

Management of the Nationality Center as an Effort to Instill the Value of Love for the Homeland in Early Childhood at TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda

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ABSTRAK

This research was conducted with the aim of deeply examining the management of the Nationality Center (Sentra Kebangsaan) as a strategy for cultivating the values of love for the homeland (cinta tanah air) in early childhood at TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda. The background for this study stems from the awareness that early childhood education plays a fundamental role in shaping character, morals, and national identity from the initial stages of growth. Instilling a sense of national pride must be designed through learning experiences that are engaging, relevant to daily life, and meaningful to the child. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, involving two main informants: the school principal and a teacher from Kindergarten A who is directly involved in managing the Nationality Center. Data collection was performed through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation review, such as the Daily Lesson Implementation Plan (RPPH) and records of children's activities. Data analysis followed the stages of the Miles and Huberman model, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the management system of the Nationality Center at TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda comprises: planning learning programs oriented toward national values, implementing play activities that foster a spirit of nationalism, and continuous evaluation to strengthen the child's character of love for the homeland. With structured and consistent management, the Nationality Center functions as a strategic educational vehicle that plays a role in building national identity, moral attitudes, and a sense of pride in the nation since the preschool age.

Keywords: *Value of-love; Nationality; Character education; Early childhood.*

INTRODUCTION

The role of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is crucial as the initial foundation for building a child's personality, character, and morals sustainably (Megandisari et al., 2025). At this developmental stage, children begin to adapt to various social, cultural, and moral values that serve as the basis for forming their self-identity and sense of nationhood. One of the main values that must be developed from an early age is the spirit of loving the homeland. This value plays an essential role in building national pride, instilling an appreciation for differences, and strengthening social bonds in the child's immediate environment (Yatemi et al., 2024)). The process of instilling love for the homeland in early childhood is insufficient if limited to just introducing national symbols like the flag or the national anthem; it must also involve cultivating behaviors that reflect nationalism in daily life. According to Liu

& Hong (2024), patriotic education in the preschool years significantly contributes to the formation of a child's national identity, where their level of affection for the homeland increases with age, although it remains concrete and contextual.

The implementation of national values in the PAUD environment is ideally carried out through an approach that is fun, exploratory, and appropriate for the child's developmental stage. Learning that emphasizes direct experience allows children to grasp the meaning of nationhood in a natural and meaningful way. Ekman Ladru et al. (2024) assert that learning about nationality can be effectively realized through activities that link elements of nature and the child's daily life. In their research in Sweden, they showed that nature exploration can foster a sense of belonging to the nation and strengthen national identity through concrete experiences, social interaction, and activities that promote cooperation. This aligns with the views of Megandisari et al. (2025), who stress the importance of integrating national and local values into character education in PAUD so children can recognize their national identity from an early age. Through structured, culturally-oriented play activities, teachers have the opportunity to develop social awareness, tolerant attitudes, and a spirit of togetherness in children.

One institution that has successfully implemented such an approach is TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda, which employs a center-and-circle-based learning system. This school created the innovative Nationality Center (Sentra Kebangsaan) as a thematic space focused on cultivating the value of love for the homeland through meaningful play activities. In this center, children are introduced to various national symbols, Indonesia's cultural diversity, and noble national values through fun and interactive activities. To achieve optimal results, an effective management system is required, spanning the stages of planning, implementation, and program evaluation. Yulianti & Rusmini. (2023) explain that structured and professional governance of a PAUD institution is a primary factor in improving the quality of learning and achieving the goals of early childhood education. With good management, the institution can ensure that every learning activity proceeds in accordance with the character education vision it carries.

In addition to strengthening the managerial aspect, character education plays a fundamental role in shaping children's morality and national consciousness. Yatemi et al. (2024) affirm that character education in PAUD is a strategic step for cultivating an individual who is noble and responsible. In the context of modern social life, Aisyah & Fitriatin. (2025) warn that technological advancement and global influence can lead to moral degradation if educational institutions do not actively instill national values from an early age. Therefore, PAUD must be at the forefront of strengthening children's national character and morals through integrative learning programs. In line with this, Fikriyah. (2024) emphasizes that

consistent and planned character education can be an effective solution for building national morality through the reinforcement of ethical, empathetic, and national values.

Based on these diverse views and research findings, this study focuses on analyzing the management of the Nationality Center at TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda as a strategy for instilling the value of love for the homeland in early childhood. This research attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the processes of planning, implementation, and evaluation of nationality-based learning activities applied in the institution. The results of this study are expected to make a practical contribution to improving the quality of character education in PAUD and enriching the scientific discourse on early childhood education management within the context of strengthening national values. With effective management implementation, the Nationality Center has the potential to become a learning model capable of fostering a younger generation with strong character, national identity, and moral commitment to the Indonesian nation.

METHOD

Subjects of Research

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative approach with the primary objective of obtaining an in-depth, holistic understanding of the implementation and management of the Nationality Center (Sentra Kebangsaan) as a strategic effort to instill the value of love for the homeland (cinta tanah air) in early childhood. The research was conducted at TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda, located in Sungai Kunjang Sub-district, Samarinda City, East Kalimantan Province. The research subjects were selected based on their crucial roles in the program's success, consisting of two main informants: the school principal and the Kindergarten A teacher responsible for the Nationality Center. These individuals were chosen due to their direct involvement in the planning, execution, and supervision of the activities focused on national value development. The data collected included primary data (derived from interviews and direct observation) and secondary data (institutional documents, including the Daily Lesson Implementation Plan (RPPH), activity photographs, and records).

Instruments and Data Collection

Data collection employed three synergistic techniques to ensure depth and triangulation of information: in-depth semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation.

Interviews were the primary method for gathering rich, detailed primary data. They were conducted with the two key informants to thoroughly explore information concerning the pedagogical management within the Nationality Center,

the specific strategies used by the teacher and principal to instill the value of love for the homeland, and the nature of activities supporting national character development.

Direct observation was performed within the Nationality Center to capture the reality of the implementation. This included observing routine activities such as the morning pledge ceremonies, simple scouting exercises, planting projects, and various cultural-themed activities designed to enhance the children's national spirit.

Documentation served as secondary data, involving the collection of activity photos, children's work products, and school archives. This material provided tangible evidence to support and corroborate the findings derived from the interviews and observations, thereby strengthening the validity of the research.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this research was executed using the systematic model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), involving three concurrent and cyclical stages: Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing/Verification.

Data Reduction: This stage involved the selection, focusing, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of the raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Only information strictly relevant to the research focus—the management of the Nationality Center in instilling the value of love for the homeland—was retained and organized.

Data Display: The reduced data were then narratively organized into a cohesive structure based on emerging themes. The display focused on illustrating key themes such as the planning process, the implementation of national value-based learning, the roles of teachers and the principal, and the contextual support from the school and parents.

Conclusion Drawing/Verification: In the final stage, the researcher interpreted the meaning of the displayed data, searching for underlying patterns, relationships, and key findings that clearly illustrated the application and effectiveness of the value of love for the homeland through the Nationality Center activities. This stage was conducted iteratively, consistent with the views of scholars like Ash-Shiddiqi et al. (2025) and Rahmani et al. (2025), to ensure the accuracy, objectivity, and holistic depiction of the reality observed in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial stage of implementing the Nationality Center at TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda begins with a **systematic and collaborative planning process**. The principal, teachers, and the curriculum team meet to design learning programs aimed at strengthening nationalistic values. Each plan is documented in the Daily Lesson Implementation Plan (RPPH) and adjusted to weekly themes such as "Love

for Indonesian Culture," "My Hero Role Model," and "My Environment is My Responsibility." These themes are then processed into learning experiences that foster a sense of national pride through enjoyable play activities.

The learning environment is also carefully prepared to represent the richness of Indonesian culture. Classrooms are decorated with children's work featuring archipelago nuances, such as batik, traditional houses, national heroes, and Indonesian maps. Teachers prepare learning aids in the form of small flags, traditional attire, and pictures depicting ethnic and cultural diversity so that children can recognize their national identity through direct observation. Thus, the planning stage not only contains activity designs but also builds a learning atmosphere that brings the spirit of nationhood to life in every corner of the classroom.

Implementation of Nationality-Based Activities

The execution of activities in the Nationality Center is designed to provide concrete and meaningful learning experiences for children. Based on the observation results, activities are carried out through various forms of games and tasks that engage children's cognitive, social, and emotional aspects. Routine activities include morning ceremonies and pledges, singing national songs, role-playing as heroic figures, and simple scouting activities such as marching and mini community service (*kerja bakti*). Additionally, children are involved in cultural projects such as getting acquainted with traditional clothing, making miniature flags, or cooking regional specialty foods together with teachers and parents.

Every activity is linked to character values such as responsibility, tolerance, cooperation, discipline, and the spirit of mutual assistance (*gotong royong*). The teacher acts as a mentor who encourages children to understand the meaning behind each activity. For instance, after role-playing about a hero, the teacher invites the children to discuss the meaning of courage and love for the homeland. With this approach, learning does not just focus on symbolic knowledge but also shapes emotional experiences that strengthen the child's sense of nationhood from an early age.

Synergy and Stakeholder Involvement

The success of the Nationality Center is inseparable from the synergy among the teachers, the principal, and the parents. The principal functions as the director and policymaker, ensuring activities align with the institution's vision. Teachers are the frontline personnel who implement learning activities and act as role models in daily behavior, striving to demonstrate a nationalistic attitude through simple actions like arriving on time, maintaining cleanliness, and respecting differences.

Parents also play a crucial role as partners in the child's character formation process. The institution organizes joint activities such as the "Archipelago Culture

Week" and "Flag Day," where parents directly participate in competitions or exhibitions of the children's work. These activities not only strengthen the emotional bond between the school and the family but also extend the habituation of national values into the home environment. The involvement of all parties makes the Nationality Center program more vibrant, sustainable, and meaningful for the child's development.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital part of the learning management system in the Nationality Center, conducted iteratively and progressively to ensure optimal achievement of educational goals. At the daily stage, teachers assess children's behavior and participation. Weekly, the center team holds meetings to review activity effectiveness and identify constraints. A final semester evaluation is conducted jointly with the principal and parents to assess the child's development in understanding and applying national values.

The evaluation results indicate positive changes in the children's social and emotional aspects. Children appear more enthusiastic, are able to cooperate in groups, show caring attitudes, and recognize national symbols well. This data then informs the planning for the subsequent semester to ensure the program remains innovative and relevant. Systematically conducted evaluation helps the institution ensure the sustainability of educational quality and maintain the consistency of the Nationality Center program as a means of strengthening national character.

Discussion of Management Effectiveness

The research findings indicate that the management of the Nationality Center at TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda reflects the implementation of comprehensive and targeted learning management. The integration of planning, implementation, and evaluation creates a system that supports the continuous formation of national character. Through play activities packaged educationally, children gain direct experience in understanding the values of love for the homeland without being burdened by abstract concepts.

The approach used proves effective in fostering nationalistic attitudes and positive morals in early childhood. Experience-based learning enables children not just to recognize state symbols but also to internalize nationalistic behaviors such as mutual assistance (*gotong royong*), responsibility, and mutual respect. The support from teachers, the principal, and parental participation are decisive factors in the success of this program. With sound management and engaging activities, the Nationality Center can serve as an **excellent practice model** for other PAUD institutions in instilling national values from an early age.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the introduction and research methodology indicates that the management of the Nationality Center at TK Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Samarinda serves as an innovative approach to cultivating the spirit of nationalism and love for the homeland in early childhood through play activities that are exploratory, interactive, and aligned with the children's developmental characteristics. The successful implementation of this program is supported by the visionary leadership of the principal and the competence of the teachers in systematically designing, implementing, and evaluating learning activities. Furthermore, the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure along with active parental involvement in school activities also reinforces the effectiveness of the nationality-based character learning. Through professional institutional governance oriented toward character formation, the Nationality Center plays a vital role as an educational model capable of integrating moral, social, and national cultural values, thereby contributing to the development of Indonesian children with a nationalistic spirit, noble character, and a sense of responsibility toward their nation from an early age.

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4th Annual International Conference on Islamic Education and Language (AICIEL) 2025
“*Transforming Islamic Higher Education through Innovation and Research for Sustainable Development*”

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