

Strengthening Indonesian National and Cultural Identity among Indonesian-Descendant Children in Malaysia through Knowledge and Experience Sharing

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Abstract

Background: Children of Indonesian descent who live and study outside Indonesia are exposed to cultural, linguistic, social, and media influences from their host environment. Although such cross-cultural exposure can enrich children's experiences, it may also create challenges in maintaining familiarity with their heritage culture and national identity. Schools and community-based learning centres therefore have an important role in facilitating the development of a balanced identity that maintains cultural attachment while encouraging openness to intercultural interaction.

Objective: This community engagement program aimed to strengthen Indonesian national and cultural identity among students at Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia, by increasing their awareness of Indonesian history and culture, fostering pride in Indonesian identity, and encouraging reflection on the challenges of maintaining national identity in a cross-cultural environment. **Method:** The program was conducted at Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh, Lot 1300, Jalan Masjid, Kampung Tanjung Sepat Darat, Tanjong Sepat, Selangor, Malaysia. The participants comprised 39 students from Grades 7–9 and school administrators. Activities employed lectures, presentations, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, observation, audiovisual learning, historical film viewing and summarisation, cultural and historical learning, and English-language learning. Evaluation was conducted descriptively through observation, discussion, documentation, and a student perception survey concerning school efforts to strengthen nationalism. **Results:** The program was implemented successfully and was accompanied by active student participation. Students demonstrated greater awareness of the importance of maintaining Indonesian national identity and expressed pride in being Indonesian citizens. They also recognised the influence of Malaysian culture on their everyday lives. The school had implemented activities supporting national identity, including flag ceremonies and national-day commemorations. In the perception survey, 95% of students strongly agreed and 5% agreed that the school had made efforts to organise programs to strengthen nationalism. **Conclusion:** Knowledge sharing combined with contextual and experiential learning can support the strengthening of national and cultural awareness among Indonesian-descendant children living in a cross-cultural environment. However, formal school activities alone are unlikely to be sufficient for sustained identity development. Continuous, contextual, participatory, and collaborative programs involving schools, families, and communities are needed to maintain Indonesian cultural identity while supporting positive intercultural engagement.

Keywords: Indonesian national identity; cultural identity; Indonesian children abroad; cross-cultural education; community engagement

Abstrak

Latar belakang: Anak-anak keturunan Indonesia yang tinggal dan menempuh pendidikan di luar Indonesia terpapar oleh berbagai pengaruh budaya, bahasa, sosial, dan media dari lingkungan tempat tinggal mereka. Meskipun paparan lintas budaya tersebut dapat memperkaya pengalaman anak, kondisi ini juga dapat menimbulkan tantangan dalam mempertahankan kedekatan dengan budaya asal dan identitas nasional mereka. Oleh karena itu, sekolah dan pusat pembelajaran berbasis masyarakat memiliki peran penting dalam memfasilitasi perkembangan identitas yang seimbang, yaitu mempertahankan keterikatan budaya sekaligus mendorong keterbukaan terhadap interaksi antarbudaya. **Tujuan:** Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat identitas nasional dan budaya Indonesia pada siswa Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia, melalui peningkatan kesadaran terhadap sejarah dan budaya

Indonesia, penumbuhan kebanggaan terhadap identitas keindonesiaan, serta mendorong refleksi terhadap tantangan dalam mempertahankan identitas nasional di lingkungan lintas budaya. **Metode:** Program dilaksanakan di Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh, Lot 1300, Jalan Masjid, Kampung Tanjung Sepat Darat, Tanjong Sepat, Selangor, Malaysia. Peserta terdiri atas 39 siswa kelas VII–IX dan pengelola sekolah. Kegiatan dilaksanakan melalui metode ceramah, presentasi, diskusi, tanya jawab, observasi, pembelajaran audiovisual, pemutaran dan peringkasan film sejarah, pembelajaran budaya dan sejarah, serta pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Evaluasi dilakukan secara deskriptif melalui observasi, diskusi, dokumentasi, dan survei persepsi siswa mengenai upaya sekolah dalam memperkuat nasionalisme. **Hasil:** Program terlaksana dengan baik dan diikuti oleh partisipasi aktif siswa. Siswa menunjukkan peningkatan kesadaran mengenai pentingnya mempertahankan identitas nasional Indonesia serta mengungkapkan kebanggaan sebagai warga negara Indonesia. Siswa juga mampu mengenali pengaruh budaya Malaysia dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mereka. Sekolah telah melaksanakan berbagai kegiatan yang mendukung penguatan identitas nasional, antara lain upacara bendera dan peringatan hari-hari nasional. Berdasarkan survei persepsi, sebanyak 95% siswa menyatakan sangat setuju dan 5% menyatakan setuju bahwa sekolah telah melakukan upaya untuk menyelenggarakan program penguatan nasionalisme. **Kesimpulan:** Berbagi pengetahuan yang dipadukan dengan pembelajaran kontekstual dan pengalaman langsung dapat mendukung penguatan kesadaran nasional dan budaya pada anak-anak keturunan Indonesia yang tinggal di lingkungan lintas budaya. Namun, kegiatan formal yang diselenggarakan sekolah saja belum memadai untuk menjamin keberlanjutan perkembangan identitas. Diperlukan program yang berkelanjutan, kontekstual, partisipatif, dan kolaboratif dengan melibatkan sekolah, keluarga, dan masyarakat untuk mempertahankan identitas budaya Indonesia sekaligus mendukung keterlibatan positif dalam interaksi lintas budaya.

Kata kunci: identitas nasional Indonesia; identitas budaya; anak-anak Indonesia di luar negeri; pendidikan lintas budaya; pengabdian kepada masyarakat

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation, international mobility, digital communication, and cross-border interaction have increasingly transformed the social environments in which children develop their identities. Children who grow up outside their country of origin may simultaneously encounter their heritage culture and the culture of the country in which they live. This situation creates opportunities for intercultural learning, but it can also generate complex processes of cultural and national identity formation. Recent research indicates that identity development among culturally diverse children and adolescents is dynamic and strongly influenced by social, educational, and cultural contexts [1–4].

National identity is not formed exclusively through formal knowledge of national history or symbols. It develops through repeated interactions with family, peers, schools, communities, media, and broader cultural environments. Research involving minority youth has demonstrated that perceptions of whether cultural difference is compatible with national identity can influence subsequent national self-identification [1]. Similarly, longitudinal evidence among adolescents of immigrant descent suggests that heritage and national identities may develop through different trajectories and are associated with the cultural diversity climate experienced in classrooms [2]. These findings suggest that educational environments can become important contexts for negotiating and strengthening identity.

The issue is particularly relevant to Indonesian children living abroad. Children who live outside Indonesia may

have fewer opportunities to interact directly with Indonesian cultural practices than children living in Indonesia. At the same time, they are continuously exposed to the language, traditions, media, social norms, and cultural practices of the host country. A recent educational program involving Indonesian children abroad demonstrated that introducing Indonesian islands, traditional clothing, dances, songs, and other cultural elements could increase children's cultural knowledge and contribute to national pride [5]. This evidence reinforces the importance of educational interventions that connect children abroad with their cultural heritage.

The Indonesia-Malaysia context is particularly important because geographical proximity has historically facilitated intensive social, economic, linguistic, and cultural interaction. Research on education in the Indonesia-Malaysia border region has identified challenges in maintaining cultural identity and nationalism amid strong exposure to external cultural influences [6]. A recent comparative study of Indonesia-Malaysia border communities likewise identified education, nationalism, cultural identity, and social integration as interconnected dimensions of life in border regions [7].

Although the present program was conducted in Selangor rather than at the formal land border between Indonesia and Malaysia, the students were living in a transnational environment in which Indonesian heritage culture interacts continuously with Malaysian culture. Therefore, the conceptual challenge resembles that identified in border-region research: how educational institutions can help younger generations maintain a meaningful

connection with Indonesian identity while living within another national and cultural context [6,7].

The role of schools in this process should not be reduced to the transmission of national symbols. Contemporary research indicates that national identity education can be more meaningful when it is connected to students' lived experiences, cultural diversity, and opportunities for reflection [8-10]. Studies of patriotic education have also demonstrated that young people's responses to nationalism education may be complex and cannot simply be assumed to result from formal instruction [8]. This suggests that educational programs should encourage students to discuss, interpret, and relate national identity to their own experiences rather than merely memorising patriotic concepts.

Cultural identity is similarly strengthened when educational activities explicitly recognise learners' cultural backgrounds. Research in bilingual and culturally diverse classrooms has emphasised the close relationship between language, culture, belonging, and identity development [11]. A positive cultural diversity climate can facilitate cultural identity exploration and resolution among adolescents, particularly when students experience heritage culture recognition and intercultural learning in the classroom [3]. Local-content curriculum has also been shown to improve cultural awareness and cultural identity among Indonesian elementary school students [12].

Family and community environments are equally important. Parents have a significant role in constructing children's national and ethnic identities, particularly during childhood and early adolescence [13]. Consequently, strengthening national identity should not be regarded solely as the responsibility of formal educational institutions. UNESCO similarly emphasises that global citizenship education is a collective process involving learners, parents, caregivers, schools, and communities [14].

The development of Indonesian national identity among young people must also be understood within the contemporary digital environment. Social media and digital platforms expose young people to global cultural content and provide new spaces for identity construction [15]. Indonesian research has indicated that social media can influence how young people understand social and national identity, while digital culture may simultaneously create opportunities and challenges for cultural preservation [15,16].

The Indonesian context provides further evidence that national pride among young people is not necessarily absent in the era of globalisation. Research among Indonesian adolescents has identified multiple sources of national pride and demonstrated that national identity remains relevant to younger generations [17]. Similarly,

research on Indonesian students studying abroad suggests that educational experiences outside Indonesia can influence the development and expression of nationalist character and perceptions of contribution to the home country [18].

These findings provide a conceptual basis for developing educational programs that do not frame foreign cultural exposure as inherently negative. Instead, the objective should be to equip children with sufficient knowledge and confidence regarding their own cultural heritage so that they can participate in intercultural environments without losing their connection to their national identity. This approach is consistent with contemporary perspectives on cultural identity, which recognise that children can negotiate multiple cultural affiliations rather than being forced to choose between two mutually exclusive identities [2,3,19].

Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh in Selangor represents a relevant educational context for this intervention. The original field assessment identified the influence of cross-cultural interactions, language, external media, and the need for stronger socialisation of Indonesian national values among students. The school had already implemented activities such as flag ceremonies and national-day commemorations, but the program report indicated that students remained exposed to strong external cultural influences.

Therefore, this community engagement program was developed to strengthen students' understanding of Indonesian history and culture through knowledge sharing and experiential learning. The program sought to connect historical and cultural knowledge with students' everyday experiences and encourage them to reflect on what it means to maintain Indonesian identity while living in Malaysia.

The objectives of the program were to: (1) increase students' awareness of the importance of Indonesian national identity; (2) strengthen pride in Indonesian history and culture; (3) encourage students to recognise and reflect on cross-cultural influences; and (4) provide an educational model that can support the development of national identity among Indonesian-descendant children living outside Indonesia

METHOD

Study Design and Setting

This activity was implemented as a community engagement program using a descriptive educational approach. The program was conducted at Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh, located at Lot 1300, Jalan Masjid, Kampung Tanjung Sepat Darat, 42800 Tanjong Sepat, Selangor, Malaysia. The original activity report identifies the school as a learning centre serving Indonesian-descendant children living in Malaysia.

The program was designed as an educational and participatory intervention rather than a controlled experimental study. Accordingly, the results are presented descriptively and should be interpreted as evidence of program implementation and participant response rather than as causal evidence of an intervention effect.

Participants

The participants were students and school administrators at Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh. Students were selected as the principal target group because they experience daily interaction with both Indonesian heritage culture and the Malaysian social and cultural environment.

The original participant record included students from Grades 7, 8, and 9, with a total of 39 students. The participants represented both male and female students. The program also involved school administrators and educators in the implementation of learning activities.

Program Development

The program was developed around the principle that strengthening national identity should combine knowledge, interaction, reflection, and experience. The educational content therefore addressed Indonesian history, the early development of the Nusantara, Indonesian cultural identity, national pride, and the importance of maintaining cultural connections while living in another country.

The activities included: teaching and classroom interaction; introduction to the early history of the Nusantara; historical learning activities; viewing and summarising historical films; activities to strengthen appreciation of Indonesian culture and identity; discussions concerning students' experiences in a cross-cultural environment; question-and-answer sessions; and English-language learning.

The combination of instructional and experiential activities was intended to avoid relying exclusively on conventional lectures. This approach is consistent with evidence that culturally responsive and contextual learning can support students' cultural identity development [3,11,12].

Implementation Methods

Several complementary methods were used.

Lectures and presentations

Lectures and presentations provided the initial conceptual framework concerning Indonesian history, national identity, nationalism, and cultural diversity. The materials were adapted to the students' educational level and contextualised to their experiences as Indonesian-descendant children living in Malaysia.

Discussion and question-and-answer sessions

Discussions were conducted to provide students with opportunities to express their opinions and experiences. Students were encouraged to discuss the meaning of Indonesian identity, their experiences of Malaysian culture, and the importance of maintaining connections with Indonesian culture. This participatory component was considered important because identity development involves interpretation and negotiation rather than passive acceptance of information [1,3,8].

Audiovisual learning

Historical films were used as learning resources, followed by summarisation activities. Audiovisual materials were intended to provide students with a more concrete representation of Indonesian history and cultural development.

Observation

Direct observation was conducted throughout the program to assess student participation, interaction, and responses to the activities. Observational notes were used to identify behavioural and contextual patterns relevant to the program objectives.

Documentation

Photographs, videos, field notes, and activity records were collected as documentation and supporting evidence of program implementation.

Evaluation

Program evaluation used descriptive evidence derived from observation, discussion, documentation, and a simple student perception survey. The survey assessed students' perceptions of school efforts to strengthen nationalism. The main indicator reported in the original activity documentation was students' agreement with the statement concerning the school's efforts to organise nationalism-strengthening programs. Because the program did not employ a validated nationalism scale or pre-test/post-test design, the findings do not quantify changes in students' nationalism attributable specifically to the intervention. Instead, they describe students' perceptions, participation, and observed responses during the program.

Ethical Considerations

The activity was conducted as a community engagement program within an educational institution. Participation was undertaken in coordination with the learning centre and its administrators. The presentation of findings is limited to aggregate program-level information and does not identify individual students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Educational Program

The program was conducted over approximately one month. The activities were implemented according to the planned educational objectives and were generally supported by active student participation. The initial sessions introduced students to the early history of the Nusantara and the development of Indonesian identity. Historical knowledge was presented not simply as factual information but as a basis for understanding the diversity and cultural richness of Indonesia.

This approach is consistent with recent research showing that local and culturally relevant curriculum can contribute to students' cultural awareness and identity. Anwar and Sukirman reported that local-content curriculum significantly improved cultural awareness and cultural identity among Indonesian elementary school students [12]. Similarly, research on culture-based learning argues that integrating local cultural knowledge into educational practice can strengthen learners' connections with cultural identity [20].

For Indonesian-descendant children living abroad, such learning may be particularly important because the everyday environment may provide greater exposure to host-country cultural content than to Indonesian cultural practices. A recent educational intervention involving Indonesian children abroad similarly found that learning about Indonesian islands and cultural traditions could increase cultural knowledge and strengthen national identity [5].

Students' Engagement with Indonesian History and Culture

Students participated in classroom teaching, historical learning, discussions, film viewing, and summarisation activities. The combination of these methods provided opportunities for students to encounter Indonesian history and culture through several forms of learning.



Figure 1. In class learning

The use of historical narratives and audiovisual materials may be particularly useful for younger learners because abstract concepts of national identity can be difficult to understand without concrete cultural and historical references. Historical knowledge can provide a shared

narrative through which students understand the meaning of national membership.

However, nationalism education should avoid presenting national identity as a rigid or exclusive category. Research on youth perceptions of patriotic education has shown that young people's interpretations of national attachment can differ from the expectations of formal educational policy [8]. Critical reflection and discussion are therefore important components of identity education.

In the present program, discussion and question-and-answer sessions enabled students to relate historical content to their own experiences. This is important because Indonesian-descendant children living in Malaysia may have a form of identity that is simultaneously influenced by Indonesian heritage and Malaysian social environments.

Awareness of Cross-Cultural Influences

The activities revealed that students were aware of the influence of Malaysian culture in their daily lives. Discussions and observations indicated that students encountered Malaysian cultural content through everyday social interaction and media, including music and television.

Such exposure should not automatically be interpreted as a threat to Indonesian identity. Cross-cultural interaction can broaden children's perspectives and develop intercultural competence. The educational challenge is instead to ensure that exposure to other cultures does not result in the loss of familiarity with one's heritage culture.

This interpretation is supported by research on adolescents of immigrant descent. Schachner et al. demonstrated that cultural identity development is influenced by the interaction between individual identity processes and the classroom cultural diversity climate [3]. Juang et al. similarly found that heritage and national identities can follow different developmental trajectories and that classroom cultural diversity climate is relevant to socioemotional adjustment [2].

The findings from the present program therefore support a balanced approach: Indonesian-descendant children should be encouraged to appreciate Indonesian culture while also developing positive relationships with the Malaysian environment in which they live.

Students' National Pride and Identity

The discussions indicated that many students expressed pride in being Indonesian citizens. This finding is important because it demonstrates that living outside Indonesia does not necessarily eliminate national attachment.

The finding is consistent with research on Indonesian adolescents showing that national pride remains

meaningful among young Indonesians despite the changing social and digital environment [17]. Research involving Indonesian students in Malaysia has likewise highlighted the continued relevance of nationalism among Indonesians experiencing education abroad [18].

However, national identity should be understood as dynamic rather than fixed. Contemporary research on minority and migrant-origin youth shows that national self-identification can develop through interactions between cultural difference, perceived national belonging, and school experiences [1,19]. Consequently, strengthening identity requires educational environments that make students feel that their cultural background is compatible with membership in the national community.

The Role of the School in Strengthening National Identity

The school had already implemented several activities related to national identity, particularly flag ceremonies and commemorations of national days. Such activities create opportunities for students to experience national symbols collectively.

The student perception survey provided a positive assessment of these institutional efforts. Ninety-five percent of students strongly agreed and 5% agreed that the school had attempted to organise programs to strengthen nationalism.

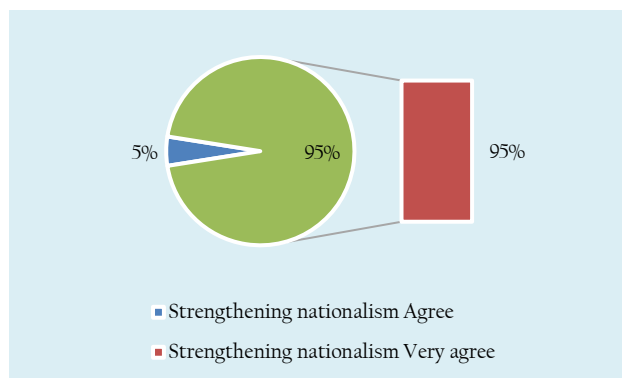


Figure 2. Participants' views on strengthening nationalism

This finding indicates that the school's efforts were recognised by students. Nevertheless, it should not be interpreted as evidence that the students' level of nationalism increased by the same magnitude. The survey measured perceptions of school efforts rather than pre-intervention and post-intervention nationalism. This distinction is important for scientific reporting. A recent study of national identity development among minority youth found that school belonging alone did not automatically produce stronger national self-identification [1]. The school environment may nevertheless contribute to national identity when it communicates that culturally diverse students can legitimately belong to the national community.

Research in Indonesia also suggests that civic education and extracurricular activities can contribute to strengthening national identity when national history, cultural values, and civic values are integrated into educational practice [21]. Therefore, the formal activities already conducted by Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh can serve as a foundation for broader and more contextual identity-building activities.

The Importance of Contextual and Participatory Learning

One of the major implications of this program is the importance of moving beyond formal ceremonial approaches. Flag ceremonies and national commemorations are valuable, but they should be accompanied by opportunities for students to explore what Indonesian identity means in their daily lives.

A participatory approach is especially relevant in culturally diverse settings. Research on national identity education indicates that critical reflection can influence how students understand different forms of nationalism [9]. Similarly, cultural identity interventions have demonstrated the importance of classroom environments that encourage heritage-culture learning, intercultural learning, and critical consciousness [3].

For Indonesian-descendant students in Malaysia, contextual learning can include Indonesian history, regional cultures, traditional arts, Indonesian language, national symbols, traditional games, food heritage, songs, literature, and stories from Indonesian communities. Such activities can make national identity tangible rather than abstract.

The importance of culturally meaningful learning is also supported by research on cultural identity in early childhood and school settings. Culture can be incorporated into learning through community-valued activities and experiences, thereby linking learning with children's social and cultural environments [22]. Similarly, culturally responsive education can strengthen students' sense of self-worth, belonging, and connection to their cultural heritage [11].

Family and Community as Partners

The development of national identity cannot be delegated exclusively to schools. Family environments are particularly important because children begin developing cultural and national identities through interaction with parents and close social networks.

Research among Chinese Indonesian families demonstrated that parents actively participate in constructing children's national and ethnic identities [13]. This finding is relevant to Indonesian families living abroad, where parents may become important cultural

mediators between Indonesian heritage and the host-country environment.

UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education framework similarly emphasises the involvement of parents, caregivers, schools, and communities in developing children's competencies and values [14]. This perspective suggests that Indonesian cultural identity programs abroad should be designed as collaborative community initiatives rather than isolated school activities.

For Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh, collaboration with parents and Indonesian community organisations could extend cultural learning beyond the classroom. Family storytelling, Indonesian cultural celebrations, traditional games, Indonesian-language activities, and community cultural events could provide additional opportunities for children to experience Indonesian identity in everyday settings.

Digital Culture and Identity Formation

The contemporary identity environment of children and adolescents extends beyond the physical school. Social media, streaming platforms, and digital entertainment provide continuous exposure to global and host-country cultural content.

Recent Indonesian studies have highlighted the role of social media in shaping social and national identity among young people [15,16]. Digital platforms can potentially weaken traditional cultural attachment when local cultural content is underrepresented, but they can also become powerful tools for cultural preservation and national identity education. Therefore, future programs at Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh could incorporate digital cultural education. Students could be encouraged to create short videos introducing Indonesian traditional culture, Indonesian regions, local languages, traditional foods, national heroes, or Indonesian historical events. Such activities could transform digital media from a source of external cultural exposure into a platform for cultural expression.

This approach is consistent with the broader shift from passive consumption toward active cultural participation. Rather than simply telling students to avoid foreign cultural content, educators can empower them to become producers and communicators of Indonesian cultural content.

Implications for Indonesian Children Living Abroad

The findings have broader implications for educational programs serving Indonesian children outside Indonesia. First, Indonesian cultural identity should be introduced through enjoyable, age-appropriate, and participatory learning activities. Second, programs should acknowledge that children abroad may possess complex and multiple cultural identities.

The objective should therefore not be cultural isolation. Instead, educational programs should help children develop confidence in their Indonesian heritage while enabling them to interact positively with other cultures.

This approach is supported by research showing that cultural identity and national identity can coexist and develop dynamically [2,3,19]. Children do not necessarily need to reject the host culture to maintain their Indonesian identity. Rather, they need sufficient cultural knowledge, positive social support, and opportunities to experience their heritage as meaningful and valued.

This is particularly important in educational settings because schools can either reinforce or challenge narrow definitions of national identity. Research among minority youth indicates that national identity development can benefit when schools communicate that cultural diversity is compatible with national membership [1].

Community Engagement as a Sustainable Educational Strategy

The present activity demonstrates that community engagement can function as a complementary mechanism for strengthening national and cultural awareness. Community engagement is particularly useful in settings where formal curricula may not provide sufficient opportunities for heritage-culture learning.

The program's combination of teaching, historical learning, discussion, audiovisual activities, observation, and documentation provided multiple opportunities for students to interact with Indonesian cultural content. This multidimensional approach may be more effective than a single-session lecture because it allows students to encounter identity-related themes repeatedly.

Nevertheless, the sustainability of the intervention remains an important issue. A one-month program cannot by itself establish long-term changes in national identity. Future programs should therefore be designed as continuous educational partnerships involving universities, schools, Indonesian community organisations, families, and potentially government institutions.

The results also suggest the need for systematic monitoring. Future programs should use validated instruments to measure cultural knowledge, national identity, national pride, and intercultural attitudes before and after intervention. Longitudinal follow-up would be particularly valuable in determining whether educational interventions produce sustained changes.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the program was implemented in only one educational institution in Selangor. Therefore, the findings

cannot be generalised to all Indonesian-descendant children living in Malaysia or to Indonesian children living abroad in other countries.

Second, the evaluation was descriptive and did not include a control group. Consequently, the observed responses cannot be interpreted as definitive evidence of a causal intervention effect.

Third, the available survey assessed students' perceptions of school efforts to strengthen nationalism rather than measuring nationalism directly using a validated instrument. The finding that 95% strongly agreed and 5% agreed therefore reflects positive recognition of school programs rather than a quantified increase in nationalism.

Fourth, the evaluation did not include long-term follow-up. The sustainability of students' awareness and national identity after the program therefore remains unknown.

These limitations should guide future research. A stronger design could employ a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test approach, validated national identity scales, qualitative interviews, and longitudinal follow-up. A multi-site study involving Indonesian learning centres in different countries would also improve external validity.

CONCLUSION

The community engagement program at Madrasah Tafidz An-Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia, demonstrated that knowledge sharing and contextual learning can provide meaningful opportunities for Indonesian-descendant children to strengthen their awareness of Indonesian history, culture, and national identity.

Students demonstrated awareness of the importance of maintaining Indonesian identity and expressed pride in being Indonesian, while also recognising the influence of Malaysian culture in their everyday lives. The school had already established formal activities supporting nationalism, and these efforts were positively recognised by students, with 95% strongly agreeing and 5% agreeing that the school had made efforts to organise nationalism-strengthening programs.

However, the findings also indicate that maintaining national identity in a cross-cultural environment requires more than formal ceremonies and national commemorations. Identity development is a dynamic process influenced by school, family, community, media, and cultural interaction. Therefore, programs for Indonesian children abroad should integrate historical and cultural learning with discussion, reflection, experiential activities, and opportunities for cultural expression.

The most appropriate strategy is not to isolate children from foreign cultures but to strengthen their cultural literacy and confidence so that they can engage positively

with cultural diversity while maintaining meaningful connections with Indonesian heritage.

Future programs should involve families and communities, integrate digital media as a platform for Indonesian cultural expression, and employ more rigorous evaluation designs. Long-term and multi-site studies are recommended to determine the sustainability and broader effectiveness of educational interventions aimed at strengthening national and cultural identity among Indonesian children living abroad.

RECOMMENDATION

Future community engagement programs should be implemented through continuous, participatory, and culturally responsive activities that involve students, teachers, parents, and the wider Indonesian community. Schools and community-based learning centres are encouraged to integrate Indonesian history, cultural heritage, national values, and intercultural education into regular learning activities rather than relying solely on occasional commemorative events. Further programs may also incorporate digital media, creative cultural activities, and collaborative projects involving Indonesian communities abroad to strengthen students' cultural attachment and national identity. In addition, future studies should employ more systematic evaluation designs, including pre-test and post-test assessments and longer-term follow-up, to measure changes in students' knowledge, attitudes, and cultural identity over time.

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