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Cultivating Nationalism Through Regional Songs in Early Childhood Education: A Qualitative Exploration and the 4C Pedagogical Model

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ABSTRACT

In early childhood education, cultivating nationalism and cultural identity requires translating abstract civic values into foundational habits by transforming traditional songs into concrete, multimodal learning experiences. However, there is a pressing need to actively mediate cultural meaning to counterbalance the homogenizing impacts of globalized digital media on young learners. Therefore, this qualitative study investigates the micro-pedagogical mechanisms used to cultivate nationalism and cultural identity through the strategic integration of regional folk songs at Insan Cendekia Kindergarten, Surakarta. The research utilizes a reflexive thematic analysis of practitioner experiences. The empirical findings highlight six key operational themes, spanning from developmentally appropriate planning and authentic assessment to navigating the challenges of digital culture. These mechanisms culminate in the proposed 4C Pedagogical Model: Cultural Contextualization, Corporeal and Multisensory Engagement, Connection of Values to Action, and Continuity between School and Home. The study concludes that the didactic power of regional songs extends far beyond musical performance; its success depends heavily on the educator's ability to mediate cultural meaning actively. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the need to foster a strong school-family ecosystem to mitigate the homogenizing effects of global digital media on early childhood character education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of early childhood education, the deliberate cultivation of national identity and robust character is increasingly recognized as a foundational pillar of holistic cognitive, social, and emotional development [1], [2]. The formative years of a child's life lay the foundation for how individuals perceive themselves as integral, contributing members of a broader cultural and national community. To resonate

with the preoperational developmental schema of a young learner, nationalism cannot be disseminated as an abstract geopolitical construct; rather, it must be translated into tangible, observable, and actionable daily experiences [3]. These experiences manifest practically as the cognitive recognition of national symbols, affective appreciation of diverse backgrounds, and adherence to social order during collective activities [4], [5]. This pedagogical orientation aligns seamlessly with contemporary global and national curricular trajectories, particularly the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile) in Indonesia, which empowers early childhood institutions to engineer contextualized learning paradigms that reflect their unique sociocultural demographics [6], [7], [8]. Within this localized context, regional folk songs functioning as an enduring repository for human experience and shared societal values [9], [10] emerge as a profoundly potent medium for bridging the cognitive gap between the abstract ideals of national unity and the concrete, lived experiences of the young child [11], [12].

Despite the demonstrable pedagogical potential of regional songs, their preservation, transmission, and use in modern educational and familial environments face formidable challenges, driven by the ubiquitous influence of digital culture and globalization [18]. The contemporary child is perpetually immersed in a digital ecosystem, effortlessly accessing homogenized and culturally detached popular content, while the intergenerational transmission of traditional music within the family unit experiences a precipitous decline [19], [20]. Concurrently, early childhood educators encounter a parallel set of systemic and pedagogical hurdles, including a highly restricted repertoire of regional songs, linguistic complexities in regional dialects, a severe dearth of appropriate instructional media, and the persistent challenge of securing consistent parental involvement [21], [22]. Furthermore, the implementation of local content curricula is frequently suboptimal, often reduced to rote memorization of language devoid of cultural context, threatening to sever the child's connection to their immediate sociocultural environment [23], [24].

Extant literature robustly corroborates the efficacy of traditional music and localized cultural artifacts in fostering comprehensive character development [13]. Systematic literature reviews indicate that audiovisual media and pedagogical approaches grounded in regional musical traditions substantially bolster character traits such as independence, discipline, patriotism, and a robust cooperative ethic [14], [15]. The transmission of these cultural artifacts serves as a mechanism of subaltern resilience, anchoring children in their specific ethnic identities while preparing them for broader national interactions [16], thereby building upon the synthesis of diverse subnational cultural expressions that embody the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* [17]. However, while a substantial body of research has investigated these overarching impacts, existing studies predominantly focus on quantitative outcomes, media efficacy, or high-level theoretical postulations regarding patriotism and civic duty [25]. For instance, methodologies such as Latent Growth Modeling have been applied to demonstrate overall increases in nationalism among elementary students following targeted interventions [26].

Consequently, there remains a conspicuous lacuna in the literature regarding the intricate, day-to-day micro-pedagogical mechanisms through which educators actually operationalize these songs to cultivate a localized, internalized sense of nationalism in the

highly dynamic early childhood environment. A granular understanding of how regional songs are deliberately selected, culturally contextualized, physically enacted, linguistically decoded, and authentically assessed is urgently required. Furthermore, a critical examination of song selection is necessary to ensure that the chosen materials promote positive cultural identity rather than inadvertently perpetuating historical narratives of marginalization, an issue noted in broader discourses [27]. Without this detailed operational blueprint, the integration of regional music risks being reduced to superficial interludes or rote memorization, utterly devoid of genuine socioemotional resonance or character-building efficacy.

To address this critical gap, this research diverges from overarching quantitative evaluations by conducting an in-depth qualitative examination of the pedagogical praxis at Insan Cendekia Kindergarten in Surakarta, Central Java. This institution is notable for its deliberate, structured integration of diverse regional songs (e.g., *Ampar-Ampar Pisang*, *Manuk Dadali*, *Padang Bulan*) into its core daily curriculum. The novelty of this study lies in its granular focus on micro-pedagogical processes; rather than attempting to quantify the statistical impact of interventions, this investigation seeks to unpack the complex, qualitative processes and profound pedagogical meanings constructed by the educator on the front lines of cultural transmission [29]. The instructional approach observed uniquely extends beyond mere vocalization, intricately weaving musical material with visual artifacts, narrative storytelling, kinetic play, and the explicit articulation of daily civic virtues [28].

Specifically, the objectives of this comprehensive study are to systematically describe and theoretically interpret: (1) the strategic planning and classroom implementation of nationalism education through regional songs; (2) the nuances of child development across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains as perceived by the educator; (3) the authentic assessment methodologies utilized, alongside the operational constraints and systemic support mechanisms; and (4) the synthesis of these micro-pedagogical mechanisms into a robust, practical framework.

The culmination of this research introduces the 4C Pedagogical Model Cultural Contextualization, Corporeal and Multisensory Engagement, Connection of Values to Action, and Continuity between School and Home. This model provides a novel, evidence-based paradigm for early childhood educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, demonstrating how traditional musical objects can be effectively transformed into dynamic instruments of cultural identity and national character to counterbalance the homogenizing impacts of globalized digital media.

2. METHOD

To thoroughly achieve the research objectives, a descriptive qualitative research design was rigorously employed. This methodological framework was purposefully selected for its unparalleled capacity to facilitate an in-depth exploration and nuanced comprehension of complex, multifaceted social phenomena in their naturalistic settings [30], [31]. In the specific context of early childhood education, where the nuances of pedagogical delivery, emotional resonance, and child reception are highly subjective and deeply embedded in daily, unscripted interactions, qualitative inquiry allows for the capture of rich, textured

narratives that quantitative metrics or standardized testing frequently obscure. The study focused on the lived experiences, operational processes, and subjective meaning-making of an educator engaged in the daily cultivation of nationalism through regional music at Insan Cendekia Kindergarten in Surakarta. The epistemological stance of this research posits that educational reality is socially constructed through practitioners' localized practices, interpretations, and immediate environmental adaptations [32].

The primary informant for this intensive case study was purposively selected based on their direct, continuous, and specialized involvement in the conceptualization, planning, execution, and evaluation of the regional song learning modules [33]. While quantitative studies prioritize large sample sizes for generalizability, deep qualitative explorations of pedagogical mechanisms often rely on key informants who serve as central nodes of data generation [34]. This specific educator possessed intimate, experiential knowledge of curating musical materials, structuring pedagogical activities, longitudinally observing student responses, and navigating systemic obstacles and support structures. By focusing deeply on a highly engaged practitioner, the research uncovers the micro-pedagogical decisions that dictate the success or failure of cultural integration.

Data were collected through the deployment of a highly structured, comprehensive written interview instrument comprising 25 carefully calibrated questions. This instrument was analytically divided into seven core domains designed to capture the holistic lifecycle of the pedagogical intervention systematically: (1) the parameters of lesson planning and curricular alignment; (2) the granular details of classroom implementation and instructional strategies; (3) the longitudinal observation of child development across cognitive, affective, and behavioral spheres; (4) the strategies for authentic evaluation and assessment; (5) the practical, linguistic, and cultural constraints encountered; (6) the institutional and familial support systems; and (7) the strategic hopes for future programmatic expansion and policy support. Within qualitative paradigms, the researcher functions as the primary instrument of interpretation, determining the analytical focus, contextualizing responses against existing literature, and synthesizing thematic structures. At the same time, the structured interview protocol serves as an essential scaffolding mechanism to ensure exhaustive data coverage and thematic consistency [35].

The analytical phase of the research was driven by the Reflexive Thematic Analysis framework conceptualized by Braun and Clarke (2021) [36]. This sophisticated method is particularly suited for interrogating subjective experiences and social practices, moving beyond mere descriptive summation to generate latent, interpretative insights that connect micro-practices to macro-theoretical concepts. The analysis proceeded through six iterative and meticulously documented stages:

1. Data Familiarization: The researchers engaged in repeated, immersive readings of the entire corpus of the informant's written responses to establish a profound connection with the data's texture, nuances, and underlying sentiments.
2. Initial Coding: Distinct units of meaning were systematically labeled with preliminary codes. These codes captured discrete pedagogical actions and observations, such as "curating songs aligned with weekly themes," "deploying cultural aperception,"

"integrating simple kinetic movements," "observing expressions of cultural pride," and "navigating the dominance of viral digital content".

3. Theme Generation: The initial codes were conceptually clustered, revealing broader patterns of meaning that coalesced into candidate themes reflecting the pedagogical lifecycle.
4. Theme Review: The candidate themes were rigorously cross-examined against the foundational data extracts and the entire data corpus to ensure fidelity, resonance, and comprehensive coverage of the research phenomena.
5. Theme Definition and Naming: Each validated theme was subjected to a detailed conceptual definition, establishing its precise analytical boundaries and formulating a concise, representative nomenclature.
6. Report Production: The finalized themes were synthesized into a cohesive, analytical narrative, deeply interwoven with established theoretical concepts pertaining to character education, multiculturalism, Latent Growth Modeling of nationalism, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

To definitively establish the trustworthiness, credibility, and rigor of the interpretive findings, several methodological safeguards were implemented [36]. The data was subjected to cyclical rereadings, and a robust relational matrix was constructed to meticulously map the direct linkages between the interview prompts, specific data extracts, generated codes, and final themes. Crucially, the analysis consciously preserved and highlighted negative cases, variations, and limitations within the data [37]. For instance, the findings explicitly detail instances of initial resistance, apathy, or shyness towards regional songs, the differential pacing of developmental changes among individuals, and the systemic failure to achieve optimal parental engagement. This steadfast commitment to reporting complexities and contradictions prevents the generation of a sanitized, overly generalized narrative, thereby significantly enhancing the study's authenticity. Thick descriptions of the educational context and pedagogical actions are provided throughout the report, empowering the reader to rigorously evaluate the transferability of the findings to diverse early childhood educational settings globally [36], [38].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

This section presents the findings obtained from the qualitative data analysis, detailing the thematic evolution and micro-pedagogical mechanisms used to cultivate nationalism through regional songs in an early childhood setting. The research focused on the lived experiences and pedagogical praxis of a highly engaged early childhood educator at Insan Cendekia Kindergarten, Surakarta. The primary informant was purposefully selected for their direct, continuous, and specialized involvement in conceptualizing, planning, executing, and evaluating regional song-learning modules within a naturalistic classroom environment.

The rigorous application of reflexive thematic analysis to the data corpus yielded six distinct, deeply interrelated themes spanning the pedagogical trajectory from initial planning

4930

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to familial integration. A synthesized overview of these empirical findings and their core operational practices is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Synthesized Overview of Empirical Findings

Theme	Key Pedagogical Practices	Perceived Indicators of Development
Planning based on learning outcomes	Establishing character objectives, curating simple melodies, developing modules, and vetting song origins.	Selection of songs strictly aligned with themes, age appropriateness, and positive moral messaging.
Transforming songs into multimodal experiences	Aperception, active listening, vocal mimicking, kinetic movement, storytelling, and visual aids.	Increased student engagement, enhanced memory retention, and cognitive recognition of origins.
Gradual habituation linking knowledge and action	Pedagogical repetition and explicit linking of lyrical meaning to daily classroom behaviors.	Manifestations of cultural pride, self-confidence, peer cooperation, and respect for diversity.
Authentic assessment of nationalism indicators	Real-time observation, dialogic inquiry, observation rubrics, anecdotal record-keeping.	Demonstrated enthusiasm, adherence to social order, tolerance, and cooperative play.
Contestation with digital culture & barriers	Linguistic translation, integration of modern audiovisual media, and use of simple instrumentation.	Student interest escalates when traditional material is interactive and competitive with digital stimuli.
Ecosystem continuity: Bridging school and home	Leveraging institutional infrastructure while advocating for continued cultural practice within the family.	Routine institutional programming and active family engagement are recognized as critical.

1. Planning Based on Learning Outcomes and Developmental Appropriateness

The data reveal that song curation is strictly governed by developmental appropriateness and moral connectivity. The educator engineered comprehensive instructional modules (*modul ajar*) seeking compositions with simple, accessible melodies and positive prosocial messages, deliberately integrated into specific academic themes (e.g., Kartini Day) [39].

2. Transforming Songs into Multimodal Cultural Experiences

The execution follows a multimodal sequence engineered to maximize sensory engagement. The instruction begins with profound cultural awareness through visual stimuli (traditional architecture, garments, maps), followed by auditory mimicry and kinesthetic engagement through rhythmic movements and traditional games.

3. Gradual Habituation Linking Knowledge, Affect, and Action

The educator's observations document a profound three-tiered developmental transformation:

- Cognitive Layer: Children successfully recognized diverse musical forms and geographic origins (e.g., *Gundul-Gundul Pacul* from Central Java).
- Affective Layer: Exhibited genuine cultural pride and elevated self-confidence, especially when wearing traditional garments.
- Behavioral Layer: Enhanced classroom cohesion, marked by peer assistance, adherence to discipline, and respect for interpersonal differences.

4. Authentic Assessment of Nationalism Indicators

Evidence of moral progression was systematically gathered during organic, real-world classroom situations. The primary evaluation instruments included structured behavioral observations, real-time dialogic inquiry, and meticulous anecdotal records, allowing the educator to capture the non-linear emergence of civic behaviors.

5. Contestation with Digital Culture and Implementation Barriers

Logistical and sociocultural constraints significantly impacted implementation. The educator navigated complex regional dialects and students' profound lack of familiarity with traditional music by translating obscure lyrics into age-appropriate national language and deploying modern digital audiovisual aids alongside simple acoustic instrumentation.

6. Ecosystem Continuity: Bridging School and Home

While the kindergarten demonstrated robust institutional support (providing physical media and integrating performances into school festivals), familial engagement remained unstructured. The institution's outreach was largely limited to passive encouragement, creating a vulnerability in the intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage.

The culmination of these thematic mechanisms resulted in the formulation of the 4C Pedagogical Model, indicating that optimal character outcomes are achieved when four pedagogical vectors operate sequentially: Cultural Contextualization (C_1), Corporeal and Multisensory Engagement (C_2), Connection of Values to Action (C_3), and Continuity between School and Home (C_4).

3.2. Discussion

This study demonstrates that the didactic power of regional songs in early childhood education extends far beyond musical performance. The successful cultivation of nationalism and cultural identity relies heavily on the educator's deliberate application of structured, multimodal pedagogy, encapsulated in the 4C Pedagogical Model, and on active mediation of cultural meaning.

The findings reveal that nationalism in early childhood cannot be taught as an abstract doctrine; it must be actively translated into micro-level, observable competencies [40]. The integration of physical movements, visual artifacts, and storytelling functions as a vital cognitive tool that concretizes abstract meanings, echoing the principles of Reggio-inspired music ateliers. Within the theoretical framework of play-based learning and Vygotskian sociocultural theory [41], [42], this fusion of bodily activity and symbolic representation empowers children to construct complex cultural concepts through unified, embodied experiences. Furthermore, fostering what developmental psychologists term "emotional competence" [43] is achieved by tethering song lyrics directly to actionable behaviors within the child's locus of control (e.g., waiting for one's turn, assisting a peer).

The existing literature robustly acknowledges the value of song-based audiovisual tools in character formation; however, previous quantitative studies using Latent Growth Modeling to track nationalism [26] often assume that character traits automatically increase

following exposure. This research provides a critical nuance: behavioral changes are not an automatic byproduct of lyrical exposure but require deliberate pedagogical tethering. Moreover, the careful curation of songs observed in this study implicitly guards against the introduction of problematic or exclusionary subtexts, addressing critical concerns raised in broader discourses about the uncritical use of traditional folk music [27].

A significant, unexpected finding was the children's initial apathy, unfamiliarity, and shyness toward their own regional heritage [44]. This resistance reflects a deep alienation driven by ubiquitous digital ecosystems and a precipitous decline in familial intergenerational transmission [18], [19], [20]. However, rather than adopting an adversarial posture toward modern technology, the educator effectively neutralized this apathy by gamifying the experience and leveraging digital platforms as dynamic re-introduction tools, proving that cultural renaissance in the classroom requires engaging on the children's modern sensory terms.

Implications of the Study

- a) Theoretical Implications: The synthesis of the findings mathematically conceptualizes the efficacy of nationalism education (E_N) as $E_N = f(C_1, C_2, C_3, C_4)$, providing a robust, sequential framework for understanding how static cultural artifacts are transformed into active civic character traits.
- b) Practical Implications: Early childhood practitioners must aggressively stimulate multiple sensory pathways to compete with digital stimuli. Furthermore, assessing abstract constructs like nationalism requires transitioning from general observation to highly granular, tiered behavioral rubrics to ensure empirical rigor. Schools must also architect innovative, structured pathways for family involvement (e.g., family-based singing challenges) to transform parents from passive observers to active co-creators.
- c) Policy Implications: The systemic failure of local content curricula under regional autonomy laws [23] underscores the urgent need for national regulatory bodies to provide standardized instructional media and to invest heavily in cultural competency training for early childhood educators.

While offering deep insights, this qualitative study relies heavily on the subjective experiences and observational reports of a single educator within a specific institutional context in Central Java. Consequently, the findings are subject to individual pedagogical biases and may not entirely represent the diverse infrastructural realities of schools across the broader Indonesian archipelago.

To address these limitations, future research must prioritize aggressive data triangulation, incorporating direct child observations, parental feedback, and physical artifacts. Furthermore, multisite investigations across diverse socio-geographic regions and longitudinal studies are necessary to rigorously validate the long-term efficacy, adaptability, and scalability of the proposed 4C Pedagogical Model.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the micro-pedagogical mechanisms by which early childhood educators intentionally instill national identity and cultural character in young

learners through regional folk songs. The findings demonstrate that effective cultural transmission relies on a highly structured, multimodal pedagogical approach rather than passive listening. By integrating storytelling, kinesthetic movement, and interactive games, educators successfully transformed traditional songs into dynamic cultural experiences, a process synthesized into the proposed 4C Pedagogical Model: Cultural Contextualization, Corporeal and Multisensory Engagement, Connection of Values to Action, and Continuity between School and Home. Ultimately, the study concludes that regional songs are powerful instruments for cultivating nationalism and countering digital homogenization, provided educators actively mediate cultural meaning to foster cognitive recognition, emotional pride, and cooperative social behavior. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature by shifting the focus from macro-level quantitative impacts to the granular, day-to-day operationalization of localized cultural artifacts. Practically, institutions are encouraged to implement deep-immersion programs, such as a "One Song, One Culture" initiative, while policymakers must prioritize systemic investments in cultural competency training and structured parental engagement frameworks. Despite these insights, this qualitative investigation is limited by its reliance on subjective observational reports from a single institutional context. Therefore, future research should prioritize rigorous data triangulation, multisite investigations across diverse socio-geographic regions, and longitudinal studies to empirically validate the long-term efficacy and scalability of the 4C Pedagogical Model.

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