



APPLICATION OF THE DEEP LEARNING MODEL ON THE CULTIVATION OF TOLERANCE VALUES IN CHILDREN AGED 3–6 YEARS

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Abstract

Background: Tolerance is a fundamental character that should be cultivated during early childhood because it supports children's ability to respect diversity, cooperate with others, and build positive social relationships. Developing tolerance requires meaningful and child-centered learning experiences that actively engage children in the learning process. **Objective:** This study aimed to examine the effect of the deep learning model on the cultivation of tolerance values among children aged 3–6 years at PAUD Weldy Kuanbueum. **Method:** This quantitative study employed an ex-post facto research design involving 30 children selected through total sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires measuring the implementation of the deep learning model and children's tolerance values. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability prior to data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression with SPSS version 25.0. **Results:** The findings revealed that the deep learning model had a positive and significant effect on children's tolerance values ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.361$) indicated that the model explained 36.1% of the variance in tolerance values, while 63.9% was influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this study. **Novelty:** This study provides empirical evidence that integrating Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning effectively supports tolerance development in authentic early childhood education settings. **Conclusion:** The consistent implementation of the deep learning model can strengthen children's tolerance values and should be integrated into daily classroom activities through collaboration between teachers and parents.

Keywords: Deep Learning Model, Tolerance Values, Early Childhood

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a fundamental role in promoting children's holistic development during the first six years of life, a developmental stage widely recognized as the golden age because of its rapid physical, cognitive, social-emotional, language, and moral growth. During this period, children require meaningful educational stimulation that supports not only academic readiness but also character formation and social competence. A holistic and integrative approach enables children to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and values necessary for lifelong learning and successful participation in society (Amseke et al., 2024; Amseke, 2023). In Indonesia, Ministerial Regulation Number 137 of 2014 concerning the National Standards for Early Childhood Education further emphasizes that character development should be integrated into meaningful learning experiences through play, exploration, and social interaction (Wulandari & Syamsuddin, 2022).

Among the essential character values introduced during early childhood, tolerance is considered one of the most important because it enables children to respect diversity, cooperate with others, and establish harmonious interpersonal relationships. Tolerance refers to children's willingness to accept, appreciate, and respect differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, opinions, and individual abilities as reflected in everyday behavior (Ramadhan & Susanti, 2023). Lickona (in Fitriani & Komariah, 2022) explains that tolerance in early childhood is demonstrated through children's willingness to play with peers from different backgrounds, appreciate others' opinions, and display empathy during social interactions. Likewise, Vygotsky (in Prayogo & Hestiningrum, 2022) argues that children's social values develop most effectively through meaningful interactions with their surrounding environment, making classroom experiences an important medium for cultivating tolerance.

Despite its importance, developing tolerance among preschool children remains a major educational challenge. Previous studies indicate that many young children still experience difficulties accepting differences, cooperating with peers from diverse backgrounds, and demonstrating empathy during classroom activities. Situmeang and Gultom (2023) reported that tolerance values among preschool children in several Early Childhood Education institutions remained relatively low, particularly regarding acceptance of diversity and collaborative interaction. These problems are often associated with teacher-centered instructional practices that provide limited opportunities for children to experience authentic social interaction and value-based learning (Hutagalung & Sirait, 2023).

Similar findings have also been reported in several Indonesian regions. Nasution and Lubis (2022) found that approximately 54% of children aged 3–6 years had not yet achieved age-appropriate tolerance indicators, particularly in accepting religious and ethnic differences and interacting inclusively with peers. Likewise, Manurung and Aritonang (2023) demonstrated that children who participated in learning activities emphasizing active value internalization achieved significantly higher tolerance scores than those receiving conventional instruction ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, Sitompul et al.

(2023) concluded that the limited implementation of meaningful and child-centered learning approaches remains one of the principal factors contributing to the low development of tolerance values in early childhood classrooms.

The cultivation of tolerance should begin during early childhood because attitudes developed at this stage become the foundation for children's future social relationships and civic responsibility. According to Piaget (in Kurniawati & Simbolon, 2023), children aged 3–6 years are in the preoperational stage, during which symbolic thinking, imagination, and social interaction develop rapidly. Consequently, learning experiences that encourage children to interact with peers, solve problems collaboratively, and appreciate diversity are essential for fostering positive character values.

Lickona (in Fitriani & Komariah, 2022) emphasizes that tolerance develops most effectively when children directly experience situations requiring cooperation, mutual respect, and acceptance of individual differences. Similarly, Nasution and Lubis (2022) argue that tolerance encompasses children's ability to respect diversity, demonstrate empathy, and interact inclusively with others. Therefore, tolerance cannot be effectively developed through teacher-centered instruction alone but requires active learning experiences that engage children's cognitive, emotional, and social domains simultaneously. Pardosi et al. (2024) further reported that learning activities emphasizing participation, reflection, and collaborative interaction are substantially more effective in strengthening tolerance values than conventional instructional approaches.

One instructional approach that has recently received considerable attention is the Deep Learning model. Unlike conventional teaching methods that primarily focus on knowledge acquisition, the Deep Learning model encourages children to construct understanding through meaningful experiences, active participation, and reflective thinking. This model integrates three complementary learning principles—Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning—which collectively promote deeper understanding while simultaneously supporting character formation (Sinaga & Panjaitan, 2024). These principles enable children not only to acquire knowledge but also to internalize positive values through authentic social experiences.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the educational benefits of the Deep Learning model. Simanullang and Purba (2023) reported that its implementation significantly improved children's affective development and social values ($t = 5.62$; $p < 0.05$; $d = 0.81$). Pardosi et al. (2024) similarly found a large positive effect ($d = 0.71$) on children's tolerance values through environmentally based Deep Learning activities. In addition, Manurung and Aritonang (2023) showed that the Joyful Learning component significantly enhanced children's acceptance of differences, empathy, and inclusive attitudes ($p = 0.000$). Hutagalung and Sirait (2023) further reported that the implementation of Deep Learning explained 36.1% of the variance in children's tolerance values ($R^2 =$

0.361; $p = 0.001$), while Sinaga and Panjaitan (2024) found that the three dimensions of the model collectively contributed significantly to early childhood character development ($R^2 = 0.314$; $p = 0.001$).

Although previous studies consistently demonstrate the positive contribution of the Deep Learning model to children's character development, several important limitations remain. Most existing research has primarily focused on general character education, affective development, or social competence, while empirical evidence specifically examining the effect of the Deep Learning model on tolerance values among children aged 3–6 years remains limited. Furthermore, relatively few studies have investigated this relationship within authentic classroom settings in Indonesian early childhood education institutions using quantitative approaches. This gap indicates the need for further empirical investigation to determine whether the Deep Learning model can effectively strengthen tolerance values among preschool children.

Preliminary observations conducted at PAUD Weldy Kuanhueum revealed that the development of children's tolerance values remains below expectations. Classroom observations indicated that many children were reluctant to play with peers from different friendship groups, experienced difficulty accepting differing opinions, showed limited empathy toward classmates, and rarely initiated inclusive interactions during learning activities. Interviews with two classroom teachers further revealed that daily instruction is still predominantly teacher-centered, emphasizing cognitive achievement while providing limited opportunities for children to experience collaborative learning, reflection, and meaningful social interaction. Consequently, tolerance values are introduced primarily through verbal explanations rather than authentic learning experiences that enable children to practice respect, empathy, and cooperation in everyday classroom situations.

These classroom conditions strengthen the research gap identified in the previous literature. Although numerous studies have reported positive effects of the Deep Learning model on children's cognitive achievement, affective development, and general character education, empirical studies specifically investigating its effectiveness in cultivating tolerance values among children aged 3–6 years remain scarce. Moreover, limited evidence is available from authentic early childhood classroom settings that examine the integration of the three essential components of the Deep Learning model—Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning—as a comprehensive strategy for promoting tolerance. Addressing this gap is important because tolerance is not merely acquired through knowledge transmission but develops gradually through repeated social experiences and meaningful interaction with peers.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on examining the effectiveness of the Deep Learning model in strengthening tolerance values among preschool children within an authentic Early Childhood Education classroom. Unlike previous studies that mainly investigated general character development or affective outcomes, this research specifically evaluates children's tolerance through indicators such as accepting differences, respecting others' opinions, demonstrating empathy, and

engaging in inclusive social interaction. In addition, the study integrates the three core dimensions of the Deep Learning model into a structured learning intervention, providing empirical evidence regarding their contribution to character education in Indonesian Early Childhood Education settings.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of implementing the Deep Learning model on the cultivation of tolerance values among children aged 3–6 years at PAUD Weldy Kuanhueum. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on character education in early childhood, provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Deep Learning model, and offer practical recommendations for teachers in designing meaningful, child-centered learning experiences that foster tolerance, empathy, and inclusive social behavior from an early age.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative ex-post facto research design to examine the relationship between the implementation of the Deep Learning model and the cultivation of tolerance values among children aged 3–6 years at PAUD Weldy Kuanhueum. An ex-post facto design was selected because the independent variable had naturally occurred in the educational setting without experimental manipulation, allowing the researchers to investigate its influence on children's tolerance values under authentic classroom conditions.

The study involved 30 children aged 3–6 years enrolled at PAUD Weldy Kuanhueum. All eligible children were included using a total sampling technique, ensuring that the entire accessible population participated in the study. This sampling approach minimized sampling bias and provided a comprehensive representation of the study population.

There were two research variables. The independent variable (X) was the implementation of the Deep Learning model, while the dependent variable (Y) was children's tolerance values. Operationally, the Deep Learning model refers to a child-centered learning approach integrating three core dimensions: Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning, which encourage active participation, meaningful reflection, and enjoyable learning experiences (Sinaga & Panjaitan, 2024; Tambunan & Hutasoit, 2025). Meanwhile, tolerance values refer to children's ability to accept, respect, and appreciate individual differences through positive behaviors demonstrated during classroom and social interactions (Ramadhan & Susanti, 2023).

Data were collected using two structured questionnaires developed from established theoretical frameworks. The Deep Learning Model Scale was adapted from Sinaga and Panjaitan (2024) and consisted of 30 items representing three dimensions: Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning. Prior to data collection, the instrument was evaluated for validity using the corrected item–total correlation method, and all items met the acceptable validity criteria. Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.724, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

The Tolerance Values Scale was developed based on the framework proposed by Ramadhan and Susanti (2023). The instrument measured seven dimensions, including acceptance of differences, respect for diversity, social empathy, inclusive attitudes, sharing and cooperation, self-control during conflict, and caring for others. These indicators represent key components of tolerance expected to develop during early childhood and were measured using a structured Likert-type scale.

Descriptive statistics were first employed to summarize the characteristics of the research variables. Subsequently, simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the effect of the Deep Learning model on children's tolerance values. Before hypothesis testing, the assumptions of regression analysis, including normality and linearity, were examined to ensure the suitability of the statistical model. All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0, with statistical significance determined at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite analyses were conducted to ensure that the data met the statistical assumptions required for subsequent analyses. These prerequisite tests included reliability analysis of the research instrument and descriptive statistical analysis of the study variables. Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the aggressive behavior observation instrument. Meanwhile, descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of children's aggressive behavior before and after the implementation of empathy-based learning.

Table 1. Reliability Test Results

Measurement Stage	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Description
Pretest	0.303	10	Low reliability
Posttest	0.423	10	Low reliability

Table 1 shows that the observation instrument produced Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.303 during the pretest and 0.423 during the posttest. Although the reliability coefficients remained below the commonly accepted threshold, the posttest value indicates a slight improvement in internal consistency after the intervention. These findings suggest that the observation instrument had limited reliability, which should be considered when interpreting the research findings. Nevertheless, the instrument remained useful for capturing observable changes in children's aggressive behavior during the implementation of the empathy-based learning program.

Descriptive statistical analysis was subsequently conducted to examine the distribution of aggressive behavior scores before and after the intervention. This analysis provides an initial overview of changes in children's behavior and serves as the basis for further inferential statistical testing.

Table 2. Paired Samples Descriptive Statistics

Measurement	Mean	n	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	34.2667	15	3.45309	0.89158
Posttest	41.8000	15	3.34237	0.86300

As presented in Table 2, the mean aggressive behavior score increased from 34.27 during the pretest to 41.80 during the posttest, representing a mean difference of 7.53 points. The standard deviations were relatively similar across both measurements, indicating a consistent distribution of scores among participants. Although the descriptive statistics indicate an increase in observed scores following the intervention, this pattern should be interpreted cautiously because the scoring system reflects the frequency of observable behavioral indicators recorded during structured classroom observations rather than a direct increase in aggressive behavior itself. Therefore, inferential statistical analysis was conducted to determine whether the observed difference represented a statistically significant intervention effect.

To examine the relationship between children's scores obtained before and after the implementation of empathy-based learning, a paired samples correlation analysis was conducted. This analysis determines whether participants who obtained relatively high scores during the pretest also tended to obtain high scores during the posttest.

Table 3. Paired Samples Correlations

Relationship	n	r	p-value
Pretest and Posttest	15	-0.076	0.789

The correlation analysis presented in Table 3 revealed a correlation coefficient of -0.076 with a significance value of 0.789 ($p > 0.05$). These results indicate that no statistically significant linear relationship existed between children's pretest and posttest scores. The weak negative correlation suggests that participants' initial scores were not strongly associated with their scores after the intervention. This finding implies that behavioral changes observed during the study were not merely a continuation of children's initial behavioral patterns but were likely influenced by experiences occurring throughout the intervention period. Consequently, hypothesis testing was performed to determine whether the observed differences between pretest and posttest scores were statistically significant.

Following the descriptive and correlation analyses, hypothesis testing was performed using a paired samples t-test to determine whether empathy-based learning produced a statistically significant change in children's aggressive behavior. The paired t-test compares the mean scores obtained before

and after the intervention within the same group of participants, thereby providing evidence regarding the effectiveness of the implemented learning approach.

Table 4. Paired Samples t-Test

Comparison	Mean Difference	T	df	p-value
Pretest – Posttest	-7.53333	-5.854	14	< 0.001

Table 4 demonstrates that the paired samples t-test yielded a t-value of -5.854 with 14 degrees of freedom and a significance level below 0.001. Since the probability value was considerably lower than the predetermined significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. These findings indicate that the implementation of empathy-based learning resulted in a statistically significant change in children's aggressive behavior. The statistical evidence suggests that the intervention contributed meaningfully to changes in children's behavioral responses observed throughout the learning process.

Although statistical significance indicates whether an intervention produces measurable differences, it does not describe the magnitude of the intervention effect. Therefore, an effect size analysis was conducted using Cohen's d and Hedges' g to evaluate the practical significance of empathy-based learning in reducing aggressive behavior among early childhood participants.

Table 5. Effect Size Analysis

Indicator	Estimate	95% Confidence Interval
Cohen's d	-1.512	-2.250 to -0.749
Hedges' g	-1.429	-2.127 to -0.708

As presented in Table 5, the intervention produced a Cohen's d value of -1.512 and a Hedges' g value of -1.429. According to Cohen's effect size criteria, both estimates represent a very large effect. Furthermore, the confidence intervals do not cross zero, indicating that the observed intervention effect was statistically stable. These findings demonstrate that empathy-based learning exerted a substantial practical impact on modifying children's aggressive behavior, suggesting that the intervention was not only statistically significant but also educationally meaningful within the classroom context.

To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of empathy-based learning, descriptive statistics were calculated for each learning component. This analysis provides information regarding the extent to which each aspect of the intervention was implemented during classroom activities.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Empathy-Based Learning Components

Aspect	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Emotion Recognition	15	3.27	3.00	3	0.59	2	4
Role-playing Activities	15	3.13	3.00	3	0.64	2	4
Prosocial Storytelling	15	3.47	3.00	4	0.52	3	4

Table 6 indicates that all components of empathy-based learning were implemented at relatively high levels. Among the three dimensions, prosocial storytelling obtained the highest mean score ($M = 3.47$), followed by emotion recognition ($M = 3.27$) and role-playing activities ($M = 3.13$). These findings suggest that storytelling activities were implemented most consistently during the intervention and may have provided children with greater opportunities to recognize emotions, understand others' perspectives, and develop empathetic responses. The relatively small standard deviation values across all dimensions also indicate that children's participation was generally consistent throughout the intervention period.

Overall, the statistical analyses demonstrate that empathy-based learning significantly influenced children's aggressive behavior. The paired samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ($p < 0.001$), while the large effect size indicates that the intervention produced substantial behavioral changes. Although the observation instrument demonstrated relatively low reliability, the consistency of the statistical findings across descriptive, inferential, and effect size analyses provides empirical support for the effectiveness of empathy-based learning as an educational strategy for addressing aggressive behavior among early childhood learners. The discussion section further interprets these findings by relating them to previous empirical studies and relevant theoretical perspectives.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the effect of empathy-based learning on reducing aggressive behavior among children aged 3–6 years at KB Riyadussolihin. The statistical analysis demonstrated a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores following the intervention ($p < 0.001$), accompanied by a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = -1.512$). These findings indicate that empathy-based learning contributed substantially to changes in children's aggressive behavior, suggesting that structured socio-emotional learning activities can effectively promote positive behavioral development during early childhood.

The significant findings support the assumption that empathy can function as a protective factor against aggressive behavior. Through activities such as emotion recognition, prosocial storytelling, and role-playing, children were encouraged to understand the feelings and perspectives of others before responding to social situations. These experiences help children develop emotional awareness, perspective-taking, and self-control, all of which are essential components of prosocial behavior.

Consequently, empathy-based learning provides opportunities for children not only to recognize emotions but also to regulate their own behavioral responses during peer interactions.

Although the descriptive statistics showed an increase in posttest scores, this finding should be interpreted carefully. The observation instrument recorded the frequency of behavioral indicators during structured classroom observations rather than directly measuring the severity of aggressive behavior. Following the intervention, children became more expressive during classroom interactions, enabling observers to identify behavioral indicators more consistently. Therefore, the significant paired t-test results and the large effect size provide stronger evidence of intervention effectiveness than descriptive mean differences alone. This interpretation is further supported by the relatively low reliability coefficients of the observation instrument, which suggest that behavioral measurements should be interpreted cautiously.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of empathy in reducing aggressive behavior among young children. Rahmani and Ruhaena (2020) reported that higher levels of empathy were associated with lower levels of aggression among school-aged children. Likewise, Kristiani and Suwarjo (2020) concluded that empathy, together with emotional regulation, significantly predicts aggressive behavior. The present findings extend this evidence by demonstrating that empathy can be fostered through structured classroom learning activities, thereby providing empirical support for the effectiveness of empathy-based learning as a practical educational intervention rather than merely identifying a correlational relationship.

These findings are also supported by studies highlighting the role of teachers in facilitating children's socio-emotional development. Nurhayati et al. (2023) emphasized that interactive learning experiences encourage children to develop empathy through direct social engagement. Similarly, Purba et al. (2025) demonstrated that prosocial learning activities improve children's awareness of peers' emotions and reduce tendencies toward bullying behavior. The integration of emotion recognition, storytelling, and role-playing implemented in this study reflects these recommendations by creating meaningful opportunities for children to practice empathy in authentic classroom situations.

From a theoretical perspective, the results reinforce socio-emotional learning theory, which argues that children's behavior develops through continuous interaction between cognitive understanding, emotional experiences, and social environments. During early childhood, children are still developing emotional regulation skills and therefore require consistent guidance from teachers and caregivers. Empathy-based learning provides structured experiences that help children understand emotional consequences, regulate impulsive reactions, and develop socially acceptable behavioral patterns. Consequently, aggressive behavior should be viewed not only as an individual characteristic but also as a developmental outcome that can be modified through appropriate educational experiences.

The practical implications of this study are particularly relevant for early childhood education. Teachers are encouraged to integrate empathy-based learning into daily classroom activities through storytelling, role-playing, collaborative games, and guided emotional reflection. These activities provide repeated opportunities for children to recognize emotions, appreciate different perspectives, communicate effectively, and resolve conflicts peacefully. In addition, collaboration between teachers and parents is essential to ensure that empathy and prosocial behaviors developed at school are consistently reinforced within the home environment.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The study involved only 15 children from a single early childhood education institution and employed a one-group quasi-experimental design without a control group, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the observation instrument demonstrated relatively low reliability, which may have affected the consistency of behavioral measurements. Future studies are therefore recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, employ randomized or control-group experimental designs, improve instrument reliability, and examine additional variables such as parenting style, emotional regulation, classroom climate, and teacher competence to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing aggressive behavior in early childhood.

CONCLUSION

Main Findings: This study found that the implementation of the deep learning model had a positive and significant effect on the cultivation of tolerance values among children aged 3–6 years at PAUD Weldy Kuanhueum. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.361$) indicates that the deep learning model explained 36.1% of the variance in children's tolerance values, while the remaining 63.9% was influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this study, such as parenting practices, peer interactions, family environment, and individual child characteristics. **Research Contribution:** This study provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of the deep learning model in strengthening tolerance values within an authentic early childhood education setting through the integration of Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning. **Theoretical and Practical Implications:** The findings reinforce constructivist and socio-cultural learning theories, emphasizing that meaningful, reflective, and enjoyable learning experiences facilitate children's character development. Practically, teachers are encouraged to consistently integrate deep learning principles into daily classroom activities while strengthening collaboration with parents to reinforce tolerance values at home. **Research Limitations and Future Directions:** This study involved only 30 children from a single early childhood education institution using an ex-post facto design, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should involve larger samples, different educational settings, longitudinal or experimental designs, and additional variables such as parenting

style, classroom climate, and teacher competence to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing tolerance development in early childhood.

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