

## **Social and Cultural Capital in Multicultural Campuses: Effects on Tolerance among Multiethnic Students**

Fita Mustafida

*Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia*

Ika Ratih Sulistiani

*Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia*

Dian Mohammad Hakim

*Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia*

Aliffiati

*Universitas Udayana Bali, Indonesia*

Sayyidah Fatinatul Fitroh

*Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia*

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines how social and cultural capital influences students' tolerance in multicultural university settings. A survey of 191 Ma Chung University and Udayana University students in Indonesia revealed that both social capital (networks, trust, and participation) and cultural capital (knowledge, experience, and exposure) significantly predict attitudes toward tolerance ( $\beta = 0.35$  and  $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), explaining 43% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.43$ ). Students involved in multicultural activities and strong social networks showed greater acceptance of diversity. These findings underscore the importance of institutional strategies to promote inclusive campus environments by developing students' social and cultural capital. Future research should*

*investigate the long-term effects and accessibility challenges faced by minority groups in multicultural programs.*

**Keywords:** cultural capital, higher education, multicultural campuses, social capital, tolerance

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## INTRODUCTION

Social and cultural capital has gained immense attention as a research field within multicultural academic contexts, particularly for its potential to foster tolerance and inclusivity (Astutik, 2023; Hanif, 2023). These forms of capital shape how students interact with and contribute to multiethnic diversity at universities and other higher education institutions (Budnyk et al., 2022). However, despite the growing emphasis on multiculturalism in higher education, the mechanisms through which social and cultural capital positively influences the development of tolerance remain insufficiently explored. This gap is especially critical in multiethnic settings where cultural and social dynamics are complex and often inequitable (Ashsyafa et al., 2024). Addressing this gap is vital as globalization expands cultural diversity on campuses worldwide.

As conceptualized by Bourdieu (1998), social capital consists of trust, reciprocity, and participation networks that enable individuals to navigate diverse environments. Similarly, cultural capital—which comprises information, experiences, and competencies acquired through exposure to diverse cultures—fosters adaptation and openness to diversity (Fatmawati et al., 2023; Golabi et al., 2020). Studies point to several forms of capital that interact to shape students' views on tolerance. For example, Amati et al. (2018) reported that students highly engaged in multicultural organizations exhibit better interpersonal skills and greater acceptance of cultural diversity. However, despite these benefits, persistent challenges—such as social network inequalities and varying levels of cultural competence—limit the extent to which minority-group students can fully benefit from multicultural opportunities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Particularly in the classroom, tolerance has recently attracted much attention. Multicultural settings present both opportunities and challenges for promoting inclusion, underscoring the importance of tolerance. Social capital and cultural capital have been increasingly acknowledged as significant determinants of attitudes such as acceptance and empathy, particularly among students in higher education. Social and cultural capital have been widely recognized as critical

factors in shaping attitudes such as acceptance and empathy, particularly among higher education students.

### **Social Capital and Tolerance**

Social capital encompasses networks, relationships, and norms that promote cooperation within or among groups (Putnam, 2007). Key components, such as interpersonal trust, openness, and active participation in diverse social networks, are consistently linked to the cultivation of inclusive attitudes (Maeda & Hashimoto, 2024; Özdemir et al., 2021). These social ties help people grow in empathy and mutual respect, which are fundamental traits of a tolerant society, and they are more aware of the variety. With greater social capital—strong networks and trust—students are more likely to participate in cross-cultural exchanges, increasing their tolerance (Costa et al., 2024). This aligns with earlier findings that social capital reduces prejudice and stereotypes by encouraging contact and understanding (Fisher, 2015; Hanif, 2023). Notably, diverse communities characterized by mutual trust and respect further increase students' likelihood of adopting tolerant attitudes (Maeda & Hashimoto, 2024).

### **Cultural Capital and Tolerance**

As conceptualized by Bourdieu (1998), cultural capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and competencies derived from cultural exposure. Students actively participating in multicultural activities—such as cultural events, workshops, and educational exchanges—tend to develop greater empathy and adaptability to diversity (Kamalova et al., 2020). These events provide chances to value several points of view, thus addressing prejudices and promoting diversity (Golabi et al., 2020; Hurtado, 2007). Different cultural experiences have been demonstrated to leave inclusive attitudes in people who help them see variations as chances for development rather than challenges. Cultural capital improves one's capacity to negotiate intercultural environments and fosters mutual understanding and acceptance (Golabi et al., 2020).

### **The interaction of social capital and cultural capital**

Although social capital and cultural capital each contribute to the formation of tolerance, their interaction has even more profound effects. Openness and trust—two key components of social capital—promote active participation in cultural activities, whereas cultural capital facilitates the formation of diverse social networks (Choi et al., 2023). This interdependent relationship creates a reinforcing cycle whereby increased exposure to multicultural environments continuously develops tolerance (Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2007).

Theoretically, social and cultural capital integration mimics Bourdieu's, (1998) capital conversion theory in that the different forms of capital reinforce one another, each being reinforced by the strength of the others. Social capital,

such as trust and civic involvement, allows for easier cultural access, thereby enhancing cultural capital. Cultural capital, in turn, enhances people's ability to build and maintain broader networks of social association. This interactive interaction result in sustained attitudinal transformation toward enhanced tolerance.

Additionally, the research of Audretsch et al. (2018) and Özdemir et al. (2021) proves that social capital extends the influence of cultural capital through greater engagement with cultural activities. This observation accords with Putnam's (2007), model of bridging social capital to highlight the bridging influence of cross-cultural encounters toward enhanced mutual understanding. Institutions must create equal access to social and cultural capital resources, regardless of background, as full and active members of multicultural life. With this interdependent social climate, universities can ensure inclusivity, foster social cohesion, and build long-term tolerance.

### **Institutional Support**

Promoting student tolerance calls for institutional assistance. Intercultural dialogs, seminars, and peer mentoring, among other diversity-oriented policies and projects, provide students with structured ways to engage actively with diversity (Adebayo & Sunderman, 2023; Hurtado, 2007). These events help children develop social and cultural capital and empathy, enabling tremendous respect for variety.

Universities must actively support participation in multicultural projects, including community service projects, intercultural cooperation, and peer mentoring programs. These programs have raised awareness of diversity and encouraged empathy, strengthening a school's inclusive environment (Choi et al., 2023; Hurtado, 2007; Rapp & Freitag, 2015).

### **Present study**

This study examines how social and cultural capital fosters tolerance among multiethnic college students in diverse university settings. While previous research has demonstrated the importance of social and cultural capital in promoting diversity and inclusion (Budnyk et al., 2022; Hanif, 2023), the mechanisms through which these forms of capital interact to shape tolerance remain unclear. Additionally, the barriers faced by underrepresented groups in accessing these resources demand further exploration (Amati et al., 2018; Özdemir et al., 2021).

Expanding on established theoretical frameworks, this study has three key objectives:

1. To explore how social capital—characterized by networks, trust, and participation—affects students' engagement with diversity.

2. To examine the impact of cultural capital, manifested in knowledge and cultural experiences, on receptivity to intercultural interactions.
3. Analyze the interaction between social capital and cultural capital to identify synergies that amplify their influence on the development of tolerance.

This study provides valuable information on how colleges may support students from all backgrounds by tackling these goals. The results provide evidence-based recommendations for improving institutional policy, creating inclusive and fair campus environments, and promoting broader conversations on diversity and inclusion in higher education.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the influence of social and cultural capital on students' attitudes toward tolerance in multicultural campus settings. A survey approach was adopted to collect data at a specific point during the even semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. The research explores the relationships between social capital, cultural capital, and tolerance and how these factors interact. Data were obtained via structured questionnaires with validated scales to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the measurements.

### Participants and Data Collection

Data were collected during the even semester of the 2023-2024 academic year from two culturally diverse campuses: Ma Chung University (N = 115) and Udayana University, Bali (N = 76). These institutions were selected for their ethnic and religious diversity, providing an appropriate setting to explore the role of social and cultural capital in shaping tolerance.

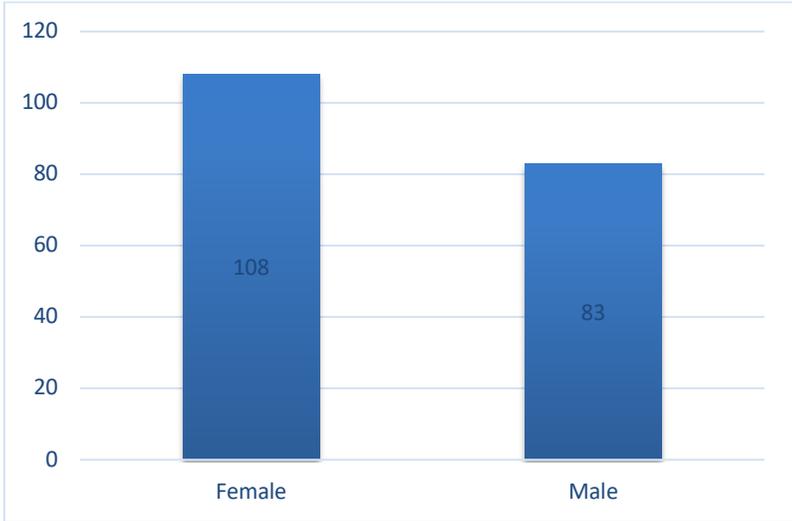
A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation across gender, age, and ethnic backgrounds. The final sample comprised 191 students: 108 females and 83 males. The participants were categorized into three age groups: under 20 years (n = 83), 20–25 years (n = 97), and over 25 years (n = 10). Religious affiliations included Islam (n = 63), Christianity (n = 52), Hinduism (n = 33), Buddhism (n = 22), and others (n = 21).

Ethnic diversity was also represented, with Javanese (n = 35), Balinese (n = 32), Chinese (n = 25), Batakese (n = 23), Madurese (n = 22), and others. Although this variety increases representativeness, the limited number of participants from certain ethnic groups and older age categories may affect generalizability.

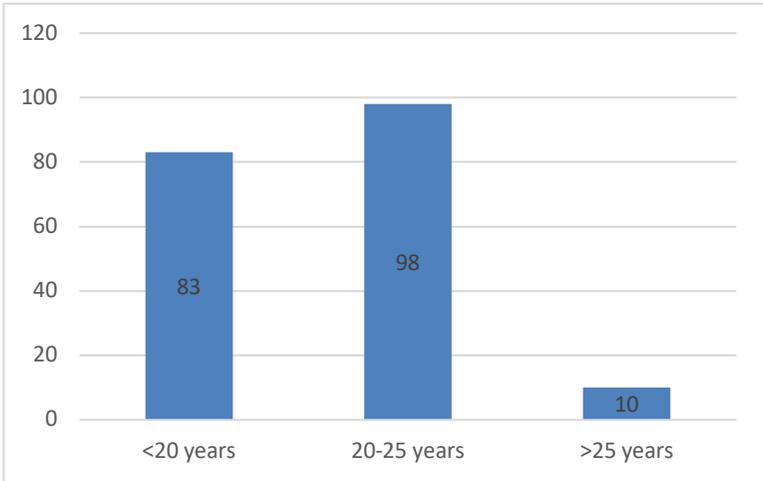
The survey was distributed online to ensure accessibility and confidentiality. A pilot test with a smaller sample was conducted to refine item

clarity, ensure cultural relevance, and validate consistency across instruments. Anonymity was guaranteed to encourage honest and reliable responses.

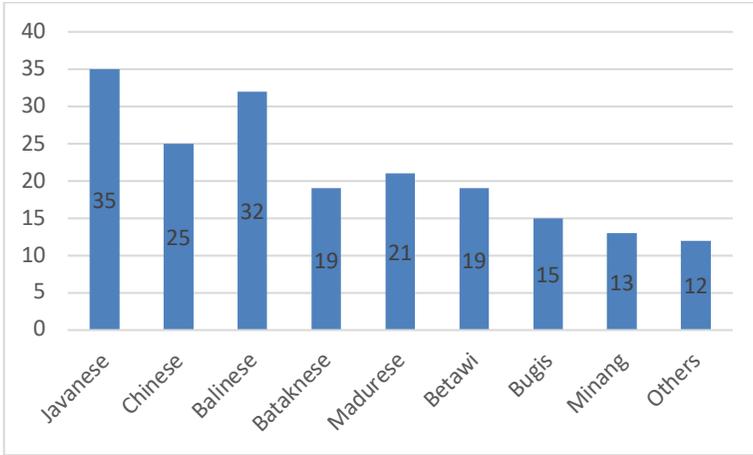
**Figure 1**  
*Gender Distribution of the participants*



**Figure 2**  
*Age distribution of participants*



**Figure 3**  
*Ethnic composition of participants*



### **Instruments**

**Social Capital Scale.** The Social Capital Scale was adapted from Hanif (2023), who developed a multidimensional tool for assessing social capital among university students in multicultural environments. The scale measures three dimensions: trust, social networks, and social participation. Example items include: "I trust people from different ethnic backgrounds.", and "I am involved in social activities with people from diverse cultures.". Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." This scale has demonstrated high reliability in prior studies, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 (Hanif, 2023). Pilot testing in this study confirmed its applicability and reliability within the sample.

**Cultural Capital Scale.** Developed by (Golabi et al., 2020), this scale evaluates students' cultural understanding, exposure to several cultural practices, and involvement in intercultural interactions. Among the example things are: "I have attended cultural events hosted by my university.", and "I hang around with friends from many cultural backgrounds.". Strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 has verified the scale in several educational environments. Minor changes were made during pilot testing to guarantee cultural appropriateness and clarity for the target audience.

**Tolerance Attitude Scale.** Adapted from Özdemiş et al. (2021), this scale measures students' tolerance toward cultural and religious diversity. The items include: "I believe it is important to interact with students from different cultural

backgrounds.", and "I respect people's different religious practices.". Previous research has shown that this scale has high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83. Pilot testing in this study refined the item wording to enhance comprehension without altering the core constructs measured.

**Data analysis**

This study employed descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to examine the relationships among social capital, cultural capital, and students' attitudes toward tolerance. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the participants' demographic characteristics and determine the key variables' central tendencies and variability. The results indicated adequate levels across all the constructs: social capital (M = 3.9, SD = 0.8), cultural capital (M = 4.1, SD = 0.7), and tolerance (M = 4.0, SD = 0.6). These findings provide a robust basis for subsequent inferential analysis.

Pearson correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships among the three primary constructs. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive power of social and cultural capital for students' tolerance. All analyses were performed via using SPSS version 24, with statistical significance set at  $p < 0.05$ .

**RESULTS**

This section presents the study's findings, focusing on the associations among students' social capital, cultural capital, and tolerance attitudes toward two multicultural campuses. The data were then analyzed via correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis.

**Correlation analysis**

The correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships among social capital, cultural capital, and tolerance. Trust, a dimension of social capital, had a moderate positive correlation with cultural capital ( $r = 0.56, p < 0.05$ ) and tolerance ( $r = 0.47, p < 0.05$ ). Social participation was positively correlated with tolerance ( $r = 0.62, p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 1**  
*Correlations between Social Capital, Cultural Capital, and Tolerance*

Variables	Social Capital	Cultural Capital	Tolerance
Social Capital	1	0.56*	0.47*
Cultural Capital	0.56*	1	0.58*
Tolerance	0.47*	0.58*	1

\*Note:  $p < 0.05$

Cultural capital, including exposure to intercultural events, also demonstrated a significant positive correlation with tolerance ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.05$ ).

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of social and cultural capital on tolerance. Both social capital ( $\beta = 0.35, p < 0.05$ ) and cultural capital ( $\beta = 0.39, p < 0.05$ ) were significant predictors of tolerance. The model explained 43% of the variance in students’ tolerance levels ( $R^2 = 0.43$ ).

The  $\beta$ -value for cultural capital is somewhat more significant, indicating that the information and experiences gained from cultural exposure may have a more direct influence on attitudes toward diversity. In regard to creating empathy and understanding via direct experiences, this may be linked to the inherent role of cultural capital. For example, participation in intercultural workshops and events provides opportunities for students to confront and overcome biases, enhancing their openness to diversity.

**Table 2:**  
*Multiple Regression Analysis Results for Tolerance*

Predictor Variable	$\beta$	t	p
Social Capital	0.35	4.76	<.005
Cultural Capital	0.39	5.02	<.005
R <sup>2</sup>	0.43		
F	56.89		

*Note.*  $\beta$  = standardized regression coefficient.

**Gender and ethnic differences**

The analysis also explored whether there were significant differences in tolerance attitudes based on gender and ethnicity. While no significant sex differences were found ( $p > 0.05$ ), notable ethnic differences in tolerance levels were detected. Students from ethnic minorities reported higher tolerance levels than did those from the majority ethnic group.

**Table 4**  
*Ethnic Differences in Tolerance Levels*

Ethnicity	Mean Tolerance Score	Standard Deviation
Javanese	3.8	0.9
Chinese	4.1	0.7
Bataknese	4.0	0.8
Madurese	3.7	1.0
Others	4.2	0.6

These findings suggest that ethnic background may influence how students perceive and engage with diversity, with ethnic minorities possibly experiencing greater exposure to multicultural environments and developing stronger tolerance attitudes. The key variables' overall means and standard deviations were as follows: social capital,  $M = 3.9$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ; cultural capital,  $M = 4.1$ ,  $SD = 0.7$ ; and tolerance,  $M = 4.0$ ,  $SD = 0.6$ . These descriptives place the following analysis in context.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study explored the relationships among the social capital, cultural capital, and tolerance of students on multicultural campuses. The results offer helpful lessons into how those forms of capital contribute to students' attitude toward tolerance, which has important implications for increasingly globalized higher education.

### **Social Capital and Tolerance**

This study demonstrated a substantial positive correlation between social capital and tolerance ( $r = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding supports the notion that students who participate in social networks, trust-building activities, and social activities are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward cultural diversity. This finding agreed with previous works indicating that social capital fostered diversity and tolerance within the multicultural environment by Amati et al. (2018; Budnyk et al. (2022). The concept of social capital enables students to form and maintain relationships with colleagues from different backgrounds. Hence, it enhances students' openness and acceptance of cultural diversity.

Other findings support Özdemir et al. (2021) and are thus indicative of high social capital, as they exhibit tolerance toward other ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, campus activities, such as participation in multicultural organizations, may foster social bonds across cultures and confer social status among students in return (Fatmawati et al., 2023). Thus, a high correlation between social participation (one dimension of social capital) and tolerance, 0.62 with a probability of less than 0.05, shows that the more students are socially active in a multicultural environment, the more accepting they become diverse.

However, the sample could have biased since 69% of those sampled were women. Other studies, such as Kamalova et al. (2020), indicate that women are more predisposed to social participation, and therefore have higher social capital scores. More studies with a better gender balance should be conducted to confirm these results.

## **Cultural Capital and Tolerance**

There was a strong predictor related to cultural capital and students' tolerance; hence,  $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . The greater the extent to which students are exposed to diverse cultural facilities and experiences, the more positive their attitudes toward diversity become. This follows Bourdieu's framework, 1998, because such a positive relationship means that with more knowledge and exposure to diverse cultural backgrounds, one is better suited to conducting intercultural interactions and forming inclusive attitudes.

This finding is consistent with Golabi et al. (2020), who reported that cultural capital is critical in determining how students can adapt to a multicultural environment. The present study assessed cultural capital by evaluating the extent of participation in intercultural events and exposure to other cultures. Students who were more active in international exchanges or had a more varied cultural backgrounds had more favorable views diversity, according to a study that revealed a substantial correlation between tolerance and tolerance.

Moreover, the multiple regression analysis indicates that cultural capital has a slightly greater impact on tolerance than does social capital, with  $\beta$  values of 0.39 versus 0.35, respectively, both of which are significant at  $p < 0.05$ . This finding confirms the value of intercultural activities and cultural exposure in higher education since these activities seem particularly effective in promoting tolerance.

## **Social and Cultural Capital**

The interaction between social capital and cultural capital is a determining factor for tolerance levels among students in multicultural university environments. This study confirms a strong correlation between the two capitals ( $r = 0.56$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that students with extensive networks are exposed to greater cultural diversity. In turn, students with greater cultural knowledge diversity can form more inclusive social relationship easily. Social capital, or trust, social interaction, and relationships, is conducive to intercultural contact (Mishi et al., 2023; Putnam, 2007). In contrast, cultural capital, in the form of knowledge, experience, and understanding of different cultures, makes individuals wiser and better able to live with diversity (Bourdieu, 1998). Regression analysis also revealed that cultural capital is more strongly associated with tolerance than social capital ( $\beta = 0.39$  vs.  $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that greater exposure to culture directly increases diversity acceptance (Tusha et al., 2024). Thus, strong social relationships and abundant cultural information lead to greater sensitivity to diversity, greater tolerance, and more intense intercultural communication with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

However, social and cultural capital remains a challenge, particularly to students from less diverse backgrounds. Social networks in access inequalities limit the extent of multiculturalism among students, and thenthe formation of

tolerant attitudes is stifled (Hanif, 2023; Özdemir et al., 2021). Before entering universities, homogeneous background students may lack sufficient cultural capital and require extended time and experience to adjust to multicultural environments (Bhorkar, 2024; Dong et al., 2024). Therefore, institutions of higher learning must play a constructive role in promoting an academic culture that supports the accumulation of both forms of capital. This is achievable through cross-cultural mentoring programs, social events that are diversity-oriented, official seminars, and cultural exchange programs (Adebayo & Sunderman, 2023). By expanding access to social and cultural capital for all learners, universities can enhance inclusivity, minimize social barriers, and foster a more tolerant and cohesive learning environment.

### **Ethnic and religious Differences in tolerance**

The research also revealed ethnic and religious differences in tolerance attitudes. The ethnic minority students, were more tolerant than the majority ethnic group was. with These results are consistent with those of previous studies indicating that ethnic minorities are usually exposed to more greater diversity, leading to higher tolerance levels (Burstow, 2018; Crowley & Walsh, 2024). Significantly, the higher tolerance of students may reflect more frequent interactions among peers from diverse backgrounds due to better understanding and acceptance. The attitudes of tolerance also significantly differed by religious background. This aligns with previous findings (Özdemir et al., 2021; Siritrakankij et al., 2024), which highlight the relevance of intercultural and interfaith dialogs among members of religious communities for making their attitudes toward cultural diversity more positive. For example, students can participate more in ecumenical activities and interfaith dialog, making them more tolerant toward others (Hurtado, 2007). These results highlight the need to enhance campus interfaith programs to promote mutual understanding among students who come from a range of religious backgrounds.

### **Institutional Support and Policy Implications**

Colleges and universities should implement programs and policies that help students interact with people of other cultural backgrounds and hence become more tolerant as tolerance is positively related to both social and cultural capital. Inclusive policies in the form of multicultural activities, mentor programs, and diversity training would help achieve student social cohesion, Adebayo & Sunderman (2023). These programs have the potential, on the basis of the findings of this study, to create more inclusive campus environments by teaching students social and cultural capital. This finding supports the assertion of Johnston & Soroka (2003)) that schools play a critical role in promoting tolerance among their student populations by creating opportunities for cross-cultural contact and understanding. Intercultural seminars and compulsory

diversity training are initiatives that help students build the knowledge, contacts, and competence that will allow them to function well in diverse classrooms. Investments in activities that facilitate social and cultural exchange tend to make students more rounded and tolerant of differences, hence making the campus a harmonious and welcoming place.

This study provides insights into how social and cultural capital shapes students' attitudes toward tolerance in multicultural campus settings. The findings highlight the crucial impact of social capital networks, trust, social participation, and cultural capital exposure to diverse cultural experiences on students' tolerance of others. Students better accept and understand cultural diversity with increased involvement in multicultural activities and social networks. Curiously, the results revealed that the effect of social capital on tolerance was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), with students having more multicultural interactions showing openness to diversity. On the other hand, several obstacles must be overcome to use this type of capital, particularly for the most underrepresented groups. The research highlights that measures such as diversity training and intercultural activities can foster a climate inside within institutions that welcomes everyone. These findings add to the rapidly growing knowledge base concerning how multicultural campuses can foster social cohesion and tolerance; further research is needed to explore the long-term effects and experiences of minority groups.

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the importance of universities intentionally nurturing students' social and cultural capital to foster a more tolerant and inclusive academic environment. One meaningful step institutions can take is to provide accessible and engaging programs—such as intercultural workshops, in which students can share and reflect on their cultural experiences, or mentorship programs that connect peers from different backgrounds to learn from one another.

Opportunities such as student exchanges, language partnerships, or collaborative projects with local communities also give students first-hand experience in navigating and appreciating diversity. Beyond student-centered activities, institutions can promote a culture of respect and empathy by offering diverse training for faculty, staff, and students—ensuring that tolerance becomes part of daily academic life rather than an abstract value.

Importantly, these efforts should not be one-off events. Universities need to listen to student voices, monitor the impact of their programs, and adapt them continuously. In doing so, campuses can become places where every student—regardless of background—feels seen, valued, and supported in becoming a more open-minded and compassionate member of society.

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## Bios

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**FITA MUSTAFIDA**, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Universitas Islam Malang. Her research interests include multicultural education, sociocultural studies, and tolerance. Email: [fita.mustafida@unisma.ac.id](mailto:fita.mustafida@unisma.ac.id)

**IKA RATIH SULISTIANI**, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Universitas Islam Malang. Her research interests include multicultural education, digital learning, digital pedagogy, and TPACK. Email : [ika.ratih@unisma.ac.id](mailto:ika.ratih@unisma.ac.id)

**DIAN MOHAMMAD HAKIM**, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Universitas Islam Malang. His research interests include multicultural education, educational management, social inclusion, and character education. Email: [dian.hakim@unisma.ac.id](mailto:dian.hakim@unisma.ac.id)

**ALIFFIATI**, M.Si., is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Cultural Sciences at Universitas Udayana, Bali. Her research interests include anthropology and social interaction. Email: [aliffiati@unud.ac.id](mailto:aliffiati@unud.ac.id)

**SAYYIDAH FATINATUL FITROH** is a student at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Malang. Her academic interests include multicultural education and Islamic studies. Email: [mynurika@gmail.com](mailto:mynurika@gmail.com)

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