



THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHENING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN EDUCATION TO MANAGE CHARACTER BUILDING IN THE ALPHA GENERATION

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Abstract:

This study aims to determine the importance of strengthening national identity in education to manage character building in the alpha generation. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach in one of the public schools. The participants in this study amounted to 4 students and 8 teachers. Data analysis used an interactive model from Miles and Huberman through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that strengthening national identity in education has a positive impact on character building for the alpha generation. This can be seen from the increase in student characters such as being independent, caring for friends, being able to work together and also being able to respect and appreciate religious differences and manners that are increasing. These characters are formed through culture-based learning at school.

Keywords: *Alpha generation, education management, character building*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a unitary state with cultural, religious and ethnic diversity that requires a strong foundation to maintain unity and togetherness. This is a factor that causes Indonesia to face various challenges and dynamics in shaping and building a strong national identity. Diversity that is not managed wisely will lead to various conflicts and can also be a source of division in it, whereas this diversity should be a strong foundation and foundation in uniting the Indonesian nation. Indonesia has a special characteristic that has become the national identity of the Indonesian people, namely diversity. Therefore, it is important to have a strong bond of national identity to achieve a just, prosperous and equitable society (Abdusshomad, 2024).

National values, such as Pancasila, are an important foundation in building a strong national identity. Pancasila plays an important role in strengthening the identity of the Indonesian nation. Efforts to preserve the nation's identity can be done in various ways, one of which is by implementing the values contained in Pancasila (Yohamintin & Widiansyah, 2024). Pancasila reflects values, norms and culture that show the nature of mutual cooperation and mutual assistance, togetherness, unity, diversity, tolerance to others, empathy for people in need, friendliness, courtesy, mutual respect and appreciation have become the identity of the Indonesian nation. This can be found and seen from the lives of Indonesian people through various tribes, customs and regions, with various languages, cultures and religions (Srihadi et al., 2024). By putting the values of Pancasila as the basis of character education, we can ensure that Indonesian children grow up to be people who are not only smart and talented, but also noble and virtuous (Mutsaqofah et al., 2024).

However, in the era of advanced globalization, challenges to national identity are increasingly complex to maintain these values. This often makes the younger generation, especially the alpha generation, vulnerable to outside influences that can shift or even obscure local values and culture that have long become the nation's identity. National problems are not far from the decline of national cultural values and nationality. Currently, various activities such as mutual cooperation are rare, the deliberation system is no longer used as a decision-making tool which is then replaced by a voting system and the culture of politeness, tolerance, social solidarity, and respect for one another has been lost (Fathiniah & Oktarina, 2023).

In this context, education has a very strategic role in strengthening national identity, as well as forming a strong and responsible character. According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation and state (Kemdikbud, 2003). Alpha generation children who can be said to be the next generation of the nation need a strong foundation to build a strong character and noble character.

Therefore, in facing the challenges and problems that arise in the current era of globalization, strengthening national identity through national values such as Pancasila becomes very important in building children's character. Strengthening the role of national identity in shaping national character also plays an important role in shaping the values of humanity, justice, and equality, which are the basis for an inclusive and equitable society (Radeisyah et al., 2024).

Education that focuses on character building and strengthening national identity has a very important role. Some steps that need to be taken to strengthen national identity are to increase self-awareness of culture. In this case, schools have an important role by organizing various activities such as education, art performances, and others as part of cultural preservation efforts. In addition, individuals also need to have a high self-awareness of their regional culture (Zam Zarinah et al., 2024).

Thus, this research aims to find out the importance of strengthening national identity in education to manage character building in the alpha generation which focuses on the positive impact of strengthening national identity in education in building character in elementary school-age children or the alpha generation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted at SD Negeri Sumber Jaya 04, which is located in South Tambun District, Bekasi Regency. The type of research used is qualitative. According to Creswell (2016), qualitative research is a type of research that aims to explore and understand the meaning of the experiences of a number of individuals or groups originating from social problems. This research uses a case study approach that focuses on a particular problem (Creswell, 2016). Case study is a research method that can be applied in various fields, where researchers conduct in-depth analysis of a case, collect data thoroughly, and use various data collection procedures according to a predetermined time. The case being analyzed can be an event, activity, process, or program (Creswell, 2016). This approach deals with the subject's view of the events he or she faces. The approach tries to understand the various facts of a case carried out according to the research to be researched based on existing data related to "The importance of strengthening national identity in education to manage character building in the alpha generation". The informants in this research are grade 1 and grade 4 teachers, as well as several students at SD Negeri Sumber Jaya 04

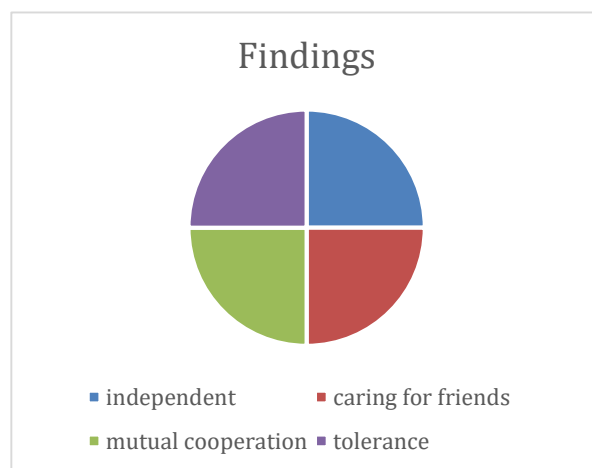
The data collection techniques in this research are observation, interview, and documentation. In the early stages, researchers conducted preliminary observations with a literature review by looking for various sources of relevant articles. Research data analysis using the interactive model from Miles and Huberman, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. In this research, researchers

collected data by searching, recording and collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation with teachers and students in the schools we researched. Furthermore, researchers reduce data to summarize and select all data regarding the importance of strengthening national identity in education to manage character building in the alpha generation, then the data is categorized into certain themes in accordance with the formulation of the problem that researchers research such as the positive impact of strengthening national identity in building character in the alpha generation. Furthermore, researchers present data in the form of narratives or descriptions in data exposure and data verification, namely drawing conclusions and verification (Sugiyono, 2019).

This research uses triangulation of sources and techniques for data validity. Triangulation of sources is comparing from several sources so that the validity of the data will be known, researchers obtained sources from eight teachers, namely four grade 1 teachers and four grade 4 teachers, and four students. While triangulation of techniques is an examination of the validity of data carried out by interview, observation, and documentation to obtain valid data (Sugiyono, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research conducted, researchers obtained information that strengthening national identity can affect the character building of elementary school-age children or the alpha generation, which has a positive impact on character building for students at the school. This can be seen from the increase in student characters such as independence, caring for friends, being able to work together and also being able to respect and appreciate differences in religion and manners that are increasing or tolerance.



First, independence, the school familiarizes its students to have an independent character. For example, for first graders who have just entered the elementary school environment, they tend to have a lack of confidence and lack of independence. So that teachers shape the character of students to be more independent and confident in living life, besides that they also apply attitudes about independence. Strengthening national identity teaches Generation Alpha to better understand and appreciate the history, culture, and values that exist in the Indonesian nation. They are more confident in living life if they have an understanding of their national identity. Self-reliance values such as the struggle for independence, resilience, and collective effort can inspire Generation Alpha to be more independent in facing life's challenges. They will be better equipped to make the right decisions, not rely on others, and dare to take responsibility for their decisions. The school prioritizes attitudes and practices independence, as said by:

“...if in class it is by means of eh attitudes, especially yes, of course, applying about independence...” (W/GK6/10/30.05.2024)

“...changing their character from kindergarten to grade 1 is the most independent character.” (W/GK8/4/0.05.2024)

“...we try to train independence and then I usually apply this...” (W/GK8/4/30.05.2024)

According to (Astuti, 2023) argues that the value of Independence is the ability to carry out tasks or take action on their own without relying on the help of others. Independence includes the ability to think, solve problems, make decisions, and manage emotions and behavior. Therefore, as stated in previous research by, (Maryono et al., 2018) states that as educators in schools, teachers need to apply the value of independent character in the classroom by providing tasks that require students to complete them independently. This is important considering that there are still many students who tend to depend on teachers or their friends in the learning process.

Second, caring for friends, at the school when carrying out the learning process forms a group which is to train students to care about each other with friends. For example, when there is one friend who feels difficult, then his groupmates help and when grouping is not selfish. One of the positive impacts of strengthening national identity is the growth of a sense of caring for others, including friends around them. Indonesian culture, which is rich in values of mutual respect and helping others, is very supportive of the formation of caring characters in Generation Alpha. Strengthening national identity through education in human values, such as mutual respect, compassion, and empathy, provides a strong foundation for Generation Alpha to not only focus on themselves, but also pay attention to the needs of others. This can help create more harmonious and deep social relationships between friends, both in the real world and online. As said by:

“..... Caring for friends is grouped together, for example, he is not selfish, he shares with each other.” (W/GK1/12/30.05.2024)

“...whatever the lesson is, it depends on how we react to it, because this mother emphasizes care and manners.” (W/GK3/13/30.05.2024)

This is the same as social care. The value of social care is one of the characters that is very important for students to have. To foster this value, the Ministry of Education (2010: 10) states that social care is an attitude and action that always tries to provide assistance to other people and communities in need (Saraswati et al., 2020).

Previous research explained that the cultivation of social care character is carried out by familiarizing students through various activities, such as helping friends in need, cooperating in class picket duty, setting aside some of their pocket money to donate to underprivileged communities through philanthropic programs, visiting friends who are sick or grieving, collecting donations in the form of money or goods such as clothes, books, groceries, and snacks for victims of natural disasters, and carrying out social services to disaster-affected areas if the location can be reached by students and teachers (Arif et al., 2021).

Third, mutual cooperation, in the school the learning process uses a role-playing method where students play traditional games in which there are mutual cooperation characters. The teacher at the school applies the attitude of gotong royong, then during the learning process a group is held and that's where the teacher assesses the process when working on whether there is an attitude of gotong royong or not. Gotong royong is one of the deep values in Indonesian culture. Strengthening national identity fosters awareness in the Alpha Generation to always work together and help each other. Through education and real examples from the surrounding community, they learn that togetherness and helping each other is the key to achieving common goals. In today's digital age and individualism, the value of mutual cooperation instilled through

strengthening national identity is very important. This encourages them to work in groups, not only for personal interests, but for common interests, both in the family, school and community environment. As said by:

"...how playing traditional games they work together with friends..."(W/GK8/5/30.05.2024)

"...the application of Pancasila values is only in this material, the children are bored, not directly applied, but if we directly apply it, for example, mutual cooperation..."(W/GK1/4/30.05.2024)

"...the results are good but what I value is the way he works and see the process he works together..."(W/GK1/12/30.05.2024)

This is supported by previous research conducted by (Salam & Nur, 2023), stating that traditional games are considered as one of the effective media to develop children's intelligence and character. These games make a major contribution to character building, by instilling local wisdom values such as mutual cooperation, cooperation, tolerance, compassion, solidarity, brotherhood, and peace. The character of gotong royong is a person's behavior or actions that are carried out sincerely, without expecting rewards, to work together for the common good or to help certain individuals (Emalasari & Wulandari, 2022)

Fourth, Tolerance, at the school is a public school where there are various religions. Therefore teachers always emphasize that to respect and appreciate differences and have a higher tolerance attitude. In addition to teaching to respect differences, but teachers at the school teach to respect teachers and friends. Tolerance is an important value that is also fostered through strengthening national identity. Given that Indonesia is a country with various religions, ethnicities and cultures, strengthening national identity is expected to instill a sense of tolerance in Generation Alpha. By recognizing and appreciating the differences that exist in this nation, Generation Alpha is expected to have an open attitude and not be easily provoked by differences that may arise in their midst. Strengthening national identity through diversity education and insight into the archipelago will strengthen mutual respect and appreciation for diversity, and reduce the potential for social conflict in the future, as said by one of the teachers at the research location:

"The positive impact is that he is more respectful and has a higher tolerance attitude...."(W/GK6/14/30.05.2024)

"...for example, usually children can respect their friends, talk politely and continue to pray, so this is tolerance with friends of different religions." (W/GK1/1/30.05.2024)

"...being able to respect, especially respecting the teacher, yes, respecting friends, it's very important, very important..."(W/GK1/3/30.05.2024)

"...often working in groups with group work, he learns to socialize more, respect each other's friends..." (W/GK1/18/30.05.2024)

Previous research conducted by Maunah (2015), showed that Tolerance means not interfering or imposing the will of others even though personally disagreeing with other people's choices, and respecting other people's choices that are in line with personal beliefs. Tolerance is also reflected in mutual respect and appreciation between individuals, as well as allowing people who have differences in terms of religion, culture, beliefs, political views, or other differences to carry out actions according to their beliefs, as long as they do not violate applicable social norms (Khalikin & Fathri, 2016). The

values of tolerance can be applied through character education, so as to form students who have the character of tolerance and prevent cases of intolerance (Tamaeka, 2022). Therefore, instilling tolerance and religious values is a challenge for teachers. In this case, all teachers in the school must work together to create a harmonious environment (Toto Nugroho & Nurdin, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the researchers, it is concluded that strengthening national identity has a positive impact on character building for elementary school-age children or the alpha generation. This can be seen from the increasing character of children at school.

First, with the character of independence, students can have an understanding of their national identity, students are better prepared to make the right decisions, do not depend on others, and dare to take responsibility for decisions.

Second, caring for friends, one of the positive impacts of strengthening national identity is the growth of a sense of caring for others, including friends around. Then with the strengthening of national identity through education in human values, such as mutual respect, compassion, and empathy, it provides a strong foundation for Generation Alpha to not only focus on themselves, but also pay attention to the needs of others. This can help create more harmonious and deeper social relationships between friends, both in the real world and online.

Third, gotong royong, in today's digital era and individualism, the value of gotong royong instilled through strengthening national identity is very important. This encourages them to work in groups, not only for personal interests, but for common interests, both in the family, school and community environment. One example is traditional games. Traditional games contribute a lot to character, which in general has local wisdom values.

Fourth, tolerance, by recognizing and appreciating the differences that exist in this nation, Generation Alpha is expected to have an open attitude and not be easily provoked by differences that may arise in the midst of society. Through strengthening national identity with an archipelago perspective, it will strengthen mutual respect and appreciation for diversity, and reduce the potential for social conflict in the future.

These characters can be formed through culture-based learning conducted at school.

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