



Character Education as an Antidote to Racism Among Generation Z

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Abstrak

Rasisme sebagai bentuk diskriminasi yang terus berkembang, menjadi masalah signifikan baik di tingkat global maupun lokal. Generasi Z yang dikenal sebagai generasi digital-native, sering terpapar isu rasisme melalui media sosial, yang dapat memperkuat stereotip. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran pendidikan karakter dalam mengatasi rasisme di kalangan Generasi Z. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode studi kepustakaan (*library research*), yang mengkaji berbagai literatur terkait untuk memahami fenomena rasisme dan strategi implementasi pendidikan karakter. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter yang menanamkan nilai-nilai seperti toleransi, empati, keadilan, dan kesetaraan memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk pola pikir inklusif pada Generasi Z. Nilai-nilai ini dapat diintegrasikan ke dalam kurikulum, kegiatan ekstrakurikuler, serta pemanfaatan teknologi digital untuk mendukung kampanye anti-rasisme. Namun, implementasi pendidikan karakter tidak tanpa tantangan, seperti resistensi budaya dan kesenjangan dalam akses pendidikan berkualitas. Untuk mengatasi tantangan ini, diperlukan kolaborasi antara pendidik, orang tua, komunitas, dan lembaga sosial. Dengan pendekatan yang terintegrasi dan komprehensif, pendidikan karakter dapat menjadi landasan yang kuat dalam menciptakan masyarakat yang lebih inklusif, harmonis, dan bebas dari diskriminasi rasial. Penelitian ini juga memberikan implikasi bahwa penguatan pendidikan karakter dapat menjadi langkah strategis untuk menghadapi tantangan global yang kompleks, terutama dalam konteks digital.

Keywords: *Racism, Generation Z, Character Education, Tolerance, Empathy*

Abstract

Racism, as a growing form of discrimination, is a significant problem both globally and locally. Generation Z, known as the digital-native generation, is often exposed to issues of racism through social media, which can reinforce stereotypes. This research aims to analyze the role of character education in overcoming racism among Generation Z. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with the method of character education. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with a library research method, which examines various related literature to understand the phenomenon of racism and character education implementation strategies. The results show that character education that instills values such as tolerance, empathy, justice, and equality has an important role in shaping an inclusive mindset in Generation Z. These values can be integrated into the character education program. These values can be integrated into the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and the use of digital technology to support anti-racism campaigns. However, the implementation of character education is not without challenges, such as cultural resistance and gaps in access to quality education. Overcoming these challenges requires collaboration between educators, parents, communities and social institutions. With an integrated and comprehensive approach, character education can be a strong foundation in creating a more inclusive, harmonious society free from racial discrimination. This research also provides implications that strengthening character education can be a strategic step to face complex global challenges, especially in the digital context.

Keywords: *Racism, Generation Z, Character Education, Tolerance, Empathy*



Introduction

Racism is understood as discrimination or stereotyping against individuals or groups based on their race or ethnicity. This phenomenon often occurs in various forms, ranging from direct actions such as hate speech to systemic ones, such as inequities in access to education, employment and health services (Febria et al., 2022; Windiana, 2022; Sulianti, 2024). The impact is detrimental, not only to the individual victimized, but also to society as a whole. Racism creates social tension, decreases community cohesion, and can be the root of prolonged conflict (Witte, 2022; Harahap et al., 2023). Addressing the impact of racism requires a collective effort involving education, community empowerment and equitable policies to create an inclusive society. Only by eliminating race-based discrimination can social cohesion be restored and the potential for prolonged conflict be minimized.

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is a generation heavily influenced by digital technology and social media (Arum et al., 2023; Waruwu et al., 2023). On the one hand, they have broad access to information, including issues of diversity and equality. However, on the other hand, social media is also a platform that reinforces stereotypes and spreads hate speech (Putri et al., 2024; Alamsyah, 2024). At the global level, cases of racism such as the Black Lives Matter movement show that racism is still a serious problem (Putra et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in the local context, Indonesia also faces similar challenges, especially in the issue of SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Intergroup) (Fensi, 2018). Generation Z is often caught in the loop of racism debates, either as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses (Writer, 2024). With high social awareness and access to global platforms, this generation can be the driving force of social change that goes beyond mere discourse, but actually realizes a society free from racial discrimination.

Addressing racism requires a comprehensive approach, and one strategic step is through character education. This education aims to instill positive values such as tolerance, empathy and respect for diversity, which have become major concerns in Indonesia (Sanur and Saripudin, 2022; Setyaningsih and Setyowatie, 2023; Sanur et al., 2024). By shaping an inclusive mindset from an early age, the younger generation can become agents of change who are able to break the cycle of discrimination and prejudice in the future (Wirata, 2024). Therefore, character education is not only relevant, but also an urgent need to build a more just and harmonious society.

Racism remains a complex issue in the modern era, despite the world's social, technological and educational advances. Generation Z, as a generation that has grown up in the midst of digital information flows, is often exposed to issues of racism both directly and through social media, which can reinforce stereotypes or prejudices (Hidayati et al., 2020). This condition raises the question of why racism persists in society, and how to effectively overcome it. Therefore, this study aims to explain the relationship between character education in overcoming racism, as well as provide insight into relevant and effective character education strategies for Generation Z in building an inclusive and anti-discrimination mindset.

Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to understand the phenomenon in depth through data analysis in the form of words, text, and images. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to provide a detailed and detailed description of a phenomenon. This makes it a very effective tool for researching situations, events, or problems that require a thorough understanding of patterns, relationships, and their meaning (Darmalaksana, 2020).

In its implementation, the author uses the literature study method, namely by collecting data in the form of scientific papers that are relevant to the topic of discussion. The data was obtained from various books, news and journal articles. After the data is collected, a selection and grouping process is carried out, followed by an in-depth study of these sources to produce articles that are in accordance with the research objectives.

Findings and discussion

Generation Z Characteristics and Challenges

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is a digital-native generation that has grown up in a highly technologically connected environment. They have extensive access to global information through the internet and social media. This generation is known to be highly socially conscious, especially on global issues such as environmental sustainability, human rights, and inclusivity. However, this generation also faces unique challenges, especially in the face of social polarization reinforced by social media algorithms (Silitonga, 2023). Digital platforms often reinforce stereotypes and facilitate the spread of racialized hate speech (Gunawan and Barito, 2021). Generation Z, with their ability to use technology, has a great opportunity to become agents of change (Afif et al., 2024). However, to be effective as agents of change, this generation needs to build strong digital literacy and critical thinking skills to counter the negative impacts of polarization and prevent the spread of misinformation.

Social media provides space for anti-racism campaigns (Hasanah, 2017; Filza and Damanik, 2024), but it has also become a tool for certain groups to spread racist propaganda (Ningrum et al., 2016; Hasnaa, 2023). Generation Z is often exposed to this content, which can influence their views on diversity issues. On the one hand, they can use social media to promote cross-cultural dialogue and inclusive narratives. On the other hand, if not accompanied by adequate digital literacy, they can be trapped in a destructive cycle of polarization (Hidayati et al., 2020). To face this challenge, character education combined with digital literacy is crucial. With a strong understanding of moral and ethical values, Generation Z can utilize technology to create positive social change.

Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of Character Education

Challenges in Character Education Implementation

1. **Cultural Resistance and Entrenched Stereotypes:** One of the biggest challenges in implementing character education is the deep-rooted cultural resistance in society. Certain stereotypes are often taken as truths that are difficult to change, even if they support discrimination and racism. A clear example is the negative view of ethnic minority groups that is passed down through generations, either through informal education or oral tradition (Solomon et al., 2005). This creates barriers to introducing values of tolerance and diversity.
2. **Gaps in Access to Quality Education:** Inequality in access to education, especially in remote or underdeveloped areas, is also an obstacle in spreading character education (Hujaimah et al., 2023). Collaboration between the government, educational institutions and communities is essential to create equal opportunities for all learners. Learners in these areas often do not receive adequate learning about diversity or equality values. In addition, the shortage of teachers trained in teaching character education further exacerbates the situation.

Solutions in implementing character education

1. **Specialized Training for Educators:** Teachers and educators play an important role in the implementation of character education. Therefore, specialized training to improve their competence in teaching the values of tolerance, empathy and equality is needed (Nisa, 2019). This training program could include modules on how to overcome stereotypes, hold constructive discussions and create an inclusive classroom environment. In addition, educators also need to be trained to recognize and address their own biases in order to be good role models for learners.
2. **Building Public Awareness through Anti-Racism Campaigns:** Social campaigns that emphasize the importance of diversity and tolerance can help overcome ingrained stereotypes. Social media, television and other digital platforms can be utilized to deliver positive messages that promote inclusivity. A concrete example is a campaign featuring success stories of individuals or communities that have overcome discrimination and built harmonious relationships (Leonardo, 2019). In this way, people can be encouraged to see diversity as a strength, not a threat.

3. **Multicultural Curriculum Development:** Integrating multicultural education into the national curriculum can be a long-term solution to address racism and discrimination. Subjects such as Civic Education and History can be utilized to teach the values of inclusivity (Arfa and Lasaiba, 2022; Sanur, 2023). This holistic approach will strengthen the foundation for creating a more harmonious society free from racial discrimination. In addition, extracurricular activities that encourage cross-cultural interactions, such as learner exchanges or cultural festivals, can also be an effective means to instill these values.
4. **Collaboration with Communities and Institutions:** Involving local communities, youth organizations and social institutions in character education programs can strengthen efforts to instill anti-racism values. For example, communities can organize workshops or seminars on diversity, while youth organizations can organize social activities that bring together individuals from different backgrounds (Subasman et al., 2024). This collaboration can create synergies between formal and non-formal education, so that messages about inclusiveness can be conveyed more widely. Berdasarkan hal di atas, dapat kita pahami bahwa, dengan mengatasi tantangan-tantangan tersebut melalui solusi yang terstruktur dan berkelanjutan, pendidikan karakter dapat menjadi alat yang efektif untuk menciptakan masyarakat yang lebih adil, inklusif, dan harmonis.

The Role of Character Education in Counteracting Racism

Character education has a strategic role in building awareness and empathy as the first step to counteract racism. Through character education, individuals are taught to understand diversity as a wealth that must be appreciated, not as a trigger for conflict (Wartini, 2015; Sanur and Dermawan, 2023). By understanding cultural, racial and religious differences, learners can develop deep empathy for the life experiences of others. This process is crucial to reducing stereotypes or prejudices that are often at the root of discrimination (Lin and Jackson, 2023). Moreover, instilling empathy early on helps individuals to see the world from different perspectives, thus strengthening social solidarity and relationships between individuals. Empathy taught through character education also encourages learners to understand that discriminatory actions have an adverse impact not only on the victim, but also on social relations as a whole (Arni et al., 2023; Rahmadani, 2024). By raising awareness of this reality, learners can become change agents committed to building a more inclusive environment (Putra et al., 2020; Subechiana and Ratnawati, 2024). For example, through role simulations or group discussions that highlight the challenges faced by minority groups, learners can learn to understand situations from different perspectives.

Promoting the Value of Tolerance and Equality

Character education also aims to instill the value of tolerance and equality in everyday life. By appreciating cultural, religious and racial differences, individuals are taught to see the uniqueness of each group as something positive. Case studies of successful implementation of character education in various schools show that this approach is effective in reducing discriminatory behavior (Jannice Michelle et al., 2024). For example, through activities such as intercultural dialogues, art performances or collaborative projects across races and religions, learners can learn to work together and understand the values of inclusiveness (Sakila et al., 2024). Effective character education not only instills the value of tolerance, but also builds the foundation for creating a generation that is able to face the challenges of diversity with an inclusive attitude. By making the values of equality and respect for differences an integral part of education, a harmonious society free from discrimination can be realized.

In many schools, character education programs have successfully integrated tolerance values into the curriculum through various activities (Nisa, 2019). One example is cultural exchange programs between learners from different backgrounds, which allow them to share experiences and build better understanding (Subasman et al., 2024). In addition, project-based learning that involves collaboration between learners from diverse groups can be an effective tool to instill the value of equality (Az-Zahra et al., 2024). Character education programs that integrate the value of tolerance through activities such as cultural exchange and project-based learning not only enrich learners' experiences, but also shape individuals who are more open, empathetic and ready to face

an increasingly pluralistic world. With this approach, schools can act as agents of change that create a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Utilizing Technology and Social Media

In the digital age, social media plays an important role in shaping individuals' perceptions of social issues, including racism. Digital character education offers an innovative approach to delivering anti-discrimination messages. Strategies such as inclusivity campaigns, educational content creation and online training can utilize digital platforms to reach a wider audience (Kumowal, 2024). For example, young people who are active on social media can be engaged in anti-racism campaign movements through short videos, infographics or online discussions that educate about the importance of respecting diversity (Purnawinadi and Sali, 2020). In this way, technology can be used as a tool to promote the values of tolerance and solidarity, while combating negative narratives that often appear in digital spaces.

Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok can be used to create inspiring and educational content. Learners can be involved in the creation of this content, so that they are not only consumers of information, but also producers of positive narratives. In addition, digital literacy training taught in character education can help learners to recognize and counter fake news or racist propaganda that is often spread on the internet (Shidique et al., 2023). With the integration of character education values into the formal, informal and digital media education systems, it is expected that individuals can grow into agents of change who are able to create a more inclusive and harmonious society (Novia et al., 2024). Well-designed character education will prepare young people to face global challenges with strong moral values, so that they can contribute to the development of a more just and peaceful society.

Character Education Implementation Strategy in Overcoming Racism

Inclusiveness-Based Curriculum

The integration of anti-racism values in the school curriculum is an important step to raise awareness about the importance of tolerance and diversity. Subjects such as History Learning, Civic Education and Religious Education can be utilized to teach the value of respect for cultural, racial and religious differences. In addition, schools can develop extracurricular programs that support cultural diversity, such as cross-cultural art festivals, inter-regional learner exchanges, and social activities involving different ethnicities (Ummah, 2019). This approach aims to help learners see differences as cultural richness rather than a source of conflict.

One effective way to implement this is by using project-based learning modules that involve collaboration between learners from different backgrounds. These projects could include researching local cultures, making video documentation, or organizing cross-cultural discussion events (Fazillah and Nisa, 2024). By providing hands-on experience, learners can better explore and internalize the value of inclusivity.

The Role of Teachers and Parents

Teachers have an important role as role models in building anti-racism character. As educators, teachers are not only in charge of delivering subject matter, but also providing examples in daily behavior. For example, teachers can show respect for differences by involving all learners regardless of their backgrounds in classroom activities (Lin and Jackson, 2023). Teachers can also hold open discussions on relevant social issues, such as discrimination and the importance of equality.

Parental involvement is also a key factor in shaping an inclusive mindset at home. Parents can support character education by creating a family environment that values diversity. Family discussions about equality values, cross-cultural experiences or inspiring stories about unity can be effective ways to instill understanding in children. Collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting character education ensures that anti-discrimination values can be instilled consistently in the various environments where children grow up. Close collaboration between teachers and parents ensures that anti-discrimination values are instilled consistently, forming a solid foundation for children to grow as individuals who value differences and play an active role in creating a more inclusive society.

Collaboration with Communities and Institutions

Local communities, youth organizations and social institutions have an important role in promoting character education. For example, communities can organize educational activities such as seminars on diversity, anti-discrimination training or equality campaigns in public spaces. Youth organizations can be involved in community-based projects that aim to strengthen solidarity between groups. In addition, social institutions can collaborate with schools to develop practice-based character education programs. For example, mentoring programs for students from minority groups can help them feel accepted and valued (Rahmi and Adam, 2022). This collaboration also includes involving community leaders and religious leaders to provide insights on the importance of diversity and tolerance in everyday life.

Based on the strategies described above, it can be understood that character education is not only the responsibility of schools but also involves all elements of society in creating an inclusive and harmonious environment. This collaborative approach ensures that the values of tolerance, empathy and equality can be internalized by individuals at different levels of society, thus building a strong foundation to fight discrimination and create a more just society.

In this case, racism in Generation Z can be addressed through a holistic approach utilizing technology, education, and community roles. Racism in Generation Z can be addressed through a holistic approach that utilizes technology, education, and the role of community. As a generation that has grown up in the digital age, Generation Z has extensive access to information and interacts globally through social media. Therefore, the first step is to encourage responsible digital literacy, where youth are encouraged to filter information, understand the impact of hate speech, and avoid negative stereotypes. Generation Z also has great power as “digital natives” in creating anti-racism social movements through social media platforms, digital campaigns, and creative content that inspires widespread mindset change.

On the other hand, education plays a key role in building anti-racism awareness. The integration of diversity values in the school curriculum, such as through Civics, Religious Education, and History subjects, helps learners understand the importance of empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences. Extracurricular programs such as cross-cultural art festivals, open discussions and project-based learning also provide hands-on experience in internalizing the value of inclusiveness. These activities encourage collaboration between learners from different backgrounds, so that differences are seen as cultural richness rather than a source of conflict.

The role of teachers and parents is very important in providing positive role models. Teachers act as role models at school by practicing respect for differences and facilitating discussions on equality issues. Meanwhile, families support through positive dialog and creating an environment that respects diversity from an early age. Collaboration between teachers, parents and learners ensures that anti-racism values are instilled consistently in the school and home environment.

In addition, local communities, youth organizations and social institutions play an important role in strengthening character education through educational activities such as diversity seminars, equality campaigns and mentoring programs for minority groups. Collaboration with community leaders and religious leaders also helps to instill the value of tolerance in everyday life.

By combining the roles of technology, education, family and community, this strategy aims to build a strong foundation for Generation Z to overcome racism. Digital literacy, inclusive education, open dialogue and creative media-based social movements can create a younger generation that is more empathetic, tolerant and actively involved in shaping an inclusive society free from discrimination..

Conclusion

Character education is a key strategy in counteracting racism, especially among Generation Z who grew up in the digital era. By instilling core values such as tolerance, empathy, justice and equality, character education shapes individuals who have high social and moral sensitivity. These values not only serve to reduce stereotypes or prejudice, but also create a more inclusive and harmonious

society. Through character education, we pave the way to a more just, egalitarian and prejudice-free society, where differences are valued as wealth, not conflict triggers.

The implementation of character education faces various challenges, including cultural resistance and gaps in access to quality education. However, through educator training, anti-racism campaigns, multicultural curriculum development and community collaboration, these challenges can be overcome. Successful character education requires the involvement of all parties, including teachers, parents, communities and social institutions. With an integrated approach, character education can be a strong foundation for building a just society, where diversity is seen as a strength, not a threat. Generation Z, as the next generation of the nation, is expected to be the change agent who brings these values into their daily lives, thus creating a better world for all.

This article has various weaknesses that can serve as references for future research. First, the research method used, library research, while relevant, tends to be limited in providing direct empirical data. Further research could consider mixed methods, such as surveys or interviews, to complement theoretical data with real-life experiences from Generation Z. Secondly, although the articles mention challenges such as cultural resistance and education access gaps, the proposed solutions tend to be generic and require further elaboration for practical situations. Future research could strengthen the validity by including quantitative data and in-depth analysis of the case studies. By improving on these weaknesses, future research can make a more comprehensive and applicable contribution to the issue of racism among Generation Z.

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Declaration

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Not applicable

Competing interests

All authors declare that there are no relevant conflicts of interest related to this research.

Author contributions

RR, AA and MYM analyzed and interpreted the patient data regarding the hematological disease and the transplant. ISS, AA, and FK performed the histological examination of the kidney, and was a major contributor in writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript."

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