

## **Strengthening the Cultural Identity of Indonesian Children in Malaysia through Education of the Regional Song “Soleram” and the Game “Ampar-Ampar Pisang”**

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### **Abstract**

*This community service activity explores how education through traditional songs and games can help Indonesian diaspora children in Malaysia strengthen their cultural identity. With globalization threatening local identities, diaspora children often struggle to balance their home culture with their new environment. Through observations and interviews with 12 children from grade 5 to junior high school at Sanggar Bimbingan At-Tanzil, this study found that integrating arts and culture into the learning process can deepen children's connection to their heritage. The traditional song "Soleram" and the game "Ampar-ampar Pisang" effectively taught cultural values and increased pride in Indonesian identity. This study emphasizes the importance of culture-based education in preserving the identity of marginalized children in a foreign country.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural Education, Cultural Identity, Traditional Songs, Traditional Games, Globalization, Non-formal Schools*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Indonesian children living in Malaysia face challenges in maintaining their cultural identity. Nowadays, globalization is a significant challenge and threat to the integrity of a country, and it is a real challenge to the original values of Indonesian culture (Hadyansah et al., 2021). Multicultural education is crucial, especially for the diaspora community (Nurmanita et al., 2024). They are often trapped between their original culture and the culture of their place of residence, which can obscure their identity as part of the Indonesian nation. Diaspora children tend to lose some elements of their culture due to integration with new cultures in foreign countries (Sari et al., 2022). Meanwhile, students need to develop cultural literacy skills as an important foundation for understanding various sources of information about cultural diversity at the global level (Anjarwati et al., 2022).

Cultural literacy can strengthen character education learning according to its learning modality in forming cultural independence (Sulistyanto et al., 2023). In this context, regional songs and traditional games can be compelling educational media in reintroducing cultural values to diaspora children. The song "Soleram" and traditional games such as "Ampar-ampar Pisang" are not only a means of entertainment but also a means to internalize cultural values that may be difficult to find in everyday life abroad. Regional songs and traditional games are important in

maintaining cultural sustainability, especially in helping them succeed in social interactions (Herdianti et al., 2021), especially in diaspora groups. Songs such as "Soleram" and the game "Ampar-Ampar Pisang" contain moral values and local wisdom that can be engaging learning media for Indonesian diaspora children in Malaysia. For example, the song "Soleram" contains a message of love that is very relevant to teaching children about human relationships (Sinaga, 2022). On the other hand, the game "Ampar-Ampar Pisang" introduces children to the culture of cooperation and perseverance reflected in the game's dynamics. By using this media, children learn language and culture and interact with values that come from their social environment of origin (Simanjuntak et al., 2023).

The importance of maintaining cultural identity in diaspora children cannot be underestimated. A study shows that education focusing on the culture of origin can help diaspora children feel more connected to their national identity (Ramadhani et al., 2022). In Malaysia's multicultural environment, Indonesian diaspora children are potentially exposed to strong local cultural assimilation, which can fade their original identity (Rejeki et al., 2023). Therefore, creating a culture-based education mechanism is important to maintain the balance of these children's identities. Education through regional songs and traditional games can help diaspora children stay connected to their Indonesian cultural roots without alienating them from the community where they live (Wahyu, 2022). The method of cultural education through traditional songs and games has been proven effective in maintaining cultural identity among diaspora children. (Azman & Kamaruzaman, 2017) Malaysia shows that integrating traditional music into the education system can increase children's interest in their cultural heritage. Games such as "Ampar-Ampar Pisang," which involves physical movements, and the song "Soleram," which is repetitive and easy to remember, can also be powerful tools to strengthen children's memory of their culture. Thus, this strategy is educational and provides a profoundly emotional experience, which is important in forming a cultural identity.

While some children may be forced to conform to Malaysian cultural norms, creating spaces to celebrate and maintain their Indonesian cultural identity is important. Traditional songs and games offer accessible and enjoyable ways to maintain this balance. Other studies have also shown that children exposed to traditional music and games tend to be more proud of their cultural heritage and more involved in cultural preservation (Subiyantoro & Prabowo, 2017). This shows the importance of informal education in strengthening cultural identity. To ensure the success of this cultural identity-strengthening strategy, they need support from various parties is needed, including families, schools, and the Indonesian diaspora community in Malaysia. This collaboration is important because cultural education cannot only take place in schools but must also be integrated into the daily lives of diaspora children. Parents can play an important role by practicing these traditions at home, while the community can organize cultural events that involve children. In this case, collective efforts can help diaspora children maintain their cultural identity amidst a multicultural environment (Muslimin, 2015). This concerted effort ensures that diaspora children do not lose their connection to their home culture.

## **2. METHOD**

This community service activity uses qualitative methods to describe and analyze the strengthening of the cultural identity of Indonesian diaspora children in Malaysia through education of the regional song "Soleram" and the game "Ampar-Ampar Pisang." According to (Fadli, 2021), the qualitative method investigates social problems based on a holistic picture presented with a detailed description of natural events in the field. This community service explores the experiences of Indonesian diaspora children in participating in traditional song and game education and its impact on their cultural identity.

The design of this community service includes the presentation of material on two traditional Indonesian songs, "Ampar-Ampar Pisang" and "Soleram." This presentation aims to

introduce Indonesian culture in a fun and interactive way. After the presentation, children are invited to sing the songs together. In this session, the teacher explains the meaning of the lyrics to deepen the participants' understanding. Children are also involved in game movements related to the two songs, increasing social interaction and learning experiences.

During the activity sessions, teachers conducted direct observations to document children's responses, including interactions, enthusiasm for singing and moving, and appreciation of songs and games. The instruments of this qualitative method included semi-structured interviews that focused on the purpose of the activities carried out (Al Kautsary, 2024) to collect information about children's and teachers' experiences and the impact of the activities on their cultural identity.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The initial learning activity is to strengthen the cultural identity of Indonesian diaspora children in Malaysia. This activity is important because cultural identity is a person's awareness of the unique characteristics of their group, such as language, customs, habits, and values. Cultural identity is also part of a person's identity, which is related to nationality. According to Aswan et al. (2023), the phenomenon of identity crisis is not only limited to documents but also includes self-identification as part of the Republic of Indonesia.

Learning about Strengthening Cultural Identity for Indonesian Diaspora children in Malaysia aims to set clear boundaries, foster a sense of nationalism, and increase their spirit of nationalism (Rachmat, 2024). This material was received with high enthusiasm and great curiosity from the beginning. With the provision of formal knowledge that has been taught at the At-Tanzil Lembah Jaya Non formal School and singing skills, Indonesian Diaspora children have become familiar with the material presented by volunteers through regional songs such as Soleram and Ampar-Ampar Pisang, which were introduced from the beginning. However, some had not memorized the songs Soleram and Ampar-Ampar Pisang, and they were welcomed with enthusiasm. The learning process used an audio-visual method, including volunteers' explanations, materials written on the board, and two-way interactive sessions to facilitate children's understanding. In addition, practice sessions in front of the class trained their courage in public speaking, respecting other people's opinions, and listening well (Dwisatoto et al., 2015). At the end of the session, the children's enthusiasm in the Q&A session showed they understood the regional songs taught and succeeded in playing 'Tapuk Ampar-Ampar Pisang' well.



Figure 1. *Clap the Ampar-Ampar Pisang Song*

This time, The learning process faced many challenges, primarily related to the limited learning space, which was not too large, thus limiting the children's movements, especially when playing the Ampar-Ampar Pisang clapping game. Another obstacle was the children's difficulty

maintaining focus and concentration during the delivery of material by the volunteers. Time constraints were also an obstacle, and the sessions were divided into several sessions, namely the material delivery and the interactive sessions. However, the volunteers still managed to deliver the material according to the meaning of the song being taught, which broadened the understanding of the children of the Indonesian Diaspora in Malaysia.



Figure 2. *Interactive Session*

The interactive session consisted of an ice-breaking session with “Single Clapping and Double Clapping,” which helped children regain their concentration, and a 10-minute question-and-answer session. The presence of this interactive session made learning more fun and less monotonous. The question-and-answer session at the end of the activity was also intended to measure children’s understanding of the material that had been presented. These challenges were successfully overcome through effective ice-breaking to restore children’s focus and good time management to deliver the material optimally.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results of this community service also show that the learning process that integrates art and culture not only enriches the knowledge of diaspora children about their ancestral heritage but also becomes a strong emotional bridge that connects them to their homeland, even though they grow and develop in a foreign country. In every verse of the song "Soleram" and every movement in the game "Ampar-ampar Pisang," there is a sense of pride and warmth that fosters a sense of belonging to Indonesian identity. This process helps diaspora children not only to learn history and cultural traditions but also to feel an emotional closeness to their national identity. This program, more than just an effort to preserve culture, is an important foundation for future generations so that they can understand, appreciate, and continue to maintain their cultural roots, especially amidst identity challenges that may arise due to the influence of the culture of the country where they live. The regional songs and traditional games are taught to function as educational tools and to strengthen social ties between children, creating a space where togetherness, mutual respect, and cooperation are fostered from an early age. In an increasingly globalized world where local identities are at risk of being lost, educational programs emphasizing local arts and traditions play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage. Sanggar Bimbingan At-Tanzil, as an informal education center, plays a vital role in strengthening children's cultural identities by incorporating interactive and fun teaching methods. Despite challenges such as limited space and keeping children focused, the program has instilled a passion for learning and a sense of pride in Indonesian culture. By integrating traditional elements into education, children can face the modern world while remaining connected to their cultural roots, creating a generation confident in their cultural identity.

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