

Addressing Multicultural Misconceptions: A Study at Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study explores the comprehension of students from Muhammadiyah higher education institutions concerning Indonesia's multiculturalism and its distinct ethnic, religious, racial, and intergroup diversities, termed SARA, esteemed as national assets.

Design/methods/approach – Utilizing a qualitative approach, data was assimilated from a literature review, focused group discussions (FGD) of [specific number, if available], comprehensive observations at Ahmad Dahlan University in Yogyakarta, in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants, and examination of pertinent documents.

Findings – Preliminary findings suggest an underdeveloped understanding of multiculturalism among the students, frequently leading to misconceptions. Rather than being viewed as an inclusive concept, multiculturalism is often perceived as threatening to certain religious adherents. Specifically, minority sects like Shia and Ahmadiyya are perceived with apprehension. This knowledge gap can be attributed to limited discourse by UAD lecturers, predominantly homogeneous student interactions, and a lack of engagement with multicultural literature.

Research implications – The observations from this research underscore the need to enhance SARA-oriented educational strategies at higher learning institutions. Implementing comprehensive multicultural education can pave the way for mutual respect and appreciation of SARA diversity, especially within Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions (PTM). Notably, the research's scope is restricted to Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, which might not necessarily represent other Muhammadiyah academic environments.

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1. Introduction

Multicultural education fosters awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity in academic environments. Research findings indicate that multicultural education significantly impacts the development of students' and faculty members' cultural competencies (Karacsony et al., 2022; Kravets et al., 2021). This practice involves social justice and multicultural engagement activities at national and international levels (Gopalkrishnan, 2019; Malott et al., 2023), focusing on nonverbal communication and emotional dynamics (Pang, 2016). Tolerance and personal values are essential factors in cross-cultural adaptation and the internalization of social regulations (Mitin et al., 2017). Islamic education in Indonesia has begun integrating multicultural perspectives through religious studies (Abdullah, 2017; Naim & Qomar, 2021) and inclusive education (Efendi & Suswanta, 2017). A successful example of multicultural education implementation can be found at Ahmad Dahlan University Campus, which



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cultivates an inclusive culture in academic and social activities by upholding tradition and religiosity (Suradi et al., 2020).

Many studies have explored essential aspects of multicultural education that need to be considered by educators and higher education institutions. Some studies show that pedagogical approaches that value knowledge based on experience can develop a sociological imagination and empower students in dealing with the neoliberal ethos that prioritizes individualization and competition (Angelo, 2022; O'Cadiz et al., 2022; Peyrefitte & Lazar, 2018). Other studies discovered new themes in multicultural education values in Islamic higher education institutions, with pedagogical and social implications (Abduh et al., 2020). Meanwhile, some studies revealed that equal access to higher education is not enough to achieve educational equality for native students (Alawiyah, 2016) and suggested that the curriculum should consider the existing identities and differences in society (Fadhli, 2022).

However, research also highlights issues faced in multicultural education, such as significant differences in how majority students relate with minority groups (Nugraha, 2020), the "cultural mosaic" resistant to cultural assimilation (Hatzikidi et al., 2021), and the identification of difficulties in perceiving other cultural values (Gopalkrishnan, 2019). There is a correlation between the faculty's position towards multiculturalism and cosmopolitan citizenship, with differences between Spanish and Japanese professors concerning concerns about preserving national identity in cultural diversity (Delgado-Algarra & Cuenca-López, 2020).

Studies on multicultural education highlight the importance of accommodating cultural diversity in teaching and learning (El-Rumi, 2019; Marzuki et al., 2020; Sirry, 2010). In this context, the faculty's attitudes toward multicultural-based instruction influence their teaching practices (Ilmi et al., 2021). Developing teachers' multicultural competencies involves improving awareness, knowledge, and cognitive, behavioral, and motivational skills (Hall & Theriot, 2016). Additionally, group work facilitates the development of interpersonal skills, cross-cultural collaboration, and higher-level learning (Mittelmeier et al., 2018). Efforts to create a culturally sustainable education system involve a combination of traditional and formal education resources (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). One study outlined the assessment plan for a multicultural initiative at Northern Illinois University, which included outcomes, findings, and recommendations for improving the industry (Krishnamurthi, 2003).

In the multicultural context, the research explores ethics in mentoring relationships between students and faculty and provides recommendations for handling ethical dilemmas that arise in cross-cultural mentorships (Schlosser & Foley, 2008). This study developed a model of positive word-of-mouth (WoM) intent in the higher education context, finding significant differences between domestic and international students in influencing satisfaction and WoM intent (Vu et al., 2022). Multicultural practices in Bali and Lombok (Hauser-Schäublin & Harnish, 2014) have successfully maintained harmony between majority ethnic and religious groups and minorities. Furthermore, multicultural education practices in Muhammadiyah educational institutions play a vital role in reducing social conflicts in Indonesia by encouraging a better understanding of pluralism, minority religions, ethnicities, and tribes (Syarif, 2020).

Multiculturalism, as a conceptual framework that encompasses social demographic diversity, interactions between individuals and groups, and the articulation of diversity in public spaces (Berry & Ward, 2016), has tremendous potential to improve the quality of social life in Indonesia through understanding and appreciation of ethnic and religious diversity (Raihani, 2018). The importance of paying attention to cultural, religious, social, and gender diversity in heterogeneous societies to avoid social conflicts (Supriyatno, 2020) and internalizing an understanding of multiculturalism in education to accommodate the diversity of students' abilities and backgrounds and minimize social conflicts (Hakim & Ritonga, 2018). Multiculturalism aims to recognize and encourage the participation of

minorities and should be integrated into educational practices and social life (Mandible, 2017). Multiculturalism practices have grown in various parts of the world, including Southeast Asia, although often considered a new phenomenon in the Indonesian context (Fahmi, 2020).

Most studies only focus on the theoretical and conceptual aspects of multiculturalism without profoundly exploring the experiences and perceptions of students in higher education institutions that implement multicultural education. There is yet to be specific research targeting Muhammadiyah colleges in the context of multiculturalism and examining its impact on students' understanding of SARA diversity (Tribe, Religion, Race, and Inter-Group) in Indonesia. The primary objective of this study is to analyze students' knowledge of multiculturalism and SARA diversity in Indonesia at Muhammadiyah colleges and identify challenges in managing SARA issues through multicultural education practices at these colleges. This study is critical because it can provide new insights into multicultural education practices at Muhammadiyah colleges in addressing SARA issues and enhancing understanding and tolerance among students from various cultural and religious backgrounds.

2. Methods

This study aims to analyze the understanding, attitudes, and multicultural practices implemented by students and lecturers within the environment of the Muhammadiyah Higher Education institution, specifically Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD). This case study is expected to illustrate a moderate, tolerant, and harmonious view between religious followers, ethnic groups, and tribes incorporated within the UAD Education curriculum, in line with the mission of the Central Leadership of Muhammadiyah. This article answers questions regarding the views and knowledge of UAD students and lecturers about multiculturalism, the practice of religious education in the context of religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, and views towards those different regarding ethnicity and religion. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study, which involves data collection through field observations, interviews, and documents (Harding & Seefeldt, 2013; Kuczynski & Daly, 2003). Field data were obtained through in-depth interviews with informants selected based on their knowledge or information about the research theme. The researcher also observed classroom educational practices, where lecturers presented lecture material in line with the research theme (Sturdivant & Alanís, 2019). After the data was collected, the researcher categorized, sorted, and interpreted data, enabling the analysis of various methods to solve problems encountered within the multicultural context at UAD.

3. Results

Research instruments were used to analyze the understanding, attitudes, and multicultural practices of students and lecturers at Muhammadiyah Higher Education institutions, specifically Ahmad Dahlan University, in confronting religious, racial, ethnic, and inter-group issues and enhancing tolerance among individuals from various cultural and religious backgrounds. The research findings from this study are as follows:

3.1. Suspicion towards Multiculturalism

Suspensions towards the views and practices of multiculturalism are often triggered by confusion and a lack of understanding of the concept. This misunderstanding obscures the true essence of multiculturalism. For example, Yuyun (not her real name), a student at Ahmad Dahlan University, expressed in an interview on July 12, 2022, that she perceives multiculturalism as an effort to equate all religions, making her hesitant to participate in multicultural life. Yuyun admits that her limited experience with individuals from different religious backgrounds may influence her understanding of their teachings and worship practices. She also stated that she was worried that

interacting with people of other religions could change a person's religious beliefs. Thus she views multiculturalism as a threat.

Nikmah Hasanah (pseudonym) also expressed a similar doubt in a September 12, 2022 interview. Hasanah perceived multiculturalism as an agenda of foreign non-Muslims aimed at weakening the faith of Muslims in Indonesia, who are the majority. She said multiculturalism could be harmful if applied in Muhammadiyah universities like Ahmad Dahlan University. This idea illustrates how negative perceptions of multiculturalism can be influenced by misunderstanding the concept and worries about its impact on religious identity. Therefore, addressing these misunderstandings is essential by providing accurate information about multiculturalism and explaining how this concept aims to respect differences and promote harmony among communities with diverse backgrounds.

A lecturer from the Faculty of Islamic Religion (AA, initials, not an original acronym) voiced a similar expression, expressing his suspicion towards multiculturalism. This was conveyed during an interview conducted on September 21, 2022:

"You are an alumnus of the Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University. It endangers UAD students if their thoughts about multiculturalism, pluralism, and philosophy are developed here. I am afraid I have to disagree with multicultural education and the interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary approaches developed at UIN Yogyakarta in understanding Islam. This is dangerous because it will lead Muslims to have weak faith."

This response reflects the deep suspicion towards the concept of multiculturalism felt by some members of the academic community at Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD). Another senior lecturer also expressed a similar response in an interview conducted on September 28, 2022:

"Multiculturalism, if not explained and implemented correctly, could lead to misunderstandings—some view multiculturalism as a tool to dampen our religious or ethnic identity. We must carefully implement this concept in a religious educational environment like UAD. It is important to clarify that the goal is to respect differences, not to eliminate them."

In this context, the findings indicate that suspicion towards multiculturalism often stems from ignorance or misconceptions about the true essence of this concept. This underlines the importance of proper education and clarification about multiculturalism within the UAD curriculum, particularly in reaching students and lecturers who may not fully understand or support this idea.

Furthermore, a student actively involved in student activities at UAD, with the initials RN (not the original acronym), also added his perspective in an interview held on October 5, 2022:

"We need a deeper understanding of multiculturalism. Not just as a theoretical concept but how we can apply it in daily life on campus and the community. Some friends are worried because of this lack of understanding. They see it as a threat, not a way to coexist in diversity. Therefore, proper multicultural education is key to changing this view."

3.2. Understanding Ethnic and Religious Diversity

Interview results with Parjiman, the Vice Rector of Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD), depict an understanding of ethnic and religious diversity in the campus environment. Parjiman states that ethnic and religious diversity is natural and accepted in society. However, a clear understanding of religious pluralism is needed to prevent dangerous relativism for individuals with insufficient spiritual knowledge. Muhammadiyah, an organization closely associated with UAD, also teaches values of appreciating ethnic and religious diversity.

An interview with Y, a lecturer at Ahmad Dahlan University originating from West Sumatra, emphasized the importance of interethnic interaction within the campus environment. Y asserted that although the majority of ethnicities in Yogyakarta are Javanese, it is crucial to understand and respect the differences between Javanese and Minang ethnicities and other ethnicities. Regarding religious diversity, Y mentioned that although all are Muslims in the UAD Faculty of Islamic

Religion, there are differences in backgrounds, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. This requires mutual respect and understanding of these differences.

Based on interview findings, it can be concluded that the understanding of ethnic and religious diversity at Ahmad Dahlan University is varied. Even though there are differences in knowledge among individuals, the commonality seen is the recognition that diversity is a natural phenomenon that cannot be avoided. The UAD campus environment shows that respecting and understanding differences in ethnicity and religion are fundamental principles in community life within the environment.

Adding to the findings above, an interview with a senior lecturer conducted on October 2, 2022, sheds light on the educational perspective of understanding ethnic and religious diversity:

"In the classroom, we strive to foster understanding and appreciation for different cultural and religious backgrounds. We include lessons on multiculturalism and ensure that our students understand that diversity is not a barrier but an enriching factor in our community. It is not only about coexisting but thriving together with mutual respect."

That statement underscores the role of education in shaping students' attitudes toward ethnic and religious diversity. It stresses the importance of infusing these principles within the educational practices at UAD. An interview with a student leader conducted on September 30, 2022, offers an insightful view from the student body:

"I see our university as a microcosm of our diverse country. We have friends from different ethnic backgrounds and learn from one another. Yes, there might be misunderstandings sometimes, but that is where dialogue and empathy come in. Our activities often include cultural exchanges, discussions, and reflections on our traditions. We believe in embracing our differences, not fearing them."

That statement reflects the understanding and acceptance of ethnic and religious diversity among students at UAD. It highlights the importance of dialogue, empathy, and active engagement in fostering a harmonious community that embraces its multicultural identity.

3.3. Understanding Social Cohesion

Understanding and establishing social cohesion is crucial to a heterogeneous and diverse society. However, within an institution, creating social cohesion and harmony becomes a significant challenge if attitudes and actions of mutual understanding are not applied from the outset at the level of thought. In the context of Muhammadiyah higher education institutions, widespread dissemination of information about the essence of Multicultural Education for students is vital to address this issue. This paragraph emphasizes the importance of understanding and applying Multicultural Education in creating social cohesion in heterogeneous and diverse environments.

For example, a student (Rasyid) statement on July 10, 2022, affirmed the benefits of Multicultural Education in helping them understand cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Rasyid stated that through this education, he realized that this diversity is not a threat to a person's faith but something to be celebrated and grateful for. In this paragraph, Rasyid depicts how Multicultural Education helps them appreciate diversity and differences as the wealth of the Indonesian nation. In addition, Rasyid emphasized that there is no need to fear this diversity and contrast, as they existed even before the country's independence.

Sutarman, a lecturer at the Faculty of Islamic Religion, affirmed the importance of building social cohesion in an interview on July 23, 2022.

"As lecturers, we indeed need to cultivate attitudes and behaviors that provide a sense of security, not suspicion, not hatred towards those different in religion, ethnicity, and social groups. However, strengthening discourse about social cohesion in what field, what is the purpose, and to whom we cooperate must be clear. We must not do things that do not comply with religious teachings. We

must cooperate with anyone in social matters to avoid social conflict. Especially now that students have very sophisticated information tools, namely Android, anything can be seen through the YouTube channel."

After expressing his opinion on the importance of social cohesion, Sutarman also emphasized the need for transparency and clarity in cooperation between different groups. By utilizing existing information technology, such as YouTube, students can more easily access information and understand these differences to realize stronger and more harmonious social cohesion.

Continuing the discussion on understanding social cohesion, an interview with a lecturer conducted on August 5, 2022, provided insightful perspectives on the role of academics in nurturing social cohesion:

"Social cohesion is not just an abstract concept; it is something we live and breathe within our academic environment. We strive to integrate multiculturalism into our curricula to reflect our diverse society and foster community, understanding, and empathy among our students. Our research initiatives, workshops, and collaborative projects aim to explore and reinforce the ties that bind us as a nation, notwithstanding our differences."

This viewpoint highlights the proactive role that academic institutions can play in building social cohesion. It emphasizes the need for practical initiatives and real-life applications that bring the concept of social cohesion into daily experiences and learning processes.

Another perspective comes from a student interviewed on August 20, 2022:

"Understanding social cohesion means recognizing our shared values and working together to create a society that respects and celebrates our differences. I think the programs at UAD, like the community outreach and student-led multicultural events, have helped break down barriers and bring us closer as a community. We have learned to see beyond labels and engage with each other as fellow human beings."

These insights offer a view from the student population, reflecting how educational programs and initiatives directly impact their understanding and appreciation of social cohesion. He acknowledges universities' vital role in shaping this understanding and fostering a community where differences are acknowledged, understood, and celebrated.

3.4. *Multiculturalism Practice in Education*

Several interview results with students and lecturers can be presented regarding implementing multiculturalism in Islamic Education. In an interview on July 23, 2022, Naila Safinah expressed her opinion.

"The practice of Multicultural Education for UAD students is fine, but students must be given adequate knowledge about what multiculturalism means so that students are not wrong in practicing multiculturalism when becoming students, community members, and later Islamic religious teachers."

In response to Naila Safinah's statement, ensuring that the Islamic Education program effectively integrates multicultural education into its curriculum is essential. In addition, teachers and lecturers must be given adequate training to support a correct understanding and implementation of multiculturalism in the educational environment. Thus, students will be better prepared to face various cultural and belief differences when interacting with the broader community and becoming inclusive and tolerant Islamic religious teachers.

In an interview conducted on July 23, 2022, with Nur Huda regarding multicultural education, he stated that multicultural education has a positive potential in the academic environment. However, students need to gain a broad understanding related to the concept of multiculturalism to avoid misunderstandings that can have a broad and negative impact. Therefore,

lecturers are responsible for providing an adequate experience of multiculturalism and illustrating multicultural practices in the context of Islamic education. This approach is considered crucial given the reality of a society comprised of various religious, ethnic, and different social backgrounds.

Adding to the perspective of multiculturalism practice in education, an interview was conducted on August 10, 2022, with a lecturer emphasized the systematic integration of multicultural education within the university's curriculum:

"Multiculturalism in education is not just an add-on or supplementary subject; it must be a foundational philosophy that shapes how we approach learning and teaching. At UAD, we strive to weave multicultural principles into every educational experience, from course design to classroom interaction, research collaborations, and community engagement. It is about creating an environment that nurtures empathy, understanding, and respect across different cultural, ethnic, and religious lines."

This statement illustrates a profound understanding of the depth of multiculturalism in educational practice. He highlights the need for a comprehensive approach beyond mere theoretical understanding to actual implementation within all facets of the academic environment.

In a subsequent interview, a student from the Faculty of Islamic Education at UAD on August 15, 2022, shared her personal experience with multiculturalism in her studies:

"I have been part of various multicultural initiatives at UAD, ranging from interfaith dialogues to community service projects with different ethnic communities. These experiences have not only broadened my horizons but have also challenged my preconceptions and biases. They have taught me that there is strength in diversity and that understanding and embracing our differences can lead to a richer, more harmonious society."

This testimony provides a hands-on view of multiculturalism from a student's perspective. Her experiences reflect the tangible benefits of an integrated multicultural education approach, which builds bridges between theory and practice, classroom, and community.

4. Discussion

4.1. *Skepticism Towards Diversity*

Research at Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD) on ethnic and religious diversity reaffirms the importance of respecting and understanding differences as a fundamental principle in community life. This result contrasts with findings highlighting four main themes: Privilege and Obstacles (Sladkova & Santos, 2023a). However, a study emphasizes the interaction between ethnic groups and the understanding of religious diversity, demonstrating the critical role of educational institutions in promoting inclusion (Rumahuru, 2019).

Findings about racial discrimination in higher education foster a fragmented learning environment, unlike the climate at UAD (Sawyer & Waite, 2021). Ahmet (2021) criticizes hollow diversity policies at several universities, while Billingsley et al. (2019) report imbalances in the representation of general and special education teachers from minority ethnic groups. Both studies highlight the challenges in creating an educational environment that reflects student diversity and the need to support minority voices and address injustices.

Kelly (2019) describes Oxford and Cambridge's efforts to increase ethnic diversity but asserts that the problem of recruiting black British students persists. UAD research reflects the importance of inter-ethnic interaction and understanding religious diversity in creating an inclusive environment, suggesting that efforts to encourage diversity must be integrated into various aspects of campus life. This study underscores the importance of a comprehensive and inclusive approach to promoting diversity on campus and attending to the specific needs of minority groups within the education system.

4.2. *Understanding Ethnic and Religious Diversity*

Previous researchers have demonstrated the importance of understanding and managing ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity in education (Barb, 2017; Berglund, 2018; Grishaeva, 2012; Sturdivant & Alanís, 2019). In Indonesia, the role of Islamic education and the development of multiculturalism in shaping a more tolerant and open society (Hakim & Ritonga, 2018; Suradi et al., 2020). Research on Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD) supports these findings, showing that understanding ethnic and religious diversity on campus varies, with the fundamental principle of respecting and understanding ethnic and religious differences.

Additionally, interview results with Parjiman and Y indicate that understanding diversity at UAD reflects the principles taught by Islamic organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), aligning with research (Hifza et al., 2020). These findings confirm that Islamic religious values in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet can be a practical foundation for appreciating ethnic and religious diversity in multicultural education.

UAD can leverage information technology to develop an understanding of diversity in multicultural education (Mansoori et al., 2017; Marzuki et al., 2020). By providing access to more positive and diverse information, information technology can prevent the growth of extremism among students and help create social solidarity, bridge social fractures, and shape broader nationalism. Furthermore, this research highlights the importance of managing ethnic and religious diversity in the educational environment to avoid social conflict and create a more harmonious society (Grishaeva, 2012).

4.3. *Multiculturalism in Education*

Previous studies indicate that Multicultural Education effectively reduces social conflict resulting from cultural, religious, and ethnic differences and helps build positive understanding between diverse groups (Psaltis et al., 2017). This aligns with interview results from Sutarman, emphasizing the importance of social cohesion and cooperation between different groups. We can also observe that social conflict is often not caused by diversity itself but due to a lack of good communication between diverse social groups (Psaltis et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, social violence, suspicion, and disharmony in Indonesian society, including education, are caused by insecurity between different groups, rumors about other groups, and crucial issues like poverty, legal injustice, and economics (Telle, 2013). This underscores the importance of creating a safe environment, as conveyed by Sutarman.

Multicultural education is expected to create an inclusive, tolerant, moderate, and harmonious social life among diverse social groups (Gellert, 2015). In the context of Muhammadiyah universities, disseminating the essence of Multicultural Education is crucial to creating social cohesion in a heterogeneous and diverse environment. Multicultural education at universities is expected to be one approach to reducing social conflict and becoming a model for creating a modern nation-state associated with political sovereignty, organization, and building harmonious relationships in a diverse society (Serohin, 2019; Suradi et al., 2020).

Additionally, the research confirms that multicultural education is a critical foundation for building an understanding of diversity in society through campus education (Sri Suneki, 2021). Therefore, in line with the statements of Rasyid and Sutarman, implementing Multicultural Education at Muhammadiyah universities is crucial in creating social cohesion and harmony in a heterogeneous and diverse society.

4.4. Building Social Harmony Among Students

The reviewed literature explains the importance of multicultural education in the context of Islamic Education, changes in the Indian education system throughout history, and how multicultural education became a crucial element in that system (Gunasekaran et al., 2022), the role of pesantren-based universities in Indonesia in teaching religious moderation values, aligning with multicultural education (Munif & Baharun, 2018). Also, the multicultural education curriculum at Darul Hikmah Modern Islamic Boarding School, Indonesia, emphasizes the importance of a broader understanding of multiculturalism in Islamic Education (Muhajir et al., 2020).

Interview results with Naila Safinah and Nur Huda indicate that multicultural education in the context of Islamic Education has been well implemented. However, they emphasize the importance of adequate knowledge about multiculturalism for students and teachers. This is supported by Hefni's (2020) findings, which report positive student perceptions at Islamic Religious Higher Education institutions about multiculturalism. However, it should be noted that enhancing understanding and practice of multiculturalism must be carried out continuously to avoid misunderstandings and possible negative impacts.

Following these findings, Islamic Education must continue to strive to effectively integrate multicultural education into the curriculum and involve teachers' inadequate training. Consequently, students will be better prepared to face various cultural and belief differences when interacting with the broader society and become inclusive and tolerant Islamic religious teachers. In conclusion, multicultural education in Islamic Education is essential for shaping a more inclusive, accessible, and open generation to the differences that exist in society.

5. Conclusion

The primary objective of this investigation was to assess the comprehension levels of students at Muhammadiyah universities concerning multiculturalism and SARA diversity within the Indonesian context. Preliminary findings suggest a prevailing gap in understanding multiculturalism, resulting in frequent misconceptions and subsequent perceptions of it as a potential threat. Several underlying factors contribute to this knowledge deficiency, encompassing limited discourse, predominant homogeneity in student interactions, and a discernible shortfall in multicultural literacy. Given these observations, this study emphasizes the pivotal role of higher education in addressing and managing SARA-related issues. A robust multicultural curriculum fosters an environment conducive to mutual respect and understanding of SARA diversities. However, it is paramount to recognize the constraints of this research, centered solely around Ahmad Dahlan University in Yogyakarta. Thus, it is essential to undertake additional studies across diverse Muhammadiyah universities to obtain a holistic understanding and to devise more encompassing strategies to mitigate challenges about SARA issues.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Sri Roviana contributed as the primary and corresponding author and prepared the draft article thoroughly. Ahmad Sunawari Long added analysis and methodology; Yusron conducted FGD and interviews with the principal researcher, Yusutria, who helped conduct in-depth interviews and a literature review.

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Data availability statement

The datasets generated during and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Interest's statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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