Raising Tolerance in Inclusive Schools Via Games

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Abstract
The topic related to tolerance and discrimination is one topic that researchers in Indonesia often studied. Indonesians have diverse characteristics; thus, tolerance is an important concept to learn as early as possible. Tolerance is the ability to respect and honour each other, regardless of their background, religion, culture, nationality, or disabilities (mental and or physical). Tolerance is important to learn early because it will help children adapt more easily to their environment and not isolate or be picky with their schoolmates. Increasing tolerance could be achieved in several ways, one of them is through games. Therefore, researchers conducted a study to raise tolerance in an inclusive school via the Step Forward Step Back Game. Students were asked to participate in this game before they were given psychoeducation by the authors. An inclusive school is chosen because although the number of inclusive schools grows, bullying still occurs in this setting. So, it is crucial to raise the students’ tolerance of differences in other students’ physical and/or mental abilities in an inclusive school. The results from the interviews with students and the general feedback from both games and psychoeducation revealed that the understanding of both inclusive and regular students related to tolerance and the importance of respecting diversity and individual differences has increased.

Key words: inclusive school, junior high school, step forward step back, tolerance

Introduction
The topic of tolerance and discrimination is familiar in Indonesia. This is because the composition of the Indonesian population consists of various ethnicities, cultures, and traditions. Indonesia has at least 300 ethnic groups, and 1,340 tribes (Indonesia, 2017). Tolerance is a stance where individuals respect and honour each other (Kemenag, 2023). Tolerance is not only restricted to religion and race context but also differences in language, socioeconomic, family situation, disabilities, physical abilities, respect for other people’s weaknesses, etc (Adawiyah, 2019; Rahmawati & Fatmawati, 2016). Research about tolerance in Indonesia was often conducted, for example, a study by Litbang Kompas in 2022 revealed that at least 62% of respondents considered Indonesians as intolerant (Widi, 2022). According to a survey by Setara (2022), Singkawang was the most tolerant city in Indonesia, followed by Salatiga, Bekasi and Surakarta.

The diverse backgrounds of Indonesians made the topic related to tolerance and religious harmony need to be introduced as early as possible to the population. Several reasons why tolerance is important to be taught from a young age, such as when children reach school age and enter a new school environment, it would be easier for them...
to adapt to their environment and learn not to differentiate their schoolmates (Siyahailatua, 2019). The type of tolerance is important to be taught such as respecting different ethnic, religions, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, languages and genders (Rahmawati & Fatmawati, 2016).

Rahmawati & Fatmawati (2016) stated that topics about tolerance need to be expanded from previously explained differences, but also tolerance in respecting and understanding various physical and mental disabilities. The characteristic of tolerance emphasises appreciating physical and mental imperfections is necessary as the focal point for teaching tolerance in inclusive schools. Several ways could be utilised to raise tolerance, for instance in education, schools implemented multicultural education. Parents also could start educating tolerance through storytelling, accompanying their children while watching television, or the simplest way, providing good examples for their kids when they meet someone different from them (Rahmawati & Fatmawati, 2016; KumparanMOM, 2018). One of the techniques that could be implemented to increase tolerance was Games. Research by Simamora & Nugrahanta (2021) utilised five different types of traditional games as a medium to raise tolerance in children aged 9–12 years old. The result revealed that the reference book which was created based on the five types of traditional games is effective in raising tolerance in children (Simamora & Nugrahanta, 2021).

Based on the arguments above, researchers would be focusing on utilising games as a medium to increase tolerance in an inclusive school in Malang City. Malang City was chosen because a study result by Setara (2022) revealed that Malang City ranked 30 of 94 cities in Indonesia. This result was quite low compared to other big cities in East Java, Surabaya, which ranked 10 from 94 cities in Indonesia (Setara, 2022). The inclusive school was chosen because as time progressed and the number of inclusive schools grew, the understanding of tolerance of diverse physical and mental abilities was necessary.

The game which has been chosen in this study is Step Forward Step Back. Step Forward Step Back is a game which is often used as an ice-breaking game during team-building events. Step Forward Step Back is chosen due to its strength where everyone could follow this game easily regardless of their age, but designed so the participants could identify and reflect what they feel and increase their well-being and empathy (Scouts, n.d; HeartBeatsHate, n.d).

This research aimed to educate inclusive school students regarding the importance of tolerance with others and raising tolerance in children and adolescents. Tolerance is not only respecting cultural, religious, gender, ethnicity, and race differences but also different physical and mental abilities.

**Method**

**Participants**

This activity was held in December 2023. The participants of this activity were 90 junior high school students grades 7 and 8, between 13 and 15 years old at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Malang, Indonesia. Every student in these grades could join this activity, and there was no separation between students from regular or inclusive classes. Initially, 300 participants from grades 7 to 9 were slotted to join this study, however, all grade 9 students had an excursion and not all students in grades 7 and 8 attended the school on the appointed date.

**Procedures**

This activity is a community service agenda. This project is started by interviewing the stakeholders to assess the problems at the partner school. According to the school administrators, there were some issues about tolerance, not only between regular and inclusive students but also between students from high and low-income families. To prevent the exacerbation of this issue, a series of activities were planned. The activities started with a game of Step Forward Step Back. This game was played for 10 minutes, followed by a psychoeducation session. The complete stages for this project are as follows:

1. **Assessing the problem in the partner school**
   At this stage, interviews were conducted at the partner school. Three staff were interviewed (Headmaster and two special needs teachers). The results of the interviews revealed that the topic of tolerance is relevant and necessary for students to be educated in. The stakeholders also offered some ideas to expand the topic, not only tolerance between regular and inclusive students but also between students in different socioeconomic and family settings.

2. **Planning the activities**
   The activity is planned for one day. Initially, the school offered for all students to join this activity, thus the activity would be divided into three sessions, with each session dedicated to each grade. However, on the appointed day, the school confirmed that only 90ish students would join the planned activity because the grade 9 students had a field study and not all grade 7 and 8 attended the school that day because they had an excursion the day before, thus were too tired to come to the school.
3. Game: Step Forward Step Back
Generally, this game is quite simple. The Master of Ceremony would read a statement, and the students were asked to step forward or step back depending on the statement. A total of 16 statements were prepared, but on the appointed day, only 6 were stated out loud due to place constraints. Examples of statements such as “Step forward if you speak Indonesian at home”, “Step back if you have ever been bullied at school” and “Step back if your family has been through some economic difficulties.”. In this session, the authors received some assistance from five undergraduate students from the Faculty of Psychology University of Muhammadiyah Malang, one acted as the Master of Ceremony, whereas the rest of them spread out and stood in line with the students during the game. The undergraduate students previously have been instructed to follow the statement given by the Master of Ceremony if they felt that the statements applied to them. This measure was implemented to assure and persuade students to follow the instructions and not feel over-conscious when the statements were suitable to their experiences.

4. Reflection
After the games, students were asked about their impressions and feelings while playing the games. Four questions were asked to the students as a trigger to share their feelings. These questions aimed to explore their thoughts during and after the game. Examples of questions such as “What do you feel during the game?”, “Is there any question where it takes you a long time to think? Which question is it?”, “For some of you who are experiencing standing alone in front or behind the line, what do you feel during this moment?”. 

5. Psychoeducation
Psychoeducation is defined as the education directed toward people and their families to improve their quality of life by preventing mental illness relapse and restoration of their mental health condition by giving an understanding of symptoms, treatments and prognosis of their situation (Atri & Sharma, 2007; Zhao et al, 2015). The topic of this psychoeducation is related to tolerance in general. Speakers also utilised the results from the reflection session to expand their topic, so the students would find it easier to relate and reflect on their current condition.

6. Enrichment
After the psychoeducation session, the students were invited to share their thoughts. Students are also invited to share their own experiences while they are studying at school, and how the psychoeducation might change their perspective and attitude while befriending their schoolmates. To ensure that the students understand the topic, an additional exercise is given. Two students were asked to write their names using their non-dominant hands and asked about their impressions and difficulties when finishing the given task. This exercise is created as a metaphor for what inclusive students felt when they were different from others, so the regular students would find it easier to relate to what these inclusive students felt daily.

Data Collection
This study utilised a qualitative approach and data collection techniques such as interviews and observation to collect the data and explore the change before and after the games and psychoeducation was given to the students. The observation was conducted during the game and reflection sessions, whereas the interviews were held during the reflection and discussion sessions. All participants were invited to come forward and share their experiences and their feelings during the activities, and eventually, six students voluntarily offered to share their thoughts. A naturalistic observation method is utilised in this study. A naturalistic observation method was an approach where the observer joined specific conditions and observed all the activities without predetermined behaviour of interest in mind (Hintze et al, 2002). This method was chosen due to its ability to observe the behaviour of interest in its original setting directly and did not rely on the self-report method (Eby, 2011). The observation was recorded through a running recording style. Running record style is a method to record behaviour in a detailed, objective manner without any interference, evaluations or interpretations (Bentzen, 2009; Peterson & Elam, n.d). For the interview, an unstructured interview method is chosen. Unstructured interviews are interviews which has more flexibility and open-ended questions, which are suitable for exploratory research and other research dealing with personal perspectives and experiences (Hofsi et al, 2014; Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2021). Unstructured interviews do not mean that the researchers are devoid of any ideas about what questions they should ask, but it means that they do not follow a set of questions and vary in length and depth (Low, 2013). All the obtained data was analysed through phenomenological analysis. The phenomenological analysis focuses on the subjective experience of the narrator’s personal and social situation and understands how people make sense of their own lives and experiences (Emiliussen et al, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Results and Discussion
This project was set to find out whether a combination of game and psychoeducation could increase tolerance and students’ understanding of diversity and being tolerant. The interview and observation results suggested that the game of Step Forward Step Back was able to entice the students to learn more about tolerance and diversity. The
feedback from students implied that they were having fun playing this game, and from this game, they were able to obtain new information about their close friends. However, students felt the game was too short. Initially, the game was planned to be played for 15 minutes, but it was cut short due to the limited space where the game was held, thus the students were not able to freely move forward or backwards.

After the game had finished, the participants were instructed to sit down and gather inside the school mosque. The reflection session was led by Author 1. The speaker would give the students several questions to assist students in reflecting or assessing the meaning of the previously played game, and later give them a chance to share their thoughts out loud. Besides as a medium to explore their thoughts and feelings during the game, this set of questions was utilised to offer some feedback to their schoolmates about students’ experiences while studying at school. One student who felt that they were different from their cohort said that they felt less confident, tended to avoid his friends and was afraid to express his feelings and thoughts. Another student stated that they prefer to gather with friends who have similar stature to them, e.g., shorter, smaller, and have been bullied before. A special needs student expressed that he had been both physically and verbally bullied by his peers by being mocked, pushed on or schoolmates refused to interact with him. This student felt isolated and no one wanted to be his friend.

The reflection process was followed by psychoeducation about the necessity of tolerance and appreciation of diversity between schoolmates. Speakers would talk about how people would encounter diversity and who are different from them, currently and in the future. Speakers also gave a speech about the importance of developing an attitude and behaviour full of empathy, accepting and respecting every difference, and acting fairly to everyone by not isolating people who are different. Students also utilised this session to ask some questions for the speaker and shared what they understood about tolerance and diversity and their or their friends’ experiences of being bullied and ostracised.

The enrichment session is conducted by Author 2 after the psychoeducation to ensure that every participant understands diversity and tolerance. A simple exercise was created and given to two students who voluntarily came forward. These volunteers were instructed to write their names using their non-dominant hands, and later write with their dominant hands. They were asked about what they felt while writing with their non-dominant hands, which they found hard, awkward, and uncomfortable to do a task that was easily done with their dominant hands. This exercise was a metaphor for what special needs students feel every day while trying to assimilate with their environment. The difficulties that students who are different and special needs students were experiencing have increased with the number of physical and verbal bullying or isolation that they have received from their peers.

The enrichment session also enhanced the result of the game and psychoeducation in a concrete way. The simple exercise of writing with their non-dominant hands also offered some illustration to the regular students of what special needs students and students who are different went through and felt in their daily lives. It was hard for these students to do basic tasks such as writing, counting, or understanding topics at school while trying to integrate and befriend their regular friends. This session produced an understanding for regular students and they found it easier to empathise with their special needs cohorts, respect and be tolerant of their friends with physical and mental differences and be able to include their special friends in their friendship circle. Regular students were also more willing to assist their friends with special needs or emotionally support their peers who went through some financial or family issues.

The strengths of this study are the game is easy to implement by anyone regardless of age and anytime as long they have adequate space to move forward and backward. This research could be utilised as a channel for minority or special needs students to express their feelings and experiences while they studied at school, thus helping the teachers conduct assessments and interventions based on their needs. This project was also limited in several ways. First, this research was a preliminary study where there was no quantitative data collected to measure the effectiveness of the method in raising the tolerance of inclusive school students. Second, the authors did not collect demographic data such as age, gender, or grade. The last one was the range of statements which were given during the game session was too broad, from statements about the students’ daily lives, their living and economic situation, and their bullying experiences to discrimination from their environments.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current research was to raise tolerance and give education regarding the importance of tolerance with others in inclusive school students through a combination of games and psychoeducation. This study has revealed that the combination of games and psychoeducation manages to raise the understanding of pupils about the importance of tolerance and respecting diversity and individual differences between schoolmates. Despite the number of limitations this study had, the fact that this set of activities was easy to administer by everyone, it offered an alternative solution of increasing tolerance in students for stakeholders in education areas.
Implication

This study implies that Step Forward Step Back can be developed as an assessment and intervention method at schools in order to improve the tolerance between students. The fact that this method is easy to administer by anyone and suitable for all ages, it could offer an alternative for teachers to assess the rate of tolerance in their schools and the impact of low tolerance on the psychological well-being and the mental health of their students. Further research should focus on developing this model into a quantified psychological intervention and creating a guidebook on the standardised implementation of the games. Further studies need to be carried out to validate the efficacy of this method.

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Authors’ Contributions

DK : Designing and conducting the research, Conducting the preliminary interview, Main speaker for the psychoeducation session, and Writing the manuscript.
YS : Designing and conducting the research, Conducting the preliminary interview, and Main speaker for the enrichment session
AP : Designing and conducting the research, Writing, Editing and Proofreading the manuscript, and Conducting the preliminary interview

Competing Interest

Authors declare there is no competing interest.

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