klippa Village, District Percut Sei Tuan, Deli Serdang Regency. School This is one of the unit education medium over the country in the region with characteristics heterogeneous society. Conditions the reflected from background behind participant diverse education in the form of aspects of religion, race, and ethnicity that is not only originate from the Sumatra region, but also from various other regions in Indonesia with background different cultures. The number participant There are 820 students studying at State Senior High School 2 Percut Sei Tuan, with composition religious which includes 722 students Muslim, 97 students Christian, and 1 student Sikh religion. Diversity This make school as room relevant social For study practice tolerance through culture school (Nizary & Hamami, 2020).

This research implemented with objective For identify efforts made school in support understanding attitude tolerance, analyzing form implementation element culture school, and study in a way comprehensive role culture school along with mechanism internalization in form attitude tolerance between students at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan (Norlena, 2015). Data collection was carried out in accordance with condition facts in the field through observation live, interview deep with informants, as well as documentation, which is further analyzed with refers to the framework relevant theories use understand phenomena and facts empirical findings in a way deep.

Researchers set informant with a number of criteria namely (1) enculturation full, which includes individual control and inherit something culture or who has undergoing an inheritance process culture ; (2) involvement directly, namely the person involved in a way direct in topic study or culture local ; (3) availability enough time For participate in study (Rahayuningsih & Iskandar, 2022).

Data analysis techniques in study This refers to the Miles and Huberman model which includes three stages The main stages, namely data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Milles & Huberman, 2013:33). The data condensation stage is carried out through the process of sorting, centralization attention, and summary of the data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation in accordance with focus research. Next, data display is carried out with presenting data that has been condensed in form narrative short and structured For facilitate the process of understanding and analysis. The final stage in the form of withdrawal and verification conclusion done with formulate findings study based on results data analysis and do search return against field data use ensure accuracy and validity results study (Rusmiati, 2023).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Research Location

State Senior High School 2 Percut Sei Tuan is a state high school managed by the North Sumatra Provincial Education Office which was founded in 2015, which was previously... managed by the government Deli Serdang Regency with permission Application No. 4221/5283/PDM/2015, Date 06 July In 2015. Percut Sei Tuan State Senior High School began operating in the 2015/2016 academic year and studied at PAB 20 Elementary School, Jalan Pusaka, Percut Sei Tuan District. In the 2015/2016 academic year, Percut Sei Tuan 2 State Senior High School accepted 126 students in 3 (three) study groups. Entering the even semester of the 2015/2016 academic year, Percut Tuan 2 State Senior High School occupied a new building under the guidance of the Deli Serdang Regency Government located at Jalan Pendidikan Pasar XII, Bandar Klippa Village, Percut Sei Tuan District.

The Efforts of State Senior High School 2 Percut Sei Tuan in Supporting the Understanding of Tolerance

Tolerance is a universal value in religions, a form of openness that respects and accepts differences, whether in views, beliefs, culture, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, or

social background (Rusmiati, 2023). The importance of implementing tolerance aims to create an inclusive, harmonious society that is able to appreciate and accept diversity. Thus, people from different backgrounds can live side by side without prejudice or discrimination. To ensure that the value of tolerance is not merely understood as an abstract concept, a space for its concrete actualization is needed. In this study, schools play a vanguard role in the process of instilling and strengthening the value of tolerance in students (Schein, 2010) .

Schools are not merely institutions for the cognitive transfer of knowledge, but also function as social laboratories where the internalization of character values takes place. In the context of Indonesia's heterogeneous society, schools play a crucial role in sowing the seeds of moderation and inclusivity. The value of tolerance, as previously described, finds practical relevance in the school environment, where students from diverse backgrounds meet, interact, and learn together on a daily basis. Through these interactions, attitudes of mutual respect, empathy, and acceptance of differences are not only taught theoretically but also practiced directly. Therefore, efforts to create a conducive educational ecosystem require policy design and field practices that can integrate diversity as a collective strength, so that the value of tolerance can grow organically and sustainably in school life (Schein, 2004).

At SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan, the realization of this inclusive environment is pursued through various strategic policies that touch on the affective aspects of students. Tolerance at this school is not only placed as a theoretical discourse in the curriculum, but is implemented as a tangible school culture. This is in line with the view that tolerance is understood as an active attitude that demands moral awareness, respect, and acceptance of diversity, which is an important foundation in building a harmonious social life, especially in a pluralistic educational environment. This is certainly inseparable from the school's strategic efforts in designing inclusive meeting spaces, as emphasized by the principal regarding concrete policies in normative religious activities at school (Setiawan & Wulandari, 2020).

As in an interview with the principal, Mrs. Suaibatul Aslamiah, M.Si (KS) (51 years old) on February 24, 2026, she said that:

"The first example of a school-wide reality is that we're anti-bullying, with no intolerance, and everyone is tolerant. We implement this, for example, in religious activities every Thursday. Muslims are on the field, and Christians are side by side on *the open stage*. I'm always in the middle of them, no one is pushing the microphone. There, they're reciting the Yasinan (Islamic recitation) while there, they're studying the Bible. I think of it like a pot of colorful flowers, beautiful when side by side."

In line with this view, efforts to instill values of tolerance through space management and tolerance of the sound of worship were also felt by educators. This is in line with the results of an interview with Mr. Jonson (GAg-Christian) (37 years old), on February 27, 2026, who revealed that:

"The school's efforts in tolerance are very good, the school supports tolerance activities, for example, religious activities carried out on Thursdays, such as the Christians on *the open stage*, the Muslims carry out their religious activities on the futsal

field and they listen and respect each other by minimizing the volume of their voices so that one another is not disturbed."



Figure 1. Joint Worship Service



Figure 2. Worship in the Field

Based on the above opinion, it is understandable that religious practices involving large crowds in open spaces often face auditory challenges in the form of potential noise. However, the reality at this school demonstrates that these challenges can be eliminated through the principles of harmony and wise sound management. To maintain a balance between fulfilling spiritual needs and shared comfort, internal agreements regarding volume limits and time management are key to effective implementation. This commitment to sound management within the weekly routine program linearly serves as a foundation for school management in facilitating larger-scale religious celebrations (Setiyati, 2014).

anti-bullying programs and Religious Thursdays, the school also regularly facilitates various religious holiday celebrations. For Christian students, the school supports activities such as Easter, Christmas, and annual *retreat programs*. Meanwhile, for Muslim students, celebrations such as Isra Mi'raj, the Prophet's Birthday, and the commemoration of 1 Muharram are regular events held on the school grounds. Furthermore, the school also provides an *open stage* as a space for cultural expression for students. Although these various programs and activities have been organized by the school as an effort to foster an attitude of tolerance, students' experiences and assessments of their implementation can vary, especially for students from minority groups.

The Implementation of School Culture Elements in Supporting the Understanding of Tolerance at State Senior High School 2 Percut Sei Tuan

As a formal educational institution, schools play a role not only in imparting cognitive knowledge but also in shaping the school culture ecosystem. This school culture encompasses physical artifacts, believed values, and the basic assumptions that underlie every interaction within it. School culture is a habit, habitus, attitude, tradition, or activity carried out daily by the school community. School culture is expected to reflect the character, attitude, and behavior of students that are inherent and can be experienced both within and outside the school environment. To shape a good school culture, schools implement it through habituation activities that are carried out routinely, whether daily,

weekly, monthly, and annually. The implementation techniques include structured and spontaneous or *direct* and *indirect learning*, which aims to train and guide students in attitudes and behavior by instilling good character values so that they become internalized habits in the hearts and souls of students (Sugarda, 2022).

At SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan, the implementation of school culture to support an understanding of tolerance is integrated into a systematically scheduled routine. This implementation does not stand alone, but is part of a comprehensive character-building program, ranging from instilling nationalism, literacy, to religious moderation. As stated in an interview with Ms. Suaibatul Aslamiah, M.Si (KS) (51 years old) on February 24, 2026, she stated:

"On Monday, we have national insight, which instills love for the homeland, such as the flag ceremony. On Tuesday, we have Fun Together with Literacy (CBL). On Wednesday, we have *English Day*, where children are allowed to make speeches and other creative activities in English. On Thursday, we have religious activities. On Friday, we have fitness, namely gymnastics, because we encourage gymnastics for the great Indonesian children. However, at 7:15 a.m., we go in and clean up for 15 minutes before class to support the clean school movement recommended by the governor."

Based on the interview results, it can be understood that the school culture is materialized in the form of *artifacts* in the form of weekly thematic activities that are implemented in a structured and sustainable manner. Although these programs appear general, the internalization of tolerance values occurs inherently in each activity. Specifically, during religious activities every Thursday, the school provides space for students to carry out activities according to their respective religions and beliefs. This practice demonstrates the school's efforts to accommodate diversity and instill the value of respect for differences as part of the school culture. Thus, the implemented weekly routines not only function as a habituation program, but also serve as a means of building understanding and practicing tolerance among students (Sukadari., 2020).

Furthermore, the school's commitment to accommodating diversity is not only reflected in the implementation of routine weekly activities, but also manifested through the provision of equal rights and opportunities in organizing various religious celebrations. This principle of equality is seen as part of the school's efforts to build an inclusive culture of tolerance. This was expressed by Mr. Kusmawadi, S.Pd.I (GAg-Islam) (42 years old) in an interview conducted on February 25, 2026, who stated that:

"This school also provides opportunities for religious celebrations, such as Isra Mi'raj and Maulid for Muslims. Non-Muslims, like Christmas and New Year, are given the same opportunities and rights, and they are also given equal rights in terms of budget. This means that the school does not discriminate between religions, as it is the school's responsibility to accommodate the rights and opportunities of each religion and foster cooperation and tolerance."

Based on this statement, it can be understood that the school strives to create a culture of tolerance by providing equal rights, opportunities, and support to all religious groups in organizing religious activities. Equality in aspects of participation and budget allocation shows that the school does not discriminate based on certain religious

backgrounds. This practice reflects the values of justice, respect for diversity, and recognition of the right of every student to practice their beliefs. From Schein's organizational culture perspective, this policy is a form of artifact that represents the values espoused by the school (*beliefs and values*), namely a commitment to equality, inclusivity, and tolerance. Thus, providing equal opportunities and support in religious activities is one of the school's concrete efforts to foster an understanding of tolerance among students (Supardi, 2015) .

At a deeper level, school culture is manifested not only through policies and ceremonial activities, but also through pedagogical practices in the classroom. The learning process is a crucial arena for schools to internalize the values of tolerance and nationalism in students. One form of implementation is seen in the use of the sociodrama method in history lessons. As explained by Ms. Novaria Sylvia, S.Pd., M.Si. (GSej) (44 years old), in an interview on February 24, 2026:

"The school certainly facilitates this. Sometimes we also create sociodramas where the children perform at a particular moment in history. For example, we once created the G-30SPKI. They briefly re-dramatized the essence of the incident to raise awareness of the importance of upholding the Pancasila ideology."

Through these sociodrama activities, the manifestation of school culture is present in the form of symbolic behavioral representations. The process of reconstructing history, such as the G-30S/PKI incident in schools, is not merely a collective memory of the past, but rather a medium for enculturating Pancasila values that overcomes primordial differences among students. When students collectively dramatize historical narratives, group egos (*in-group feelings*) are melted into a more macro national identity. This aligns with the view of Setiawan et al. (2020) who explain that understanding the history of the Indonesian nation's struggle can foster and strengthen a person's nationalist attitude. In the context of school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan, this historical awareness is internalized as an instrument of social integration, where consensus on the state ideology becomes the main foundation for upholding an attitude of tolerance among students (Suwarni, 2022).

In a different dimension, the manifestation of school cultural elements is also represented through the institutionalization of co-curricular activities, one of which is the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). Through an anthropological perspective, this program functions as an enculturation instrument that provides space for students to explore the values of global diversity and local wisdom collaboratively. The students' experience in undergoing the P5 program was described by one of the students, Fadiya Safiah (S3) (17 years old), in an interview on February 24, 2026, who stated that:

"Sis, once, when there was a P5 project in grade 10 about local wisdom, my group *tedak sinten*, meaning a 7-month event for a baby, made urap, porridge, it could be a big family event or a simple event. In grade 10, we even held a gebyar after the P5 project, whoever was the best was given a reward by the school and sometimes performed at the retirement party. In grade 12, this is no longer the case."

Based on the narrative of F.S. students in the P5 project regarding the *Tedak Sinten tradition* (local wisdom of the Javanese ethnic group), it shows how elements of school culture provide a space for cultural legalization of student heterogeneity. Through this group-based co-curricular activity, a direct *cross-cultural learning process occurs*, where students who are not from the Javanese ethnic group actively participate in constructing knowledge about the tradition. The organization of "gebyar P5" and the giving of appreciation (*rewards*) by the school act as *artifacts* as a form of physical culture that emphasizes the values believed (*espoused values*) by the institution. The school consciously creates an academic atmosphere that positions differences in ethnic traditions not as separators, but as cultural assets that deserve mutual respect.

In line with internalization through P5, the manifestation of school culture at the micro level is also dynamically integrated into pedagogical practices in the classroom, particularly in Sociology subjects. As a cultural ecosystem, the classroom is utilized as a social laboratory to reduce students' primordial barriers through applicable cross-cultural interactions. This is reflected in the results of an interview with Mrs. Ade Vera Siregar, S.Sos (52 years old), in an interview on February 23, 2026, who stated that:

"In sociology, there's multicultural learning through group learning methods. I mix groups with different ethnicities and religions, so they understand that they're not just limited to one ethnicity (Tindangen et al., 2020). In multiculturalism, there's something called traditional cuisine. The project will involve creating traditional dishes. Depending on the ethnicity in the group, they will also create their own traditional dishes. For example, if there are three ethnicities in one group, each group will have to make a traditional dish."

Through the lens of educational anthropology, the formation of interethnic and interfaith study groups by this sociology teacher serves as a strategy for fostering social interaction in the classroom. The assignment to cook traditional dishes based on the ethnic backgrounds of the group members encourages direct intercultural communication. This practice demonstrates that sociology learning focuses not only on textbook material but also on students' real-life experiences. This multicultural project, in turn, helps erode exclusive tendencies among students and demonstrates that a culture of tolerance can be consistently built through classroom learning.

It can be concluded that the implementation of school culture elements in supporting the understanding of tolerance at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan is actualized through various activities that take place in a structured, sustainable, and integrated manner in daily school life. This implementation is realized through weekly routine activities, the implementation of religious activities, providing equal opportunities in celebrating religious holidays, sociodrama-based learning in History subjects, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) activities, and multicultural learning in Sociology subjects. These various activities not only function as a means of academic learning, but also become a medium for socializing and internalizing the values of tolerance, respect for diversity, equality, and cooperation between students who come from different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Tumanggor & Mularsih, 2020).

Through these various practices, students gain direct social experience in interacting, collaborating, and understanding the diversity that exists within the school environment. These experiences ultimately shape the awareness that differences are a social reality that must be valued and accepted as part of shared life. Thus, the school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan serves not merely as a set of formal customs or rules, but has evolved into a cultural mechanism that consistently shapes the understanding and practice of tolerance among students.

When analyzed using Edgar H. Schein's organizational culture theory, various school culture practices at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan show that the instillation of tolerance is realized through various activities that can be directly observed, such as weekly routine activities, Religious Thursdays, celebrations of religious holidays, sociodrama activities, P5 projects, and multicultural learning in the classroom. The existence of these various activities indicates the manifestation of school culture that is visible in the daily lives of the school community. Behind these various practices, there are values that are consciously built and used as guidelines by the school, such as respect for diversity, equal rights, inclusivity, anti-discrimination, and cooperation between students. This indicates the existence of shared values (*espoused beliefs and values*) that serve as the foundation for the school in directing the behavior of all school members so that they are able to live side by side harmoniously amidst diversity (Wijaya, 2018).

Furthermore, the school's consistency in providing equal space for all students regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds demonstrates that the practice of tolerance has gone beyond the formal program level. This condition indicates signs of basic *underlying assumptions* developing within the school environment, namely the belief that every student has equal rights, dignity, and opportunities to participate in school life. This assumption ultimately shapes the mindset and behavior of school residents who view differences as something natural, valuable, and worthy of respect. Thus, the school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan functions not only as a set of rules or activities, but also as a value system that continuously shapes the understanding and practice of tolerance among students.

The Role of School Culture in Shaping Understanding of Tolerance Among Students at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan

Tolerance is a universal value in religions, a form of openness that respects and accepts differences, whether differences in views, beliefs, culture, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, or social background. Tolerance involves respect for individual rights and the recognition that everyone has the right to maintain their own beliefs, values, and identity. Tolerance is not just about respecting differences, but also includes the ability to live peacefully side by side and cooperate with those who are different by respecting and honoring human rights and dignity (Rusmiati, 2023). Tolerance plays a vital role in creating an inclusive, harmonious society that values diversity, where people from various backgrounds can live together without discrimination, conflict, or prejudice.

In the context of education, the instillation of tolerance values does not occur automatically but is formed through various social processes that occur within the school

environment. One factor that plays a crucial role in this process is school culture. School culture serves as a strategic tool for instilling values of togetherness, mutual respect, and appreciation for differences among school members. Through school culture, students are guided to understand, internalize, and practice tolerance in their daily lives. School culture is generally formed through a person's vision and mission, which are developed in response to the demands of both internal and external communities. It is crucial for schools to create or maintain their own school culture, serving as a sense of identity for the school and as a source of pride for its members. School culture illustrates how the entire academic community socializes, acts, and collaborates in building the school into an advanced, superior, and high-quality school, as well as working together to resolve any problems that arise within the school (Nizary & Hamami 2020). Therefore, school culture serves as a foundation for all school members in addressing various issues and challenges that arise within the educational environment. School culture serves as a guideline that directs individual behavior to align with shared values (Yudha & Aulia, 2023).

The school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan is reflected in various daily practices that directly shape attitudes of tolerance among students. Through structured routine activities such as national insight, literacy, *English Day*, religious activities, and group fitness, the school creates a space for intensive interaction for students from diverse backgrounds. These habits contribute positively to the social dynamics at school, where students do not just live side by side passively, but actively demonstrate attitudes of mutual respect and interest in each other's religious and cultural activities. The manifestation of closeness between students and this inclusive atmosphere is clearly illustrated in the statements of students who directly experience the fading of barriers of difference in the school environment.

Based on the interview results above, it can be concluded that the inclusive school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan internalizes multicultural values into students' daily social actions. The tolerance created is no longer merely formal recognition, but rather manifests in the form of sympathy and active appreciation among students of different faiths. This phenomenon is evident in how students outside the religious circle do not hesitate to learn and imitate their peers' religious songs in a relaxed atmosphere without stigma. Furthermore, the recognition and greetings on minority religious holidays such as Diwali by teachers and fellow students demonstrates that the interactive space provided by the school is able to foster a sense of security, strengthen social cohesion, and foster a character of mutual respect within the educational ecosystem. This harmonious condition at the student level does not stand alone, but is linear with the exemplary behavior demonstrated by educators in the school environment.

On the other hand, teachers also demonstrate tolerance through concrete actions, where educators actively support each other and attend each other's religious events to provide direct examples of inclusivity. This is reflected in an interview with Ms. Elfi Khairani, S.Pd (GPpkn) (55 years old) on February 27, 2026, who stated that:

"The role that schools have built to build tolerance among students is, for example, we have Christians and there's a Christmas celebration, of course all the teachers are

invited, even though they are Muslim. If I have time, I come. This person, when there's a Christmas event, the church changes, if it's close to my house, I come. The principal also comes, the principal is Muslim. And this person, for example, when we have a short-term Islamic boarding school celebration like the public relations officer, is Christian and often comes to help line up the children. That's a form of tolerance, helping each other, sometimes he's the one who organizes the parking."



Figure 3. Islamic boarding school Lightning



Figure 4. Principal's Welcome Speech at the Christmas Celebration

Based on the interview excerpt, it can be concluded that tolerance at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan is built through the principle of reciprocity and active cooperation between teachers of various faiths. Teachers do not merely position themselves as teachers of moral theory, but as the main actors who transmit the values of tolerance through concrete actions (*role modeling*), such as the presence of the principal and Muslim teachers at the Christmas celebration, as well as the active involvement of Christian teachers in the success of Pesantren Kilat activities. This attitude of mutual assistance in the operational and ceremonial realms emphasizes that theological differences are not a barrier to the creation of social solidarity, so that the exemplary behavior of the ranks of teachers and leaders is a strong foundation for a solid culture of inclusiveness in the school ecosystem.

Thus, it can be concluded that the school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan plays a significant role in shaping students' understanding of tolerance. The school culture, manifested through various routine activities, daily social interactions, and teacher role models, has created an inclusive and conducive educational environment for the growth of mutual respect amidst diversity. The understanding of tolerance formed is not only limited to recognizing differences, but also develops into concrete actions such as giving appreciation to other religious practices, giving congratulations on religious holidays, and creating harmonious social relationships without primordial barriers among school residents (Zuldafrial & Muhammad, 2012).

Furthermore, a culture of tolerance in schools is also strengthened through the role models demonstrated by teachers and school leaders. The involvement of interfaith teachers in various religious activities, whether through attendance, moral support, or technical assistance, demonstrates that tolerance is not only taught conceptually, but is also practiced directly in school life. This role model ultimately becomes a social learning process for students, understanding that religious differences are not a barrier to building cooperation, solidarity, and harmonious social relationships. Thus, school culture serves as a medium for internalizing the values of tolerance that continuously shape the understanding, attitudes, and behavior of tolerance among students at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan.

When analyzed using Edgar H. Schein's organizational culture theory, various forms of interaction and social practices found at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan indicate the presence of visible and directly observable cultural manifestations (*artifacts*), such as the habit of students appreciating each other's religious activities, giving greetings on religious holidays, and the involvement of interfaith teachers in various school activities. These practices indicate that the school consciously builds values of togetherness, respect for differences, and inclusivity in daily life. This indicates the existence of espoused beliefs *and values* that guide the behavior of all school members in establishing social relationships. Furthermore, the consistency of tolerant behavior demonstrated by both students and teachers indicates the existence of basic *underlying assumptions* that have been internalized in the school environment, namely the belief that every individual has the same dignity, deserves respect, and can live side by side harmoniously despite having different religious and cultural backgrounds. When this belief has become part of the collective consciousness of the school community, tolerant behavior no longer arises because of the demands of formal rules, but has become a living culture and is practiced naturally in the daily lives of the school community.

Discussion

School culture refers to a system of values, beliefs and norms that are accepted together, and implemented consciously as natural behavior, which is formed by the environment that creates the same understanding among all elements and school personnel, including the principal, teachers, staff, students and if necessary, forms the same public opinion as the school (Setiyati, 2014). In this study, school culture is focused on internalizing the understanding of tolerance attitudes at the high school level, specifically at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan.

Based on the research results presented in the previous sub-chapter, it is clear that the school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan is not only present in the form of formal activities, but also manifested in various practices, policies, and social interactions that take place in the daily lives of the school community. These various activities indicate a process of internalizing the value of tolerance that is carried out continuously through the mechanism of school culture. To understand more deeply how school culture plays a role in shaping the understanding of tolerance attitudes among students, the findings of this study were analyzed using Edgar H. Schein's organizational culture theory which

divides organizational culture into three levels, namely *artifacts*, *espoused beliefs and values*, and *basic underlying assumptions*.

First, at the artifact level, the school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan is evident through various forms of behavior, activities, symbols, and policies that can be directly observed by the school community. Schein explained that artifacts are the most easily seen manifestations of culture, but often require further interpretation to understand their meaning. Based on the research results, artifacts of tolerance culture in this school are manifested through the implementation of routine weekly activities such as flag ceremonies, Cheerful Together with Literacy (CBL), English Day, Religious Thursdays, and Fitness Fridays. In addition, the culture of tolerance is also evident in anti-bullying policies, the use of adjacent prayer rooms, the implementation of equal celebrations of religious holidays, sociodrama activities in history lessons, the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), multicultural learning in Sociology subjects, and the involvement of interfaith teachers in various school religious activities (Databoks, 2010).

various cultural *artifacts* not only demonstrate the existence of school programs but also play a role in fostering an understanding of tolerance among students. Through direct involvement in various routine activities and interactions across religions and cultures, students gain concrete social experiences regarding the importance of respecting differences. The understanding of tolerance formed at this stage remains visible and practical, as students learn to respect each other, cooperate, maintain mutual comfort, and avoid discriminatory actions in everyday life. Thus, school cultural artifacts serve as an initial means for students to recognize and practice the values of tolerance in a concrete way.

Second, at the level of *espoused beliefs and values*, the school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan is reflected through various values and beliefs that are consciously embraced and used as guidelines in the implementation of education. According to Schein, *espoused beliefs and values* are values explicitly stated by the organization as a reference in determining policies, goals, and behavior of organizational members. Based on the results of the study, the values developed by the school include respect for diversity, equal rights, inclusivity, anti-discrimination, cooperation, nationalism, and respect for the dignity of each individual (Unesco, 2020).

These values are reflected in school policies that provide equal opportunities and support for all religious groups in carrying out religious activities, granting students the freedom to determine their involvement in religious activities according to their beliefs, and the school's commitment to rejecting all forms of bullying and discrimination. The principal's statement that likened diversity to "flowers in a pot that are colorful and beautiful when side by side" demonstrates a normative belief that diversity is a social wealth that needs to be maintained within the school environment. Furthermore, the value of tolerance is not only stopped at the level of slogans or formal policies, but is also integrated into various learning practices and school activities. This demonstrates the alignment between expressed values (*espoused values*) and social practices that occur within the school environment. This alignment is important because, according to Schein,

organizational culture will develop further if the expressed values can be realized in the behavior of organizational members.

At this level, understanding of tolerance is not only demonstrated through visible behavior, but also begins to be understood by students as an important value in communal life. Through the various values consistently conveyed by the school, students gain an understanding that every individual deserves respect regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural background. Thus, the school not only teaches the practice of tolerance in everyday interactions but also instills an understanding of the importance of mutual respect in social life.

Third, at the deepest level, namely *basic underlying assumptions*, the research results show that the culture of tolerance at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan has developed into a collective belief accepted as normal by the school community. Schein stated that *basic underlying assumptions* are unconscious assumptions formed through shared experiences and are consistently considered truths within the organization. These assumptions ultimately direct how individuals think, interpret reality, and act in everyday life.

In the context of SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan, various tolerance practices carried out repeatedly and continuously have formed an understanding that all students, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or cultural background, have the same rights and opportunities to be accepted and participate in school life. This is reflected in the behavior of students who spontaneously greet each other on religious holidays, show interest in the religious practices of friends of different beliefs, work together in multicultural groups, and engage in various school activities without questioning primordial identities.

Furthermore, ongoing interactions have shaped students' perspectives on diversity as a natural part of social life at school. The resulting understanding of tolerance extends beyond simply understanding the importance of respecting differences, but is reflected in everyday behavior through mutual respect, cooperation, and the building of harmonious social relationships. From Schein's perspective, this indicates that the value of tolerance is no longer understood merely as a formal rule but has begun to develop into a fundamental assumption that influences how school members interact with and view diversity (Creswell, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that the author has conducted regarding the role of school culture in internalizing the understanding of tolerance attitudes at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan's efforts to support an understanding of tolerance among students are carried out through various inclusive school policies and programs. These efforts are realized through the implementation of an anti- *bullying policy*, holding routine weekly activities, giving students the freedom to participate in religious activities according to their beliefs, implementing religious holidays for all religions, and providing facilities such as *an open stage* as a space for student cultural

expression. These various policies demonstrate the school's commitment to creating an educational environment that respects diversity, upholds equality, and prevents discrimination in the school environment.

2. The implementation of school culture elements in supporting the understanding of tolerance at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan is actualized through various activities carried out in a structured and sustainable manner in daily school life. This implementation is seen through weekly routine activities, such as national insight, Ceria Bersama Literacy (CBL), *English Day*, religious activities, and joint fitness, as well as through learning and co-curricular activities, such as sociodrama in History subjects, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), and multicultural learning in Sociology subjects. These various activities function as a medium for socializing and internalizing the values of tolerance that enable students to gain direct experience in interacting, collaborating, and understanding the diversity of religions, ethnicities, and cultures in the school environment.
3. The school culture at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan plays a role in shaping an understanding of tolerance among students through habits, daily social interactions, and role models demonstrated by teachers and school leaders. This school culture creates an inclusive and conducive environment for the development of mutual respect amidst diversity. The understanding of tolerance that is formed is not only limited to the recognition of differences, but is also reflected in concrete actions, such as respecting the religious practices of other students, giving greetings on religious holidays, and establishing cooperation and harmonious social relations between students of different religions. In addition, the example of teachers in demonstrating tolerance also strengthens the process of internalizing the value of tolerance, so that mutual respect and appreciation of differences become part of the social life of the school community.

Suggestion

1. The school is advised to develop and implement an official guidebook or written module on the culture of tolerance at SMA Negeri 2 Percut Sei Tuan as a normative guideline for implementing harmonious social life within the school environment. The purpose of this module is to document and internalize the values of togetherness, mutual respect, and appreciation for diversity that have developed within the school culture.
2. School management should hold regular evaluation meetings at the end of each academic year, specifically focusing on reviewing the implementation of religious programs and strengthening tolerance values, such as Religious Thursday activities and commemorations of religious holidays. These evaluations are crucial for program reflection and quality control, helping to identify the program's effectiveness, relevance, and impact on student character development.
3. It is recommended that schools host multicultural arts performances and interactive dialogue forums aimed at introducing and strengthening

understanding of the cultures of various ethnic groups. These activities serve not only as a means of appreciating cultural diversity through performances of local wisdom, but also as an educational medium for promoting the moral values, social norms, and philosophical meanings inherent in each tradition.

4. This research is still limited to how school culture shapes understanding of tolerance attitudes through qualitative observations. Therefore, future researchers are advised to expand the scope of the research by examining the influence or contribution of this school culture on other aspects of students' social life (in the long term through quantitative research methods that measure the relationship between variables in a more measurable manner).

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