

# Accept, Respect, or Appreciate Diversity? How Diverse Educational Environment Affects Tolerance Among University Students in Buleleng, Bali

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the effect of diverse educational environment on the level of tolerance among university students in Buleleng, Bali. Particularly, this study was trying to reveal the difference of tolerance and three dimensions of tolerance, namely acceptance to diversity, respect for diversity, and appreciation for diversity between students who study in a university with higher degree of diversity and students who study in a university with lower degree of diversity. Data was collected using Three Factor Model of Tolerance which was adapted into Indonesian. The test for validity and reliability of the instrument was also done to make sure that the instrument is valid and reliable to be used in Indonesian context. Data were analyzed quantitatively using Nonparametric Test with IBM SPSS 25.0. This study found out that students who study in a diverse educational environment exhibit higher degree of tolerance overall and in each dimension than students who study in a nondiverse educational environment.

**Keywords:** *Tolerance, Diversity, Educational Environment*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The globalization and high mobility of people between nations create an undeniably diverse population, bringing groups with different backgrounds come into contact with each other. People have easy access to other countries to work, study, and even reside as long as they want although there are still some rules and regulations to be obeyed. Communication is a lot easier with the advancement of technology, especially social media, and at the same time making the spread of information becomes faster. This shows that the world is opening more opportunity for cultural exchange to happen, either direct or indirect.

Diversity is inevitable. People are forced to adapt with the changing world as well as diverse environment. This is especially happening in the context of higher education. Students and lecturers may come from various provinces, countries, or even continents. This cultural and academic exchange are very expected since it can contribute to the success of learning and experience obtainment among students. However, this is also a

challenge at the same time, especially in creating harmony between people with different background and characteristics. More often than not, it is used as a place to spread negative attitudes (e.g. radicalism) that are spreading quite rapidly in institutions of higher education. Therefore, issues on tolerance to diversity is very undeniable among the university students because diversity in higher education is high and university students are still exploring their identity, thus any kind of influence might be easier to enter [1]. Institution of higher education must be aware of this condition and thus making effort to tackle this issue.

In order to achieve harmony in a diverse environment, tolerance is a key to create peace and justice between people with different cultures [2]. Multicultural educational environment is indispensable for tolerance formation [3]. In the context of a democratic country, tolerance is a fundamental component for democracy to run well [4]. Several studies pointed out that tolerance is linked to prejudice. Prejudice can be reduced and thus making people more tolerant. However, other studies contented that we can be tolerant and at the same time

have prejudice toward other people [5]. In the other case, Hjern et al contented that the focus of tolerance is more on how a person values diversity itself which is subjective between one person and another and does not begin with dislike or disapproval of certain groups. People who have high tolerance are people who are able to appreciate and accept the differences that exist between themselves and others [4]. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) values tolerance as respecting, accepting, and appreciating the diversity of cultures. Tolerance is often viewed as how we put up with something we do not like [6]. Moreover, tolerance is not merely an affective or cognitive attitude toward a group, but also attitude that has resulted in behavior [6].

In addition, there are three types of tolerance, namely acceptance of difference, respect for difference, and appreciation for difference [4]. These types are rooted from the concept from [7]. Acceptance of difference sees tolerance as giving permission and opportunity for other people to live a life they want. Respect for difference sees that tolerance means being able to respect existing differences and people are seen equal even though the differences exist. Meanwhile, appreciation for difference sees tolerance as an ethical appreciation and a feeling of attraction towards the beliefs of others. In this study, tolerance is seen as a multidimensional variable consisting of acceptance of difference, respect for difference, and appreciation for difference. In attempt to understand tolerance, it must pointed out that tolerance may take many forms, including religious tolerance, racial and ethnic tolerance, political tolerance, tolerance against persons with disabilities, gender tolerance, sexual orientation tolerance, and educational tolerance [8]. Tolerance to diversity means that a person is able to accept, respect, and appreciate any differences that exist between them and live harmoniously with those different people.

One of the ways to build tolerance between groups is by promoting intergroup contact. According to Intergroup Contact Theory, that was first introduced by Gordon W. Allport, contact between groups may facilitate the development of more positive attitudes toward the out-group, thus creating a better relationship [9]. Greater contact between groups was believed to result in reducing intergroup tension and prejudice, however that would only occur when the "optimal" conditions were present. Negative attitudes can be reduced when groups meet under conditions of equal status, effort of achieving common goals, cooperation, as well as support of authorities [9][10]. According to William Paul Vogt, when negative attitude is reduced, tolerance is developed [11]. Based on this notion, the negative attitudes that can cause radicalism in higher education can be avoided by maintaining intergroup contact at optimum level. Thus, diversity might promote intergroup contact because there is a huge probability for

a group of people to have direct contact with other groups.

There have been many studies about tolerance in Indonesia, however in the context of higher education in Buleleng, Bali, it is still very limited. Higher educational institutions in Bali have long been receptive and accommodative toward people from other cultures, both in terms of students and lecturers. Universities welcome students and lecturers from other regions in Indonesia as well as from other countries. This situation encourages a huge exchange of cultures, ideas, views, and many more, thus creating a diverse educational environment. A diverse educational environment is deemed as an opportunity for students to learn human and national values for meaningful cooperation of various ethnic cultures [12]. Universities in Buleleng are starting to gain its popularities in the past several years. Students are coming from many provinces, especially eastern part of Indonesia. However, it is undeniably that several universities are indeed more popular than the others and thus getting a variety of students from all over Indonesia. Several universities are still untouched with this diversity due to the location as well as popularity of the university itself.

This study aims to investigate how tolerance develops among university students who study in the university that accommodates diverse educational environment as well as university that has a small number of students from outside Bali. Each type of tolerance is discussed in order to have a broader understanding on the behavioral element of tolerance.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

### ***2.1 Research Design***

This study is a quantitative research using causal-comparative study design. This study aimed at investigating the difference between two groups, namely students who study in the university that promotes diversity and students who study in the university that has not been much exposed with diversity. There are two variables used in this study, namely diverse educational environment as independent variable and tolerance as dependent variable. The diversity of educational environment was observed by looking at how diverse or multicultural the educational environment is. University with many students coming from other provinces or countries are considered multicultural or diverse. Meanwhile, tolerance as dependent variable was measured using questionnaire.

### ***2.2. Sampling***

Population in this study were all students who study in higher educations in Buleleng Regency in Bali between 18-22 years of age. Sample were collected using

*simple random sampling*. Sample in this study were 482 students from two universities, 365 of the sample are from Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha (Undiksha) and the other 117 students are from Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan Buleleng (STIKES Buleleng). These two universities have different characteristics in terms of the level of diversity. Undiksha is considered as having diverse educational environment than STIKES Buleleng as Undiksha accommodates students from all around Indonesia ranging from western to eastern part of Indonesia. Undiksha is starting to gain its popularity among high school students in Indonesia to pursue their study, thus many students come from other provinces to study. This makes Undiksha more diverse or multicultural than STIKES Buleleng.

### **2.3. Data Collection Method and Instruments**

Tolerance construct was assessed with an instrument developed by Hjerm, Eger, Bohman, and Connolly [4]. This instrument was called Three Factor Model of Tolerance. The measure contains 8 items related to the degree of tolerance among university students. To be used in Indonesian context, this instrument was translated using back translation method. After being back translated, researchers asked two experts to evaluate the readability and make sure that it is easy to understand by Indonesian people.

The items of the instrument were rated on a 5-point Likert scale in which score 1 being the least “totally disagree”, score 2 being “disagree”, score 3 being “neutral/not sure”. Score 4 being “agree”, and score 5 being “totally agree”. It yielded an overall tolerance score and three subscale scores: Acceptance to Diversity, Respect for Diversity, and Appreciation for Diversity. The Acceptance to Diversity subscale consists of 3 items and assesses the degree to which respondent exhibit permission and acceptance on the way people want to live their life. Respect for Diversity subscale is comprised of 2 items and taps the degree to which respondents exhibit respect and understanding that everyone is equal despite being different in many ways. Appreciation for Diversity scale consists of 3 items related to the degree to which respondents appreciate the difference and show likability or interest in others’ differences.

The test for validity and reliability of the instrument were conducted. The sample used to test the instrument was 75 people with the same characteristics as the sample in this study. Based on the reliability test, it was found that the alpha coefficient of all items on the instrument was 0.677. This shows that the instrument in this study has fairly good reliability, which means that the items in this instrument are homogeneous and already have sufficient internal consistency to measure one factor. While the results of the validity test found that all items resulted in a positive  $r$  value with  $p < 0,05$ . Therefore, it

can be concluded that all items in this instrument are valid.

### **2.4. Data Analysis Method**

IBM SPSS 25.0 was used to analyze descriptive statistics for demographic information. Data was analyzed using Non-Parametric Test (2 Independent Samples) to find out if there is a significant difference between students who study in a diverse educational environment and students who study in nondiverse educational environment. Three constructs of tolerance were examined for both groups, including (a) Acceptance to Diversity, (b) Respect for Diversity, and (c) Appreciation for Diversity. Test of normality was also conducted to ensure the use of right method to analyze the main data.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1. Result**

From the table shown below, it is obtained that 75.7% or as many as 365 respondents came from Undiksha, and 24.3% or as many as 117 respondents came from STIKES Buleleng. Male respondents were 115 people or 23.9% and 367 people or 76.1% were women. Based on religion, the respondents consisted of 0.4% Buddhist, 85.3% Hindus, 10.2% Muslims, 1.2% Catholics, and about 2.9% were Protestants. Meanwhile, based on residency, as much as 4.1% or as many as 20 respondents reside in Badung Regency, 2.5% reside in Bangli Regency, 4.4% reside in Gianyar Regency, 3.5% reside in Jembarana District, as well as in Karangasem and Klungkung Districts. Furthermore, 6.2% reside in Tabanan Regency, 63.2% reside in Buleleng Regency, reside in Denpasar City, and the rest 2.9%. or as many as 14 respondents reside outside Bali.

Respondents were categorized using the degree of tolerance. Respondents with the mean score higher than the total mean ( $M=4.26$ ), were categorized as having high degree of tolerance, meanwhile respondents with the mean score lower than the total mean was categorized as having low degree of tolerance. There were 211 respondents with high degree of tolerance and 271 respondents with low degree of tolerance.

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of Respondents

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
University	Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha	365	75,7%
	STIKES Buleleng	117	24,3%
Sex	Male	115	23,9%
	Female	367	76,1%
Religion	Buddhist	2	0,4%
	Hindu	411	85,3%
	Islam	49	10,2%
	Catholic	6	1,2%
	Protestan	14	2,9%
Residence	Badung Regency	20	4,1%
	Bangli Regency	12	2,5%
	Gianyar Regency	21	4,4%
	Jembrana Regency	17	3,5%
	Karangasem Regency	17	3,5%
	Klungkung Regency	17	3,5%
	Tabanan Regency	30	6,2%
	Buleleng Regency	305	63,3%
	Denpasar City	29	6,0%
	Other	14	2,9%

In order to conduct the main analysis of the data, the test of normality was performed to know whether the data was distributed normally. Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality, it was found that all the data were not distributed normally ( $p=0.00$ ). Therefore, the nonparametric test was used to find the difference between two groups of samples. The following table shows the score of tolerance and each dimension using nonparametric test:

The table below shows the mean value and standard deviation of respondents from two groups. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant difference in the scores of tolerance profile for Undiksha students ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=0.43$ ) and STIKES Buleleng students ( $M=4.15$ ,  $SD=0.49$ );  $p=0.00$ , that is Undiksha students reported significantly higher level of tolerance profile than

STIKES Buleleng students. Similar results were obtained for each dimension. The table shows that there was a significant difference in the mean score of Acceptance of Diversity for Undiksha students ( $M=4.30$ ,  $SD=0.50$ ) and STIKES Buleleng students ( $M=4.15$ ,  $SD=0.57$ );  $p=0.00$ . Moreover, there was a significant difference in the mean score of respect for diversity among Undiksha students ( $M=4.33$ ,  $SD=0.53$ ) and STIKES Buleleng students ( $M=4.19$ ,  $SD=0.54$ );  $p=0.00$ . There was also a significant difference in the mean score of appreciation for diversity among Undiksha students ( $M=4.26$ ,  $SD=0.53$ ) and STIKES Buleleng students ( $M=4.11$ ,  $SD=0.52$ );  $p=0.00$ . In conclusion, these results show that Undiksha students reported significantly higher level of acceptance to diversity, respect for diversity, and appreciation for diversity than STIKES Buleleng students.

**Table 2.** Tolerance Profile in Each Group

Variable	Undiksha		STIKES Buleleng		Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Tolerance Profile	4,29	0,43	4,15	0,49	0,00
Acceptance of Diversity	4,30	0,50	4,15	0,57	0,00
Respect for Diversity	4,33	0,53	4,19	0,54	0,00
Appreciation for Diversity	4,26	0,48	4,11	0,52	0,00

### 3.2. Discussion

According to the results obtained, students who study in a more diverse educational environment exhibit higher degree of tolerance than those who study in a nondiverse educational environment. The results were similar for three dimensions of tolerance, namely acceptance to diversity, respect for diversity, and appreciation for diversity. According to the concept mentioned by [4], high acceptance to diversity means that someone allows people with different background to live a life according to their beliefs and be able to respect each other in order to avoid division and bring about social peace. For example, someone allows a friend to worship according to that person's belief even though he/she personally does not believe in that religion. Furthermore, high respect for diversity means that a person is able to respect different choices and beliefs and that every human being is considered ethically equal. From the previous example, if someone has high respect for diversity, then he will give different people the opportunity to worship according to their respective beliefs because everyone has the same right to have a religion and all religions are considered equal, only the method is different. Lastly, someone who has a high appreciation for diversity respect the beliefs of others and show interest in these different beliefs. They believe that even though they are different, they ultimately have good goals. Regarding the example of practicing religion earlier, a person with high appreciation for diversity will let other people practice their respective beliefs and even take time to learn these beliefs because they feel interested in knowing. When we are willing to learn other people's beliefs, then we will better understand why someone has that view or belief.

Intergroup Contact Theory was used to explain why people who are surrounded with diverse educational environment will exhibit higher degree of tolerance than people who are surrounded with less or minimum diverse educational environment. This theory states that exposure to different groups can reduce threats and prejudice to other groups which in turn can build positive attitude in those other groups [10]. Diversity can increase the likelihood of individuals interacting with different ethnicities so that these difference become blurred and may increase trust in general [13]. In a diverse cultural environment, students are exposed with not only different religions, race, etc., but most importantly with the diversity of ideas. Being able to exhibit tolerance for the differences of ideas is the heart of democracy where people are free to express their ideas under the certain regulations [6]. When exchange of cultures and ideas exist, trust is developed, and trust will lead to being able to accept, respect, and appreciate differences that exist between groups.

### 4. CONCLUSION

This study tried to reveal how students who study in a diverse learning environment differ in the degree of tolerance as compared to students who study in a nondiverse learning environment. Samples were 482 students from two universities in Buleleng that have different characteristics, especially in terms of the multiculturalism and diversity among the students. The study revealed that diversity in educational environment does have a significant influence on the level of tolerance, that is students who study in diverse educational environment exhibit significantly higher degree of tolerance than those who study in non-diverse educational environment. The tolerance includes their ability in accepting, showing respect, and appreciating diversity or differences that exist in their environment. This result also gives us general picture of tolerance among university students and that it creates an optimism in the sense that students are not only able to accept the difference, but also respect and show appreciation and interest in learning other people's differences. This is a good start in order to achieve harmony and peace in this modern world.

Future research is expected to further investigate the factors that contribute to the formation of tolerance, not only in Buleleng but also in Bali or Indonesia. Bali as a province that is well-known for its practice of tolerance, will be a good subject for study as we can create a framework or model of tolerance in Indonesia. It will be a good example for other provinces in the sense that the model can be implemented in other provinces in Indonesia.

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