Enhancing Multicultural Understanding through Educational Cinema-Based Information Services among Seventh-Grade Students at SMA Brigjend Katamso Medan

Fathia Nabila
Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study aims to enhance multicultural understanding through information services using an educational cinema technique among seventh-grade students at Brigjend Katamso Private Junior High School, Medan. The study employed Guidance and Counseling Action Research (GCAR) conducted in two cycles, Cycle I and Cycle II. Each cycle comprised planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, while Cycle II concluded with an evaluation. The participants were 37 students selected through a screening process. Data were collected using a 39-item multicultural understanding test that had undergone validity, reliability, item-difficulty, discrimination, and distractor-effectiveness testing. Data were analyzed descriptively by comparing scores and percentages before and after the educational cinema-based information service. The pre-cycle percentage of multicultural understanding was 40.8%. Following the intervention in Cycle I, it increased to 72%, representing a 31.2-percentage-point increase. In Cycle II, the percentage increased further to 92.2%, representing an additional 20.2-percentage-point increase from Cycle I. Overall, multicultural understanding increased by 51.4 percentage points from the pre-intervention stage to Cycle II. These findings indicate that educational cinema-based information services can be used as a guidance and counseling strategy to strengthen students´multicultural understanding.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received :January 5 2026
Accepted :May 5 2026

KEYWORDS

Information services; Educational cinema; Multicultural understanding

* **Corresponding Author:** Nfathia192@gmail.com
© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Era Scientific Publisher (ERA).
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic country characterized by a very high degree of diversity in ethnicity, religion, language, and culture. Such diversity represents both a national asset and a social challenge that requires individuals to live together peacefully and harmoniously. In education, the capacity to understand, accept, and appreciate diversity needs to be developed from the school years onward. Multicultural education is not limited to knowledge acquisition about diversity; it also seeks to develop attitudes, empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences. Fitrikasari and Andiana (2023) explain that multicultural education is a process of cultivating ways of life characterized by mutual respect, sincerity, and tolerance toward cultural diversity in a pluralistic society.

The issue is important because diversity within a school does not automatically produce inclusive interaction. Preliminary observations conducted by the researcher at SMP Swasta Brigjend Katamso Medan indicated a tendency for students to interact within relatively homogeneous groups based on shared cultural or religious backgrounds. This condition suggests that students' understanding of multicultural values had not developed optimally. If not addressed through appropriate educational services, exclusive interaction patterns may hinder the development of a harmonious and inclusive school climate. The school is strategically positioned to address this issue because it brings students from different cultural and religious backgrounds together within the same social environment.

This problem cannot be adequately addressed through the verbal delivery of concepts alone. Students need learning experiences that connect information about diversity with concrete social

situations. In guidance and counseling, information services can provide relevant knowledge while helping students understand appropriate attitudes and behaviors in social life. One approach that can strengthen such services is educational cinema. Film can present social situations concretely, evoke emotions, facilitate perspective-taking, and provide opportunities for reflection. Banks (2013) emphasizes the importance of multicultural learning that reduces bias and strengthens inclusive social structures.

Previous studies indicate the potential of film and educational cinema in supporting educational and counseling processes. Effendi (2021) reported the use of film media in information services as a means of improving students' learning motivation. More specifically, Iryani and Suriaty (2021) found that educational cinema techniques could improve multicultural awareness among senior high school students. These findings provide a basis for considering educational cinema as relevant to the development of awareness of diversity. However, research specifically examining educational cinema within information services for junior high school students, particularly seventh-grade students in the early transition to adolescence, remains limited.

This gap is important because seventh-grade students have developmental characteristics that differ from those of senior high school students. During early adolescence, students benefit from learning experiences that are engaging, concrete, accessible, and emotionally meaningful. Accordingly, the research problem is not merely whether students know about diversity, but how guidance and counseling services can transform initially limited understanding into a more comprehensive understanding reflected in openness and social interaction.

The novelty of this study lies in the application of educational cinema-based information services within a guidance and counseling action research framework that begins with screening all seventh-grade students and then focuses the intervention on students who require reinforcement of multicultural understanding. Changes in understanding are examined across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II and are complemented by observational data. The contribution therefore lies in a service model that connects needs identification, educational cinema, inter-cycle reflection, and observation of changes in students' responses within a junior high school guidance and counseling context.

Based on these problems and the identified gap, this study aims to enhance students' multicultural understanding through information services using an educational cinema technique among seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Brigjend Katamso Medan. Specifically, the study describes changes in students' understanding from the pre-cycle through Cycle II and describes changes in students' responses during the service.

Method

This study employed Guidance and Counseling Action Research conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. This design enabled findings from each stage to inform improvements to the subsequent service. The study was conducted among seventh-grade students at SMP Brigjend Katamso Medan during the 2025/2026 academic year.

The population consisted of 196 seventh-grade students distributed across five classes. During the pre-cycle, all students completed a multicultural understanding test for screening purposes. Based on the screening results and the need for service reinforcement, 37 students were selected as research participants. This selection ensured that the intervention was focused on students who required improvement in multicultural understanding.

The main instrument was a 39-item multicultural understanding test. Each item was scored 1 for a correct answer and 0 for an incorrect answer. As reported in the original study, the instrument had undergone validity, reliability, item-difficulty, discrimination, and distractor-effectiveness testing. Supporting data were obtained through observations of the service implementation and students' responses, including BMB3 data used to strengthen interpretation of changes during the intervention.

Test scores were classified into three levels. The maximum score was calculated as 39 items × 1 = 39, while the minimum score was 39 items × 0 = 0. Thus, the score range was 39 − 0 = 39. The category interval was calculated using the formula I = R / K, where I is the interval, R is the range, and K is the number of categories. Because there were three categories, I = 39 / 3 = 13. Accordingly, scores of 0–13 were classified as low, 14–26 as moderate, and 27–39 as high.

Data were analyzed descriptively by comparing mean scores, percentages, and category distributions across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II. Observation data served as supporting evidence to examine changes in engagement, responses, openness, and students' ability to relate the material to diversity. Test and observation findings were compared as a form of data triangulation. The success indicator was based on improved understanding and achievement of the high category among the research participants.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Multicultural Understanding Categories

Score	Category
0–13	Low
14–26	Moderate
27–39	High

Table 2. Pre-Cycle Multicultural Understanding Categories

Score	Frequency	Category
0–13	11	Low
14–26	26	Moderate
27–39	0	High

Table 3. Cycle I Multicultural Understanding Categories

Score	Frequency	Category
0–13	0	Low
14–26	13	Moderate
27–39	24	High

Table 4. Cycle II Multicultural Understanding Categories

Score	Frequency	Category
0–13	0	Low
14–26	0	Moderate
27–39	37	High

Table 1 provides the basis for interpreting changes in students' multicultural understanding at each stage of the study. The three-category classification makes changes in the distribution of scores visible in addition to changes in mean scores and percentages.

At the pre-cycle stage, 11 students were in the low category and 26 were in the moderate category, while none reached the high category. This condition indicates that all participants required reinforcement of their multicultural understanding. The mean score among the 37 students was 15.9, equivalent to 40.8%. These findings provided the basis for implementing the educational cinema-based information service.

Following the intervention in Cycle I, the score distribution changed. No students remained in the low category; 13 students were in the moderate category and 24 had reached the high category. The mean score increased to 27.92, with a percentage of 72%. Although this represented substantial progress, the predetermined success indicator had not yet been met, so the intervention continued into Cycle II.

In Cycle II, all 37 students were classified in the high category. No students remained in the low or moderate categories. The mean score increased to 35.97, corresponding to 92.2%. Thus, from the pre-cycle to Cycle II, the percentage increased by 51.4 percentage points. The pattern indicates consistent improvement following the educational cinema-based information service and the refinement of the intervention based on reflection from the previous cycle.

Observation and BMB3 findings reinforced the test results. In Cycle I, students began to understand cultural diversity, but their understanding was still largely limited to visible aspects such as traditional clothing and regional dances. Students also showed relatively passive tolerance, selective interaction, and difficulty explaining the values and philosophies underlying diversity. In Cycle II, students became more active in discussion, more open in expressing their views, and better able to connect the material with values, language, ways of life, and more diverse social experiences.

The increase in multicultural understanding from the pre-cycle through Cycle II indicates that educational cinema-based information services provided students with a more concrete learning experience. At baseline, all participants were in the low or moderate categories, with a mean score

of 15.9 or 40.8%. This condition suggests that the diversity present in the school environment had not yet been fully translated into an adequate understanding of tolerance, respect, and living together. This finding is consistent with Fitrikasari and Andiana (2023), who emphasize that multicultural education should foster social awareness and respect for differences rather than merely transmit knowledge about culture.

The change observed in Cycle I indicates that delivering information through educational cinema began to shift students' understanding. The mean score increased from 15.9 to 27.92, while the percentage rose from 40.8% to 72%. Categorically, no students remained in the low category and 24 students had reached the high category. This change suggests that film can make abstract material about diversity more concrete and accessible. The presentation of characters, social situations, conflicts, and resolutions provides a context through which students can observe others' experiences and discuss the meaning of differences. This finding is consistent with Effendi (2021) regarding the use of film media in information services and with Iryani and Suriaty (2021), who found that educational cinema could increase multicultural awareness.

However, the Cycle I findings also indicate that the increase in scores did not necessarily represent a fully developed way of understanding diversity. Observational findings showed that students' understanding remained focused largely on readily visible characteristics, such as traditional clothing and regional dances. Tolerance was still relatively passive and interaction across groups had not fully developed. This is important because multicultural understanding extends beyond recognizing differences to include understanding the values, perspectives, and experiences of other groups. Within Bennett's (1993) framework, this condition can be understood as an early stage of development toward acceptance and adaptation. Banks (2008), meanwhile, positions multicultural education as a process that needs to move beyond adding cultural information toward changing how students understand and respond to diversity.

Reflection on the Cycle I condition provided the basis for continuing the intervention into Cycle II. Repeated exposure to the service gave students opportunities to process the information again, discuss it, ask questions, and connect the film content with their lived experiences. In Cycle II, the mean score increased to 35.97 and the percentage reached 92.2%, with all students classified in the high category. The change was evident not only in test scores but also in students' responses during the service. Students became more open, more willing to express their views, better able to explain the material, and more capable of relating diversity to values, language, ways of life, and social experiences.

From a theoretical perspective, these changes can be explained through the representational and reflective functions of cinema. Film enables students to encounter social experiences from perspectives that may differ from their own. Seeing, emotionally engaging with, and discussing characters' experiences may help students develop more contextual and empathetic understanding. Lee and Priester (2015) demonstrated that vicarious experiences through film can support learning about cross-cultural experiences. Popa et al. (2021) likewise showed that film can be used educationally to support openness toward other cultures. Thus, the strength of educational cinema in this study lies not simply in showing films, but in using films as prompts for discussion and reflection within an information service.

The changes in Cycle II can also be understood as movement from cognitive understanding toward affective and behavioral dimensions. Cognitively, students moved beyond recognizing visible differences to understanding the values and norms underlying diversity. Affectively, they displayed greater openness, empathy, and respect. Behaviorally, they began to show more inclusive patterns of interaction. These changes are consistent with the acceptance and adaptation stages in Bennett's (1993) model and with the transformative approach to multicultural education described by Banks and Banks (2010).

From a guidance and counseling perspective, the findings suggest that information services can be developed not merely as a means of delivering information but as a learning experience that allows students to reflect on their attitudes and behavior. Educational cinema provides a media variation that is relevant to the characteristics of early adolescents, while discussion and reflection help connect the film's messages with students' social situations. This pattern may serve as an alternative for school counselors addressing intergroup interaction, tolerance, and acceptance of diversity.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted in accordance with the research design. This

study used GCAR with 37 students selected through screening in a single school; therefore, the observed improvement cannot be directly generalized to all junior high school students or interpreted as causal evidence equivalent to a controlled experiment. In addition, the primary data came from a test supported by observation, so long-term changes in attitudes and behavior require further investigation using follow-up measurements. These limitations do not diminish the practical value of the study but indicate the need for future research involving larger samples, comparison groups, and follow-up assessments to examine the sustainability of the changes.

Overall, the increase from 40.8% at pre-cycle to 72% in Cycle I and 92.2% in Cycle II, together with changes in students' responses, indicates that educational cinema-based information services have strong potential as a strategy for developing multicultural understanding within school guidance and counseling. The main contribution of this study lies in a service pattern that integrates needs screening, educational cinema, discussion and reflection, action cycles, and observation of students' responses. This pattern provides a practical basis for school counselors to develop multicultural services that are more contextual, engaging, and oriented toward changes in students' understanding and participation.

Conlusion

Based on the findings, educational cinema-based information services were associated with increased multicultural understanding among seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Brigjend Katamso Medan. At the pre-cycle stage, the mean score was 15.9 or 40.8%; in Cycle I it increased to 27.92 or 72%; and in Cycle II it increased to 35.97 or 92.2%. The category distribution also changed from 11 students in the low category and 26 in the moderate category at pre-cycle to all 37 students being classified in the high category in Cycle II. Observation findings indicated corresponding changes in openness, participation, willingness to express opinions, and the ability to relate the material to experiences of diversity. These findings support the use of educational cinema-based information services as an alternative guidance and counseling service for strengthening multicultural understanding, while recognizing the limitations of a one-group action research design and the context-specific nature of the study.

References

Banks, J. A. (2008). An introduction to multicultural education (4th ed.). Pearson.

Banks, J. A. (2013). Multicultural education: Characteristics and goals. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives. Wiley.

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (2010). Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives (7th ed.). Wiley.

Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), Education for the intercultural experience (pp. 21–71). Intercultural Press.

Dewi, R. (2024). Guidance and counseling action research. Medan.

Effendi, B. (2021). The use of film media in information services to improve students' learning motivation. Jurnal Pamomong, 2(1), 59–68.

Fitrikasari, M., & Andiana, D. (2023). The importance of multiculturalism in educational institutions. Jurnal Belaindika: Pembelajaran dan Inovasi Pendidikan, 5(2), 35–42.

Haryoko, S. (2020). Qualitative research data analysis: Concepts, techniques, and procedures. UNM Press.

Iryani, I. (2020). Development of educational cinema technique instruments to increase multicultural awareness of 11th-grade students at SMA Isen Mulang Palangka Raya (Undergraduate thesis, Palangka Raya University, Indonesia).

Iryani, I., & Suriaty, M. (2021). Group counseling using educational cinema techniques to increase multicultural awareness of 11th-grade students at SMA Isen Mulang Palangka Raya. Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling Pandohop, 1(2), 31–36.

Lee, S. A., & Priester, P. E. (2015). Increasing multicultural understanding and diversity appreciation through a film-based intervention. Journal of Counseling & Development, 93(3), 253–262.

Liana, W. K. (2023). The effect of classical guidance using short films on students' social interaction

at SMA Negeri 2 Kota Jambi (Undergraduate thesis, Jambi University, Indonesia).
Masri, S. (2020). Multicultural awareness, cinema education techniques, and bibliotherapy. Aksara Timur.
Nasution, H. S., & Abdillah. (2019). Guidance and counseling: Concepts, theories, and applications. LPPI.
Nurasmawi, & Ristiliana. (2021). Multicultural education. Asa Riau.
Popa, N. L., Salău, M., & Bălău, C. (2021). Using film in education to develop openness toward other cultures. Frontiers in Psychology, 12, 750904.
Purba, P., et al. (2021). Classroom action research. Yayasan Kita Menulis.
Queensland Health. (2008). Health starts in life. http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/saphs/hsil_ful_doc.pdf
Sugiyono. (2017). Research methods: Quantitative, qualitative, and R&D approaches. Alfabeta.
Wakano, A. (2018). Introduction to multiculturalism. IAIN Ambon Press.
Widodo, S., et al. (2023). Textbook of research methods. Science Techno.
Wina, S. (2013). Educational research. Kencana.