



Survey of the Need for Implementing Javanese Culture in Kindergarten Learning: Language, Manners, Traditional Clothing, Food, and Daily Etiquette

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the need for implementing Javanese culture in kindergarten education in Yogyakarta, particularly regarding the preservation of cultural identity from an early age. The research focuses on five main components of Javanese culture: the use of Javanese language, etiquette, introduction to traditional clothing, and traditional foods. This need is crucial because various studies indicate that identity crises and cultural shifts in children are increasing due to the strong currents of globalization and the decline in local cultural practices in families and schools. This study used a survey approach involving kindergarten teachers and school principals as subjects. The research instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire supplemented by brief interviews to enrich the data. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive quantitative methods to obtain a percentage of the actual conditions in the field. The survey was conducted in several early childhood education institutions in the Yogyakarta area. The results show strong indications of a decline in Javanese cultural practices in early childhood. Additionally, 85% of children are not accustomed to using Javanese greetings such as "sugeng enjing," 65% do not address teachers with the greeting "Ma'am," and 92% do not use the expression "nyuwun sewu." These findings underscore the need for more systematic integration of Javanese culture into the early childhood education curriculum as an effort to strengthen children's cultural identity and character from an early age.

INTRODUCTION

Javanese culture is one of the nation's cultural treasures, possessing profound philosophical values, etiquette, and manners. Amidst globalization and rapid technological development, preserving Javanese culture is increasingly crucial to ensure the younger generation maintains an identity and character rooted in local values. (Koentjaraningrat, 2009) states that culture comprises various elements, such as language, knowledge systems, social organizations, and tools, which must be passed on to prevent erosion of values. Early childhood education is a strategic phase in this preservation effort, as it is during this period that children are in a particularly strong stage of character formation and habit formation. Yogyakarta Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2011 concerning culture-based education emphasizes the importance of educational units integrating local cultural values into the learning process.

This situation indicates the need for systematic steps to map the needs of schools, teachers, and students regarding the implementation of Javanese culture in kindergarten. The preservation of Javanese culture in the modern era has become an increasingly important issue in line with the rapid development of technology and globalization. Changes in lifestyles, the penetration of popular culture, and the increasingly widespread use of foreign languages have the potential to marginalize local cultural values. In the context of early childhood education, cultural preservation serves not only to transmit identity but also as a vehicle for character development, good manners, and the instilling of pride in regional culture (Suyanto, 2020).

One phenomenon frequently observed in kindergartens (TK) is the decline in the use of Javanese, particularly at the krama level, which reflects etiquette and politeness. Children tend to be more familiar with Indonesian and slang, while the use of krama Javanese in everyday conversation at home is becoming less common. Research shows that low exposure to regional languages in the family and school environment is a major factor in children's diminishing ability to use Javanese according to politeness norms (Widodo, 2018). Furthermore, many young children demonstrate minimal knowledge of Javanese traditional clothing and traditional Javanese food. This is evident in the lack of exposure to local culture through learning activities and thematic activities at school. In fact, introducing local culture from an early age has been proven to increase awareness of cultural identity and foster a love for one's own culture (Mulyasa, 2017). To address these issues, developing a Javanese culture-based learning model is highly relevant. However, before developing a learning model, a needs survey is necessary to ensure that the interventions developed truly align with real-world conditions.

A needs assessment is crucial to determine the level of teacher understanding, institutional readiness, student needs, and the teaching materials still needed to integrate Javanese culture into the curriculum. Therefore, this study aims to identify the level of need for implementing Javanese culture in kindergarten learning, including aspects of language, etiquette, traditional clothing, traditional foods, and the needs of teachers and institutions in developing culture-based learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Identity Theory Cultural

Identity is a distinctive characteristic inherent in individuals or groups, manifested through values, norms, symbols, language, and cultural practices passed down through generations. Cultural identity defines who a person is, where they come from, and how they interpret themselves within their social and cultural environment. (Hall, 1973), cultural identity is not static but is formed through learning processes, social interactions, and cultural experiences. In the context of early childhood, cultural identity serves as the foundation of self-concept, helping children recognize their environment, feel a sense of belonging to a particular cultural group, and develop a sense of pride and appreciation for their own culture (Suparno, 2019). Children who receive cultural stimulation from an early age tend to better understand cultural symbols, have positive attitudes toward traditions, and exhibit more adaptive social behaviors aligning with group norms. (Koentjaraningrat, 2009) explains that culture consists of seven basic elements that are universally applicable and present in every society. These elements form the basis for the formation of individual cultural identity, including that of early childhood.

Language

Language is both a primary means of communication and a cultural symbol. In the context of Javanese culture, the use of Javanese (ngoko, madya, krama) reflects etiquette and social relationships. Children accustomed to using regional languages tend to better understand manners as part of their cultural identity.

Knowledge System

Relates to people's perspectives on nature, the environment, traditions, and social rules. Knowledge of Javanese traditional clothing, traditional foods, and philosophical meanings within the culture (e.g., "alon-alon waton kelakon" or "rukun agawe santosa") shapes children's thinking about the world around them.

Life Equipment and Technology System

Includes objects and tools used in daily life, such as batik, jarik (traditional Javanese cloth), blangkon (traditional Javanese headdress), gamelan musical instruments, and traditional cooking utensils. Introducing cultural objects helps children understand the physical symbols of Javanese culture.

Livelihood

Children can be introduced to traditional professions (farmers, batik artisans, wayang puppet makers) as part of their knowledge of Javanese life.

Religious or Belief System

Includes moral, ethical, and spiritual values held by the community. In Javanese culture, values such as rukun (harmony), tepa selira (compassion), and nrimo ing pandum (respect for one's family) are part of the value system that can shape a child's character.

Arts

Includes music, dance, literature, batik, traditional games (dolanan), and performing arts. The arts play a strong role in instilling pride and love for regional culture in children.

Social Organization

Includes relationship patterns within the family and community. In Javanese culture, relationships between family members, respect for parents, and the system of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) shape a child's social identity.

These seven elements serve as a framework for assessing the extent to which cultural identity is introduced and internalized in early childhood education.

Culture-Based Education

Culture-based education is education that places culture, values, norms, language, local practices, and wisdom as essential components in the teaching and learning process. The goal is not only mastery of academic material, but also the formation of cultural identity, character, and an understanding of the meaning of one's own culture in social and global relations.

Culture-based education is an educational approach that makes cultural values, norms, and practices the foundation of the entire learning process, including content, methods, and educational objectives. (Tilaar, 2002) states that culture-based education is an effort to develop individuals rooted in their own national culture, by making culture a source of values and direction for educational development. In this way, education not only transfers academic knowledge but also fosters awareness of national identity, character, and character. (Sedyawati, 2014) also states that culture-based education aims to maintain, develop, and preserve local culture through formal and non-formal educational activities. In her view, culture is not merely an object of learning but also a means of developing a holistic human personality.

Internationally, UNESCO (2015) explains that culturally relevant education respects cultural diversity and uses local culture as the primary context in the learning process. This model helps students understand their social environment, develop a sense of pride in their cultural heritage, and actively participate in its preservation. (Banks, 2008) argues that culture-based education is closely related to multicultural education, which integrates the values and experiences of various cultural groups to build equality and respect for differences. Thus, culture-based education can be understood as education that favors culture, namely education that seeks to preserve and transmit cultural values to the younger generation without being closed off to modern progress.

(Ki Hajar Dewantara, 1961) contextually emphasized that education must be based on national culture, because only through culture can humans develop in harmony with the dictates of nature and the times. Ki Hajar stated that education rooted in culture will shape civilized individuals with character and a strong national identity.

Therefore, culture-based education is not only interpreted as a process of inheriting tradition, but also as a strategy for transforming cultural values in the context of modern education. Through the integration of local culture into the learning process, culture-based education plays a crucial role in shaping students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess character, self-identity,

and an awareness of their cultural roots. This type of education serves as the foundation for a generation capable of facing global change without losing the nation's identity or noble values.

Components of Javanese Culture

1. Javanese Language

Javanese is a fundamental cultural element because it is used in everyday communication and has linguistic levels that reflect values of politeness and social stratification. (Koentjaraningrat, 2009) states that language is part of a cultural element that functions as a means of communication and a means of transmitting social values. In Javanese culture, language has various levels, including ngoko, madya, and krama, each of which is used according to the situation and social relationships between speakers. Mastery of Javanese, especially krama, not only demonstrates linguistic ability but also reflects a child's ability to understand social rules and ethics in Javanese culture (Sasangka, 2004). Using Javanese from an early age is important for strengthening cultural identity and developing a respectful and polite character in children.

2. Etiquette

Javanese etiquette is a code of behavior that reflects politeness, respect, and social ethics in Javanese society. According to (Suseno, 1997), Javanese etiquette is rooted in the principles of tata tentrem (order and tranquility) and tepa selira (tolerance). In the context of early childhood education, etiquette is reflected in how children greet teachers, respect others, regulate their behavior, and behave politely in various situations. Reinforcing etiquette from an early age is important because it fosters habits of polite behavior, respect for elders, and fosters harmonious social relationships (Hidayat, 2015). In kindergarten, etiquette can be developed through simple practices such as greeting, speaking politely, and introducing Javanese customary sitting, walking, and posture.

3. Unggah-ungguh

Unggah-ungguh is a more specific and detailed set of rules for speech and behavior than etiquette. While etiquette addresses general norms of politeness, *usus-ungguh* directly relates to the implementation of these politeness in everyday language and actions. (Subroto et al., 2023) explain that Javanese etiquette encompasses word choice, speech, body language, and the etiquette of giving and receiving. Important examples of etiquette instilled in early childhood include the use of the expressions "monggo," "nyuwun sewu," "sugeng enjing," and "matur nuwun." Practicing etiquette helps children understand the value of respect for parents, teachers, and others, and fosters a character with noble character.

4. Traditional Clothing

Traditional clothing is part of the material culture that forms the visual identity of Javanese society. (Koentjoroningrat, 2009) calls it part of the "equipment of life" that carries symbolic meaning and social function. Some Javanese traditional clothing often introduced to children include the kebaya, lurik, beskap, blangkon, Sabukwolo, and kencongan. Traditional clothing not only serves as clothing but also embodies philosophical values such as simplicity, neatness, and beauty. Introducing traditional clothing to children in kindergarten

is important as an effort to strengthen cultural identity, introduce history, and foster pride in local culture (Suryaningsih, 2021). This can be implemented through cultural-themed activities, Javanese Day activities, or project-based learning.

5. Traditional Food

Traditional food is a form of cultural heritage that reflects the identity and distinctive characteristics of a region's people. In Javanese culture, traditional foods such as *jenang*, *tiwul*, *gethuk*, *apem*, *klepon*, and *jadah* hold historical and philosophical value closely linked to rituals, celebrations, and daily life. According to Pramudito (2017), traditional food plays a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity through culinary practices across generations. Introducing traditional food to early childhood can enrich sensory experiences, broaden cultural horizons, and foster a love of local foods. In kindergarten, this introduction can be done through simple cooking activities, projects with the theme "My Culture," or the introduction of Javanese food symbols in learning media.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey with a quantitative descriptive approach. The needs assessment approach was chosen because the research objective was to map the gap between ideal conditions (expected implementation of Javanese culture in kindergarten) and actual conditions on the ground. The data obtained can then inform decision-making and design targeted cultural preservation programs. A similar approach was used in a quantitative descriptive study of the need for cultural infusion in early childhood education (Gifari, 2024).

The subjects of this study were kindergarten teachers, principals or administrators, and parents/guardians. Respondents were selected based on their roles as direct implementers of learning. The primary instrument was a Likert-based needs questionnaire with a 1-5 scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This questionnaire measured perceptions and levels of need for each variable, such as Javanese language, etiquette, traditional clothing, and traditional food.

The variables studied included the use of Javanese language in daily life, the application of Javanese etiquette, such as polite greetings to teachers, classroom behavior rules, and the inculcation of the value of tolerance. Children's knowledge of traditional clothing such as *Sabukwolo* and *Kencongan*, introduction to Javanese food including the names, ingredients, and cultural context of traditional foods within the learning theme, and Javanese etiquette such as polite words like *Monggo*, *Matur Nuwu*, *Nyuwum Sewu*. Each indicator was formulated into a measurable questionnaire item to allow for the calculation of an average score per variable. Studies on the application of similar components in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) have been widely reported in recent local literature. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively – including frequency calculations and percentages.

RESEARCH RESULT

A survey of the implementation of Javanese culture in kindergarten education in Yogyakarta shows that the preservation of local cultural values in early childhood remains low. This data indicates that the role of educational institutions, families, and the social environment in transmitting Javanese culture is not yet optimal. The figure for Javanese cultural identity crisis, which reached 82% of institutions, indicates that most children claim to be experiencing an identity crisis.

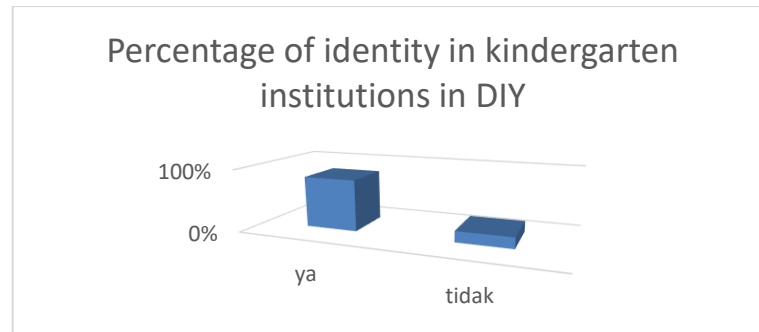


Figure 1 Graph of the percentage of identity crisis in DIY kindergarten institutions

The identity crisis experienced by institutions in DIY kindergartens is characterized by minimal use of Javanese language, low knowledge of Javanese clothing, inadequate introduction to traditional foods, and low levels of habituation of Javanese etiquette.

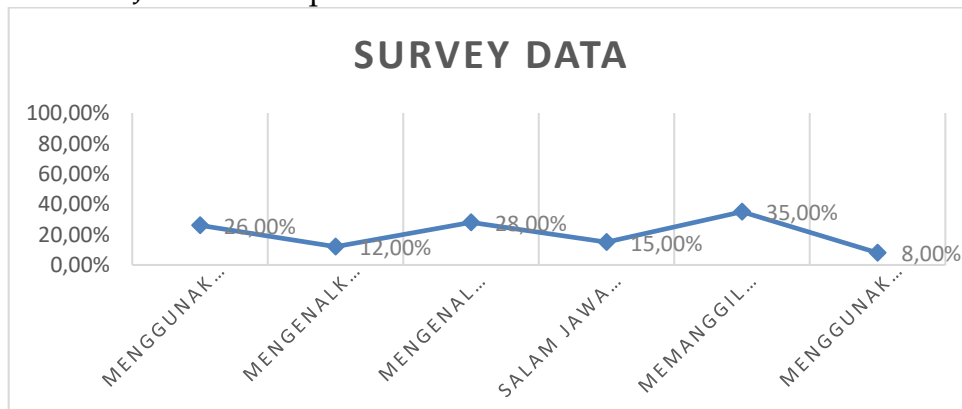


Figure 2. graph of the results of the Javanese cultural learning survey

The use of Javanese, including manners and politeness, is very low. 74% of children do not use Javanese in everyday conversation, either at school or at home. This may be due to two main factors: (1) teachers do not make it a habit to use Javanese as the language of instruction; (2) parents at home rarely use Javanese with their children. This condition has an impact on children's ability to understand Javanese at all levels and loses the cultural aspects contained within the language.

As many as 88% of children are unfamiliar with Javanese traditional clothing, including distinctive elements such as the Sabukwolo (belt) and Kencongan (kencongan). Traditional clothing is a symbol of local wisdom that embodies the philosophy of simplicity, elegance, and Javanese values. This lack

of familiarity may occur because schools rarely hold culturally themed activities, such as traditional fashion shows or thematic learning about traditional clothing. The high figure of 72% of children who are not introduced to traditional Javanese food indicates that schools and families have not yet incorporated culinary culture as part of thematic learning. In fact, traditional foods such as *jadah*, *gatos*, *tiwul*, *geplak*, and others are cultural artifacts that can be used to introduce history, local wisdom, and social skills through cooking activities.

Several forms of politeness that should be characteristic of Javanese children are actually very rarely practiced: 85% of children do not say "sugeng enjing", "sugeng siang", or "sugeng sonten". 65% of children do not address teachers as "Ma'am/Pak Guru". 92% of children do not use the expression "nyuwun sewu" when asking for permission. These figures indicate that Javanese politeness values are not consistently instilled. Javanese politeness is at the core of Javanese character, which upholds respect, humility, and courtesy. This lack of familiarity could lead to a decline in social etiquette in the future.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of Javanese cultural elements in kindergarten learning which include language, etiquette/*unggah-ungguh*, traditional clothing, traditional food, and values such as *rukun*, *tepa selira*, and *nrimo ing pandum* has been implemented, but the levels are still varied in each educational unit. The bar/pie chart data presented previously shows that the majority of teachers have introduced aspects of language and etiquette, but aspects of philosophical values and cultural practices (traditional clothing, food, and thematic cultural activities) have not been optimally implemented. This indicates a gap between the objectives of the culture-based curriculum and learning practices in the field.

These findings suggest that the implementation of Javanese culture in kindergarten learning still requires more structured program interventions, such as: integration of Javanese culture in RPPM/RPPH, teacher training on Javanese culture, daily habituation (Javanese morning greeting), thematic cultural activities (food, clothing, language, traditional games), school-parent collaboration in cultural habituation at home.

Kindergarten learning based on local wisdom helps shape children's cultural identity from an early age and supports holistic development, including social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development (Ita & Ngonu, 2025). The integration of local values into early childhood education facilitates character development, including tolerance, responsibility, a sense of community, and respect for culture (Sakti, 2024). The high percentage of respondents reporting "not familiar with Javanese culture" indicates that without local culture-based educational interventions, the younger generation is vulnerable to losing their cultural identity. This aligns with the theory that the educational environment and family play a crucial role in the transfer of culture (local wisdom) to the next generation.

In addition, Santoso & Widodo (2023) emphasized that regional culture-based programs—including traditional clothing, folklore, games, and traditional

food—can strengthen children's identity and prevent cultural erosion due to modernization.

This research aligns with the theory of Koentjaraningrat and Bronfenbrenner, which emphasizes that culture is inherited through a child's immediate environment (family, school, and community). When these three environments no longer reinforce local culture, an identity crisis becomes inevitable. Local research in Indonesia has found a similar trend: young children are increasingly distancing themselves from regional languages and local wisdom due to the dominance of modern popular culture.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results show that the implementation of Javanese culture in kindergartens remains very low and has not become an integral part of daily habits. 82% of institutions are experiencing a cultural identity crisis. 74% of children do not use Javanese in daily conversation, 88% are unfamiliar with traditional clothing such as Sabukwolo and Kencongan, and 72% are not introduced to traditional Javanese food. Furthermore, the adoption of politeness practices such as Sugeng Enjing (respectful greeting), Matur Nuwun (respectful greeting), and Nyuwun Sewu (respectful greeting) is also very minimal, with a prevalence of 85–92%. These findings indicate that the process of cultural transmission from family, school, and the community is not yet optimal.

Based on these results, this study concludes that cultural education in Yogyakarta kindergartens requires more planned, structured, and collaborative interventions. Schools need to integrate Javanese cultural values into the RPPM/RPPH (Children's Learning Plan), strengthen teacher capacity through training, and build collaboration with parents in language and politeness practices. Without a comprehensive culture-based education strategy, early childhood children have the potential to become increasingly distant from their local identity. These findings emphasize the importance of designing learning models and cultural preservation programs that are relevant, contextual, and sustainable..

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Further research needs to test the effectiveness of Javanese culture-based learning through experimental designs to determine its impact on children's language, manners, and etiquette. Developing a more valid cultural identity instrument is also crucial for more accurate measurement. Furthermore, longitudinal studies and family and community involvement are needed to understand environmental support for cultural inheritance. Comparative studies across regions can also provide insight into the factors influencing the success of cultural implementation in kindergarten.

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