

The Implementation of Multicultural-Based Social Guidance to Improve Students' Social Cohesion of SMKN 1 Tabanan in 2025

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Abstract: *In the context of Indonesia's diverse education system, Vocational High Schools face the challenge of building social cohesion amidst diverse student backgrounds. This study aims to analyze the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance in improving student Social Cohesion at SMKN 1 Tabanan, Bali. The research approach employed was a qualitative documentation study method, focusing on the review of social guidance program documents, activity reports, counseling service guidelines, and the results of the school's internal evaluation for the period of 2024–2025. Data was analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify key themes related to strategy, implementation, and the program's impact on student social interactions. The results show that the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance at SMKN 1 Tabanan has strengthened the values of tolerance, empathy, and cooperation among cross-cultural students. The guidance program, which is integrated with extracurricular activities and project-based learning, has successfully improved social cohesion, as seen from the decrease in cases of interpersonal conflict and increased student participation in cross-department activities. However, challenges remain in the form of limited counselor training and a lack of systematic evaluative guidelines. These findings reinforce multicultural counseling theory (Sue & Sue, 2016) and the concept of social cohesion (Putnam, 2000), which argue that an educational environment that values diversity will strengthen social solidarity and integration between individuals. The practical implications of this study emphasize the importance of developing multicultural competencies for guidance teachers and counselors, as well as the need for school policies that support an inclusive and adaptive social guidance model for students' cultural plurality.*

Keywords: social guidance, multicultural, Social Cohesion, Vocational High School, inclusive education

1. Introduction

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the personality, character, and social skills of students. One crucial aspect of education is the development of social skills, reflecting cohesiveness or social integration among students. Social cohesion is a condition in which individuals within a group share a sense of togetherness, mutual trust, and work together to achieve common goals. In the school context, social cohesion is a crucial foundation for creating a harmonious, inclusive, and productive learning environment.

In today's era of globalization and digitalization, schools are not only places for the transfer of knowledge but also a meeting place for diverse cultural backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, and social values. SMKN 1 Tabanan, as one of the vocational education institutions in Bali, has a heterogeneous student body, both socially, economically, and culturally. According to data from the Bali Provincial Statistics Agency (BPS) (2024), there are more than 32,000 vocational high school students in Tabanan Regency, with diverse social and geographic backgrounds. Meanwhile, the 2024 Ministry of Education and Culture's Basic Education Data (*Dapodik*) shows that the distribution of students in vocational high schools across Bali demonstrates high student mobility between sub-districts and regencies. This situation has the potential to present social challenges within the school environment, including social disparities, cultural stereotypes, and the emergence of small groups based on regional origin.

SMKN 1 Tabanan, one of the public vocational high schools in Bali, has students from various regions and socio-cultural

backgrounds. Based on internal school data from 2025, the number of students at SMKN 1 Tabanan comprises a diverse range of regional origins and religions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' Composition at SMKN 1 Tabanan based on the Sociocultural Background in 2025

Socio-cultural Aspect	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Hindu	750	65%
Islam	250	22%
Christian	120	10%
Others	30	3%
Total	1,150	100%

(Source: Students' Data of SMKN 1 Tabanan, 2025)

In addition to religious diversity, there are also differences in ethnicity and region of origin, such as students from Bali, Java, Lombok, and East Nusa Tenggara. This situation causes significant potential for building tolerance, but on the other hand, it can pose challenges in maintaining social cohesion. Based on observations and preliminary interviews with guidance counselors, several social symptoms were identified, such as a lack of cooperation between student groups, inter-ethnic stereotypes, and limited cross-cultural interaction in the school environment.

Multicultural-based social guidance offers a solution to instill the values of empathy, tolerance, and mutual respect among students. This approach integrates the principles of cultural diversity into the counseling and social guidance process, enabling students to develop social skills in an inclusive manner (Sue & Sue, 2016).

This cultural and social diversity needs to be managed with an educational approach that fosters values of mutual respect and appreciation for differences. In this regard, multicultural-based social guidance plays a strategic role in strengthening relationships between students from diverse backgrounds. Social guidance that integrates multicultural values not only helps students understand themselves and their environment but also fosters empathy, openness, and the ability to interact harmoniously.

Various studies have shown that implementing a multicultural guidance approach can increase tolerance and cooperation among students (Banks, 2015; Suparno, 2020). However, empirically, challenges remain in building strong social cohesion in vocational schools. For example, the emergence of small groups based on regional origin, differing perspectives, or social friction resulting from a lack of understanding of cultural diversity. Furthermore, initial observations at SMKN 1 Tabanan in 2024 indicated low cross-class social participation and a lack of social guidance programs oriented toward multicultural values, necessitating systematic intervention through multicultural-based social guidance programs.

Over the past decade, studies on multicultural guidance and counseling in Indonesia have shown increasing academic attention in line with the demands of social pluralism in schools. A bibliometric review indicates that publications related to multicultural competency in counseling services in Indonesia increased significantly between 2013 and 2022, indicating that issues of diversity and tolerance have become a new focus in education (Putra & Hartati, 2023).

Several empirical studies (Anshori, 2019; Suparno, 2020; Astuti, 2022) reported that integrating multicultural values into group guidance programs can improve social empathy, communication, and appreciation for differences. However, most of these studies were conducted in general high schools or Islamic schools (*madrasah*), not Vocational High Schools. Furthermore, several studies in the Vocational High School context indicate that students still face challenges in building social cohesion due to informal segregation based on major, region of origin, and social customs (Lestari, 2021; Widodo, 2022).

Furthermore, research on the multicultural competence of guidance and counseling teachers in Indonesia (Rahman & Yunita, 2021) indicates a persistent gap between theoretical understanding of multiculturalism and practical application in the field. Many guidance and counseling teachers recognize the importance of diversity values, but lack a systematic implementation model for building social cohesion in schools.

Therefore, there is a significant research gap:

- 1) A limited interventional study that directly measures the influence of multicultural-based social guidance on the students' social cohesion, especially in Vocational High School.
- 2) Minimum contextual data in Bali, especially in vocational schools such as SMKN 1 Tabanan, which has unique sociocultural characteristics.

- 3) Lack of an implementation model that focuses on the relationship between multicultural values and social cohesion empirically.

This study is conducted to fill the gap by studying deeply the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance and its effect on the students' social cohesion at SMKN 1 Tabanan. With a contextual approach that considers the pluralistic socio-cultural values of Bali, this research is expected to enrich the literature on multicultural social guidance in Indonesia while providing practical recommendations for vocational schools.

Research Problem

- 1) How is the condition of students' social cohesion at SMKN 1 Tabanan before the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance?
- 2) How is the process of implementation of multicultural-based social guidance at SMKN 1 Tabanan?
- 3) How is the effect of the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance on the students' social guidance improvement?
- 4) What are the supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing multicultural-based social guidance at SMKN 1 Tabanan?

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- 1) Describing the initial conditions of students' social cohesion at SMKN 1 Tabanan.
- 2) Analyzing the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance at SMKN 1 Tabanan.
- 3) Measuring the effect of the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance on the students' social guidance improvement.
- 4) Identifying the supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing multicultural-based social guidance.

2. Theoretical Review

1) The Concept of Social Guidance

Social guidance is a service within guidance and counseling that focuses on developing an individual's ability to interact socially effectively. According to Prayitno and Amti (2010), social guidance aims to help students adapt to their social environment, build healthy interpersonal relationships, and understand prevailing social norms.

Meanwhile, Winkel and Hastuti (2013) emphasize that social guidance has four main functions:

- a) Understanding Function, namely helping students understand themselves and others;
- b) Preventive Function, namely, preventing the emergence of social problems by instilling positive values;
- c) Alleviation Function, namely helping students overcome the social problems they face;
- d) Development Function, namely, developing students' social potential for prosocial behavior.

In the context of Vocational High Schools, social guidance plays a crucial role in strengthening cooperation, responsibility, and communication skills among students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (Sukardi, 2018). Thus, social guidance serves not only a curative function but

also a preventive and educational one in building a harmonious social life in schools.

2) Multicultural Education and Guidance Services

a) The Concept of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is an educational approach that emphasizes respect for cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and social diversity (Banks, 2019). This education aims to foster awareness, tolerance, and empathy for differences as a source of wealth, not a source of conflict.

Tilaar (2004) explains that multicultural education is a learning process that instills the values of pluralism, democracy, and equality across cultures. Thus, this education serves as a means of building a civil society that respects differences.

Nieto (2010) adds that multicultural education is not simply about introducing various cultures; it must also encourage changes in attitudes, behaviors, and institutional policies to be inclusive of all social groups.

b) Multicultural Guidance in the School Context

In the context of guidance and counseling, a multicultural approach requires counselors to understand the cultural dimensions inherent in everyone (Sue & Sue, 2016). Counselors are required to possess multicultural competencies, namely:

- Awareness of personal values and biases;
- Knowledge of the client's cultural background; and
- Skills in implementing guidance strategies that are sensitive to cultural differences.

Pedersen (1991) stated that multicultural counseling is "the fourth force in counseling" because it broadens counselors' insights into cultural dynamics in social interactions. In the Indonesian context, this approach is particularly relevant due to the pluralistic and diverse nature of its society.

Integrating multicultural education into social guidance in schools helps students internalize the values of tolerance, empathy, and the ability to work collaboratively in diverse environments (Supriyanto, 2021).

3) Students' Social Cohesion

Social cohesiveness describes the extent to which individuals feel connected, trust each other, and cooperate within a group. Forsyth (2010) defines social cohesiveness as "the forces that bind members to their groups, including attraction to the group and commitment to its goals."

Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) explain that group cohesiveness is formed by two main factors: interpersonal attraction between group members and commitment to common goals. Meanwhile, Carron and Brawley (2000) add that cohesiveness can also arise from shared emotional experiences, good communication structures, and a sense of group identity.

In the school context, social cohesiveness means solidarity, cooperation, and mutual respect among students. According to Dwiantari (2022), students with high levels of social

cohesiveness demonstrate prosocial behavior, empathy, and low levels of social conflict.

4) The Relationship between Multicultural-based Social Guidance and Social Cohesion

Theoretically, the relationship between multicultural social guidance and social cohesion can be explained through Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory. This theory states that positive interactions between individuals from diverse backgrounds can reduce prejudice if four conditions are met: (1) status equality, (2) shared goals, (3) cooperation, and (4) support from authorities.

The implementation of multicultural social guidance in schools directly creates these conditions through group activities, cross-cultural dialogue, and social empathy simulations.

Furthermore, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory explains that individuals tend to categorize themselves within a particular group (in-group) and compare themselves to other groups (out-groups). Through multicultural guidance, students are helped to develop a more inclusive social identity and reduce intergroup prejudice.

Putnam's (2000) social capital model also supports this relationship. Social cohesion grows when social networks (trust, norms, and reciprocity) are developed through repeated and positive interactions. Multicultural social guidance helps build bonding (internal solidarity) and bridging (bridges between groups) among students.

5) Integration of Local Value in Multicultural Guidance

In the context of Bali, local values such as **Tri Hita Karana** and **Tri Kaya Parisudha** are highly relevant to the concept of multiculturalism.

- Tri Hita Karana** teaches balance between human and God (*parahyangan*), among the humans (*pawongan*), and the environment (*palemahan*).
- Tri Kaya Parisudha** teaches the purity of thought, speech, and deed.

Integration of these values in multicultural-based social guidance strengthens the moral and spiritual internalization of the students in building social harmony (Sumada, 2025). Therefore, multicultural based social guidance at SMKN 1 Tabanan could be designed contextually based on the local wisdoms.

3. Research Method

1) Research Approaches and Types

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a documentary study method (documentary research). A qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to understand a social phenomenon in depth, namely, how the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance is carried out to build social cohesion among students at SMKN 1 Tabanan.

According to Creswell (2018), a qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the meaning, process, and social context from the perspective of participants. Meanwhile, the

documentary study, as the primary method, focuses on the collection and analysis of available written and visual data, such as policy documents, activity reports, guidance modules, and student evaluation results (Bowen, 2009).

Thus, this study not only describes ongoing social guidance practices but also examines the meanings and values of multiculturalism internalized through official school documents and records.

2) Research Location and Object

This research was conducted at SMKN 1 Tabanan, Bali Province, Indonesia. This school was selected purposively due to its high level of social and cultural diversity. It has students from various sub-districts in Tabanan Regency, even from outside Bali. Furthermore, the school has implemented several social guidance programs oriented towards the values of tolerance, cooperation, and diversity. The research objects include:

- School policy documents on guidance and counseling.
- Modules, guides, and reports on the implementation of social guidance.
- Data on character development activities and multicultural-based school programs.
- Notes from guidance and counseling teachers' observations and the results of an internal school survey on social relations among students.

Types and sources of data, according to O'Leary (2014), the use of document data sources allows researchers to gain a contextual understanding of social practices without direct intervention with research subjects.

3) Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique includes:

a) Document Analysis

This process was conducted by reviewing some documents, such as:

- School social guidance activity plans and guidelines
- Annual report of the guidance and counseling teacher and student monitoring records
- Modules on strengthening character and tolerance among students.
- School articles or publications highlight multicultural programs.

Document analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis guidelines.

b) Triangulation Source

Triangulation is carried out by matching data from various documents and activity reports to ensure the validity and consistency of the information (Patton, 2015).

c) Field Record and Secondary Observation

Although this research is documentation-based, the researcher also used observation notes obtained from school counselor reports and school activity documentation to strengthen data interpretation.

4) Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was carried out with content analysis techniques developed by Krippendorff (2018). This analysis aimed at identifying the main themes that emerged from the research documents. The analysis procedures include:

- Data Reduction** – Selecting relevant documents with multicultural-based social guidance.
- Categorization** – Grouping the data into several themes, such as tolerance value, social empathy, intercultural cooperation, and student cohesion.
- Interpretation** – Interpreting the relationship between social guidance and the form of students' social cohesion.
- Verification and Drawing Conclusion** – Drafting a thematic pattern that describes how multicultural-based social guidance was implemented and affects the students' social cohesion.

The analysis was conducted interactively and repetitively based on the model by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), which involves the process of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

4. Research Analysis and Discussion

4.1 General Description of the Research Findings

Based on the results of the documentation analysis obtained from SMKN 1 Tabanan, it was found that the school had implemented various social guidance activities with the integration of multicultural values from 2022 to 2025. The documents analyzed included:

- Annual Guidance and Counseling Work Plan and Program,
- Social Guidance Module on "Empathy and Cross-Cultural Cooperation",
- Student Harmony Program Activity Report (2023–2024),
- Guidance and Counseling teacher observation notes on student social relationships across majors,
- Internal student survey data on social dynamics at school.

The analysis shows that the implementation of multicultural-based social guidance at SMKN 1 Tabanan is systematic and oriented towards improving student social cohesion. The social guidance programs emphasize the values of tolerance, cooperation, empathy, and cross-cultural communication.

4.2 The Implementation of Multicultural-based Social Guidance

According to the 2024/2025 Guidance and Counseling Activity Plan document, the school counselor has designed a module with the theme "Friendship in Diversity." This module integrates a multicultural group guidance approach involving students from various ethnic backgrounds, religions, and majors.

The methods used include reflective discussions, empathy simulations, and peer learning.

Document analysis indicates that the implementation of this social guidance is carried out in three stages:

Stages	Main Activities	Objectives
Planning	Identification of the students' social problems; designing Multicultural-based module	Identifying intolerance issues and minor social conflicts
Implementation	Group guidance, empathy training, and cross-cultural communication	Fostering mutual respect and openness
Evaluation	Observation of students' social behavior, satisfaction survey, and social cohesion	Measuring the change in social attitude and relationships among the students

These findings confirmed Banks (2019) and Sue & Sue (2016) that multicultural education and counseling could foster social awareness and reduce stereotypes in a diverse school environment.

4.3 Improvement of Students' Social Cohesion

Data from the 2024/2025 Even Semester Guidance and Counseling Evaluation Report shows an improvement in social cohesion indicators. Based on an internal school survey of 210 students, the results are as follows:

Indicator of Social Cohesion	Before the Program (%)	After the Program (%)	The Change (%)
Mutual trust among the students	65	84	+19
Social Empathy	62	85	+23
Inter-department cooperation	70	88	+18
Tolerance and inclusive attitude	60	86	+26
Participation in social activities	68	89	+21

Data Source: Guidance and Counseling Evaluation Report of SMKN 1 Tabanan, 2025.

These findings indicate that multicultural-based social guidance programs significantly contribute to improving social relationships and solidarity among students. In other words, social guidance that is sensitive to cultural diversity has been shown to strengthen students' social cohesion.

4.4 Thematic Analysis: Multicultural Values in Social Guidance

The content analysis of the document showed four main themes that describe the internalization process of multicultural values in the social guidance:

- 1) **Social Empathy:** The social guidance module emphasizes role-taking and perspective sharing, where students are encouraged to understand the experiences of peers from different backgrounds. This aligns with Hoffman's (2000) theory of social empathy, which emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural emotional awareness.
- 2) **Tolerance and Inclusivity:** Social guidance programs foster awareness that differences are not a source of conflict, but rather a source of social enrichment. This supports Parekh's (2006) theory of social pluralism, which states that social harmony is achieved through the active acceptance of differences.
- 3) **Intercultural Cooperation:** Peer collaboration activities encourage students to work together across majors and cultural backgrounds, strengthening social solidarity. These results are consistent with research by Yuliani & Rahayu (2022), which found that collaboration-based social guidance increases a sense of belonging.

- 4) **Strengthening National Identity:** In the Indonesian context, a multicultural approach also affirms the values of Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. This reinforces Tilaar's (2004) argument that multicultural education in Indonesia must be grounded in collective Indonesian values.

4.5 Discussion: Integration of Theory and Practice

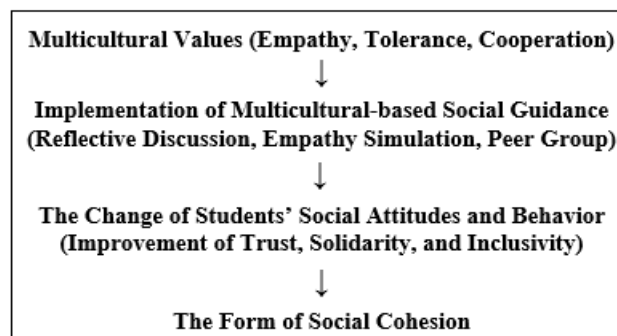
The findings of this study strengthen previous theories and studies:

- 1) **First**, the findings support Banks' (2019) finding that multicultural education, which is integrated into school services, contributes to social harmony.
- 2) **Second**, it is in line with Sue & Sue (2016), who propose that multicultural counseling improves the cultural sensitivity of the counselor and students.
- 3) **Third**, the findings extend the theory of social cohesion (Forsyth, 2010) by showing that cohesion is not only built through spontaneous social interactions, but also through systematic educational interventions such as multicultural-based social guidance.
- 4) **Fourth**, this approach is also in line with the idea of Dwiantari (2022), who stated that social empathy and tolerance are the main components in forming cohesiveness in the educational environment.

Thus, it can be concluded that multicultural-based social guidance is not only a social development strategy, but also an effective education instrument in strengthening students' social ties in heterogeneous vocational schools such as SMKN 1 Tabanan.

4.6 Model of Conceptual Implementation

Based on the analysis and documentation interpretation, this study composes a conceptual model in implementing multicultural-based social guidance to improve social cohesion of the students as follows:



This model can be used as a reference in developing a social guidance program in other schools with the same social diversity characteristics.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the document and the theoretical review, it can be concluded as follows:

- 1) The implementation of multicultural-based social guidance at SMKN 1 Tabanan has been systematically implemented through planning, implementation, and evaluation. The guidance programs emphasize empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and respect for differences.
- 2) Multicultural-based social guidance has been proven to positively contribute to the improvement of students' social cohesion. It can be shown from the school survey that reveals significant improvement in the indicators of social trust, empathy, social participation, and inter-department cooperation.
- 3) Multicultural approach in social guidance is not only functioning as a counseling service, but also as an instrument of character education that fosters national values, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, and Pancasila in the context of social diversity at school.
- 4) Students' social cohesion is fostered through a structured internalization process of multicultural values in the social guidance, such as reflective discussion, empathy training, and intercultural collaboration. This process strengthens solidarity and a sense of belonging among students.
- 5) The implementation model of multicultural-based social guidance can be used as a conceptual reference for other schools with the same social diversity characteristics to strengthen social relationships, reduce prejudice, and build an inclusive school climate.

Thus, this study confirms that multicultural-based social guidance is an effective approach in increasing the social cohesiveness of students in diverse Vocational High Schools such as SMKN 1 Tabanan.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the research findings, the author proposes some recommendations as follows:

- 1) **For the school and School Counselor**
 - It is recommended to continue developing social guidance programs based on multicultural values and tolerance.
 - School counselors need to receive additional training in multicultural counseling approaches to be able to more sensitively understand the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.
- 2) **For the Government and Department of Education**
 - Supporting policies are needed to encourage the implementation of multicultural guidance programs in all schools, especially in areas with high social heterogeneity, like Bali.
 - The Department of Education can provide standardized, multicultural-based social guidance modules that are adaptive to local contexts.
- 3) **For Further Researchers:**
 - It is recommended that this research be supplemented with in-depth interviews and participant observation

to further explore students' subjective experiences in the guidance process.

- Comparative studies between schools are also needed to strengthen the validity of the multicultural-based social guidance implementation model across various socio-cultural contexts.

4) For Educators and Educational Counselors

- The results of this study should serve as a practical reference in developing social guidance strategies oriented towards strengthening empathy and social harmony.
- The implementation of social guidance should not only focus on solving individual problems, but also on building a cohesive and socially empowered school community.

5.3 Research Implication

This study provides crucial implications as follows:

- 1) **Theoretical Implications:** Confirms the relevance of multicultural guidance theory (Sue & Sue, 2016) and social cohesion theory (Forsyth, 2010) in the context of pluralistic Indonesian education.
- 2) **Practical Implications:** Provides a model for implementing social guidance that can be replicated in other schools with adjustments to local contexts.
- 3) **Policy Implications:** Provides an empirical basis for formulating multicultural-based character education policies at the regional and national levels.

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