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Learning to Sing Indonesia Raya Songs to Cultivate the Character of Love for the Motherland in Grade 1 Students of Ngijo 01 Elementary School, Semarang City

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A B S T R A C T

Despite the strong emphasis on character education in primary schools, empirical studies examining practical classroom-based strategies for cultivating patriotic values among early-grade students remain limited. In many schools, the singing of the Indonesian national anthem Indonesia Raya is commonly practiced as a ceremonial routine rather than as a structured pedagogical activity. This study aims to examine how the habituation of singing Indonesia Raya can function as a learning strategy to foster the character of love for the motherland among Grade 1 students at SD Negeri Ngijo 01 Semarang. A qualitative case study design was employed involving twenty-four students, one classroom teacher, and the school principal. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and analyzed through coding, behavioral categorization, and thematic interpretation. The findings show that 70.83% of students demonstrated disciplined participation within the Maxi and Consistent categories, while 29.17% were categorized as Developing and Intervention, indicating the need for additional pedagogical reinforcement. These findings suggest that structured musical habituation, supported by teacher modeling and contextual explanations, can facilitate the gradual internalization of patriotic character among early elementary students.

1. Introduction

Strengthening students' sense of national identity has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary elementary education. Rapid globalization, technological advancement, and children's increasing exposure to digital media have influenced how young learners perceive cultural values and social identity. Although global connectivity offers broader opportunities for knowledge exchange,

it may also weaken children's emotional attachment to national identity and collective cultural values. In school environments, this phenomenon is often reflected in declining enthusiasm during ceremonial activities, reduced participation when singing national songs, and limited understanding of patriotic symbols among elementary school students. These conditions highlight the importance of educational strategies that cultivate not only students' cognitive understanding of nationalism but also their emotional engagement and behavioral commitment to patriotic values from an early age. In the Indonesian education system, character education is strongly emphasized through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*), which promotes the development of the Pancasila Student Profile. This framework includes core values such as cooperation, global diversity, responsibility, and love for the nation.

Despite the strong policy emphasis on character formation, its practical implementation in schools often remains procedural. Patriotic activities such as flag ceremonies and the singing of national songs are frequently conducted as routine obligations rather than as meaningful learning experiences. Consequently, students may participate in these activities without fully understanding the symbolic meaning and moral values embedded within them. This discrepancy between policy expectations and classroom practices indicates the need to transform ceremonial routines into pedagogically meaningful learning processes that support the internalization of patriotic values. Early elementary education represents a critical developmental stage in which behavioral habits and social values are formed through repeated experiences and guided participation.

At this stage, children tend to learn through imitation, observation, and structured routines involving sensory and motor engagement. Educational psychology literature suggests that young learners internalize values more effectively when learning activities incorporate rhythmic movement, collective participation, and observable behavioral modeling. Music therefore represents a particularly relevant pedagogical medium in early childhood learning contexts. National songs combine rhythm, symbolic language, and collective expression, enabling students to experience patriotic values not only cognitively but also emotionally and physically. When integrated into classroom routines, singing national songs may function as a practical strategy to strengthen discipline, cooperation, and respect for national symbols among young learners.

Previous studies on character education have predominantly examined macro-level aspects such as school leadership, institutional management, and curriculum implementation. Several studies published in the *Journal of Educational Sciences* emphasize the importance of these institutional factors in supporting character development. For example, Dewi et al. (2025), highlight the role of school leadership in organizing character education programs, while Ridiyawati et al. (2025), demonstrate that principal supervision contributes to improving the quality of learning processes. Similarly, Rifalda et al. (2024), report that effective classroom management strategies can enhance students' learning independence, and Hasbi et al. (2024), show that integrating local cultural wisdom through Pancasila Student Profile activities strengthens students' cultural identity. In

addition, Lucardo (2026), found that digital learning worksheets oriented toward independent character development can improve students' learning outcomes and responsibility during classroom activities. Although these studies provide important insights into character education implementation, most of them focus on leadership roles, instructional innovation, or curriculum-based programs rather than examining routine classroom practices that shape students' daily behavioral habits. Other research also demonstrates that innovative pedagogical approaches can support students' moral and civic development. Effendi et al. (2026), for instance, show that inspirational stories about national figures can strengthen students' understanding of civic values, while Hardiman et al. (2025) highlight that guided repetition and consistent teacher modeling support the gradual development of disciplined learning habits.

Meanwhile, research by Khusnunnisa and Andriani (2025) demonstrates that innovative learning strategies can significantly increase student engagement during classroom instruction. However, empirical studies investigating how routine-based musical activities can function as structured pedagogical strategies for cultivating patriotic character among early-grade elementary students remain limited. In particular, little research has examined how the habituation of singing the national anthem can be integrated into classroom learning routines to facilitate the gradual internalization of patriotic values among young learners. Addressing this gap, the present study examines how the habituation of singing the national anthem *Indonesia Raya* can function as a structured classroom learning activity for cultivating the character of love for the motherland among early elementary students. Specifically, this study aims to analyze the implementation of singing *Indonesia Raya* as a routine classroom practice and to explore how this musical habituation contributes to the development of patriotic character among Grade I students at SD Negeri Ngijo 01 Semarang. By focusing on routine-based musical activities within classroom contexts, this study contributes to the literature on character education by providing empirical evidence on how structured musical habituation can serve as a micro-pedagogical mechanism for strengthening patriotic values in early primary education.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of how the habituation of singing the national anthem *Indonesia Raya* contributes to the development of patriotic character among early elementary school students. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to explore social phenomena within their natural contexts, particularly when examining behavioral patterns, classroom interactions, and the meanings constructed by participants during learning activities. Through this approach, the study aimed to capture how the routine singing activity was implemented in classroom practice and how students responded behaviorally as part of character education activities. The research was conducted at SD Negeri Ngijo 01, located in Semarang City, Indonesia. The school was selected purposively because it consistently implements the singing of the national anthem *Indonesia*

Raya as part of its daily classroom routine, making it a relevant setting for examining the pedagogical role of musical habituation in strengthening patriotic character among young learners.

The participants in this study consisted of twenty-four Grade I students as the primary subjects of observation, one classroom teacher who directly implemented the singing activity during classroom routines, and the school principal who supervises the implementation of character education programs in the school. The classroom teacher and the principal served as key informants who provided contextual information regarding the objectives, strategies, and perceived outcomes of the habituation program. The research instruments included observation guidelines, semi-structured interview guides, and documentation checklists. The observation instrument was designed to record students' behavioral participation during the singing activity, including indicators such as posture, attentiveness, vocal participation, and discipline while performing the national anthem.

The semi-structured interview guide consisted of open-ended questions aimed at exploring the perspectives of the classroom teacher and the school principal regarding the implementation of the singing routine and its perceived contribution to students' character development. Documentation instruments were used to collect supporting materials such as lesson plans, classroom activity records, and school documents related to character education programs. Data were collected through three primary techniques: non-participant classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Classroom observations were conducted to examine students' behavioral responses during the singing of the national anthem *Indonesia Raya*. Interviews were carried out with the classroom teacher and the school principal to obtain deeper insights into the objectives of the habituation program, the strategies used to guide students during the activity, and the perceived educational outcomes.

Documentation analysis was conducted by reviewing relevant school documents, including lesson plans and activity reports. Visual documentation used in this study was obtained directly during classroom observations with permission from the school administration and teachers, and all figures were embedded within the manuscript to comply with the publication guidelines of the *Journal of Educational Sciences*. Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative process consisting of several stages. First, all collected data from observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation were organized and transcribed. Second, an initial coding process was conducted to identify meaningful units related to students' behavioral participation during the singing activity. Third, similar codes were grouped into broader categories representing patterns of engagement and discipline. These categories were then interpreted using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to the process of character internalization through musical habituation.

The findings were presented in descriptive narratives supported by simple categorical tables to facilitate the interpretation of observed behavioral patterns. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed.

Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, namely the classroom teacher and the school principal. Method triangulation involved comparing findings obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted by returning preliminary interpretations to the teacher informant to confirm the accuracy of the findings. Dependability was maintained by documenting the research procedures systematically to ensure that the analytical process could be traced and evaluated. Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process.

Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from the classroom teacher and the school principal as research informants. Because the primary participants were young students, parental approval was facilitated through the school to ensure that classroom observations complied with ethical standards in educational research. All collected data were treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. The duration of the research was relatively limited because the study focused on a specific routine activity that occurs regularly within the classroom schedule. Repeated observations of the singing routine were conducted during the research period to capture consistent patterns of students' participation and behavioral responses.

3. Results and Discussion

Behavioral Patterns During National Anthem Habituation

The observational findings demonstrate that the habituation of singing *Indonesia Raya* functions as a structured behavioral routine that supports the development of disciplined participation among Grade 1 students. Rather than merely describing student participation, the analysis examines how repeated musical routines shape behavioral regulation and attentional stability during patriotic activities. Routine singing activities in elementary schools can strengthen students' sense of national identity and pride in their country when teachers provide explanations about the meaning of national song lyrics (Zamzami et al. 2025). Table 1 presents the distribution of students' behavioral participation based on the Maxi–Consistent–Developing–Intervention classification framework.

Table 1. Distribution of Student Behavior Categories During the Singing Activity

Behavior Category	Operational Indicators	n	%
Maxi	Full attention, upright posture throughout the activity, demonstrates self-correction, and shows strong engagement during singing.	6	25.00
Consistent	Mostly focused during the activity, maintains proper posture, occasionally requires minor prompting from the teacher.	11	45.83
Developing	Attention decreases in the middle of the song, participation is partial, and self-correction occurs intermittently.	6	25.00

Intervention	Frequently distracted, posture is inconsistent, and requires repeated guidance from the teacher.	1	4.17
Total		24	100.00

The findings indicate that 70.83% of students fall within the Maxi and Consistent categories, suggesting relatively stable participation in the singing routine. This pattern highlights how repeated exposure to structured activities encourages the gradual formation of disciplined behavioral habits among young learners. The results support the argument that routine-based pedagogical practices can serve as effective mechanisms for shaping students' behavioral engagement. Character education research emphasizes that repeated participation in structured activities enables students to internalize behavioral norms through habit formation and guided practice. For example, character education implemented through contextual classroom learning has been shown to foster students' responsibility, cooperation, and social awareness (Hanifa et al. 2025).

Ceremony Context: Dynamics of Formal Singing Practice

The dynamics of students' participation during formal ceremonial activities provide important insights into how patriotic routines influence behavioral discipline among early-grade learners. Observational data indicate that the ceremonial setting functions as a structured social environment where students collectively perform symbolic national practices. The arrangement of students during the singing of the national anthem creates visible behavioral expectations related to posture, attentiveness, and synchronized participation. These expectations are reinforced through both institutional norms and peer observation. As shown in Figure 1, Grade 1 students stand in a structured formation while singing the national anthem during the school ceremony.

Figure 1. Students' Ready Position During the Singing of the National Anthem Indonesia Raya

From an analytical perspective, the ceremonial environment operates as a social regulation mechanism. The presence of peers, teachers, and school authority

structures encourages students to conform to expected behavioral norms. This social dimension plays an important role in shaping students' participation, particularly in early elementary education where observational learning remains a dominant developmental mechanism. Peer modeling further strengthens this process. Students categorized in the Maxi group often demonstrate consistent posture and vocal participation, which serves as observable behavioral references for their peers. Through repeated observation, other students gradually adopt similar behaviors. This finding aligns with research on character education that highlights the importance of role modeling and structured school programs in strengthening students' moral development. Effective character education programs rely not only on instructional content but also on consistent modeling by teachers and peers within daily school routines (Dewi et al. 2025).

Classroom Context: Structured Habituation and Immersive Practice

While ceremonial activities provide a formal structure for patriotic practice, classroom-based singing routines offer a more controlled learning environment that enables teachers to provide immediate pedagogical guidance and contextual explanation. In classroom settings, teachers can directly monitor students' posture, vocal participation, and attentional focus during the singing activity, allowing disciplined behaviors such as upright posture, synchronized participation, and self-correction to emerge and stabilize earlier than emotional solemnity. This pattern reflects a developmental sequence in which concrete motor routines precede abstract affective understanding (Prasetyo, 2021). As illustrated in Figure 2, students participate in a structured classroom singing session where the teacher provides visual cues and guidance during the activity, while the whiteboard displays the lyrics of the national anthem in large, color-coded writing to support memorization and encourage active participation.

Figure 2. Classroom Practice of Singing the National Anthem Indonesia Raya

Within classroom contexts, teachers play a mediating role in linking symbolic patriotic values with concrete student behavior (Ristiani, Sularso, & Mwansa, 2025). During the singing activity, teachers occasionally pause to explain the

meaning of specific lyrics and relate them to everyday classroom practices such as cooperation, responsibility, and mutual respect. This pedagogical mediation is crucial because early elementary learners often require concrete contextualization to understand abstract moral values. Through such explanations, the singing routine evolves from a ceremonial ritual into a structured learning activity that integrates emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions (Dewi, Sanjaya, & Swastika, 2025). Research on character education in elementary schools similarly emphasizes the importance of contextual learning experiences that connect moral values with real-life situations. When character education is embedded within daily learning activities, students are more likely to internalize moral values through meaningful participation rather than through abstract instruction alone (Dewi et al. 2025). In addition to ceremonial and classroom singing sessions, the daily habituation of the national anthem also occurs as part of routine classroom preparation before learning activities begin. This daily repetition plays an essential role in strengthening students' familiarity with the anthem's melody and lyrics while simultaneously reinforcing behavioral discipline. Through repeated participation, students gradually develop automatic motor responses such as standing upright, maintaining eye focus, and synchronizing their voices with peers. The process of daily habituation is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows the teacher guiding students during the classroom singing routine.

Figure 3. Daily Classroom Habituation of the National Anthem Indonesia Raya

The teacher is positioned directly in front of the class with one arm raised to signal posture and breathing cues. A whiteboard behind the teacher displays the anthem's lyrics written in large, color-coded fonts to support lyric memorization. Several students are shown glancing at the lyrics while singing, indicating cognitive engagement. Daily classroom habituation allowed immediate feedback and corrective modeling. When a student's posture wavered, the teacher provided individualized gestures such as a gentle hand-raise or eye contact that helped the student self-correct. This pedagogical approach aligns with the cognitive–behavioral principle that immediate, short-duration reinforcement strengthens motor routines and gradually supports voluntary behavioral regulation (Dewi et al., 2025). Classroom contexts also minimized distractors present in the open setting of

ceremonies, which likely contributed to greater stabilization of attention and greater confidence in vocal projection. In addition to improving disciplined participation, the teacher occasionally paused during rehearsals to explain key lyrics in age-appropriate language. For example, when singing about "unity," the teacher related the phrase to the class's group work during art activities. This form of contextual explanation served as a bridge from motor compliance toward meaning construction, indicating that classroom habituation not only reinforces behavior but also fosters early conceptual understanding.

Analytical Interpretation: Why Physical Discipline Emerges Before Emotional Solemnity

A defining pattern in the data is that physical discipline such as posture and synchronized participation emerges earlier and remains more stable than emotional solemnity. This distinction likely reflects a sequence in developmental processing where concrete motor imitation and externally guided regulation precede internally constructed affective meaning (Preniqi et al. 2022). Early motor behaviors are tangible and observable, making them easier for young learners to imitate and execute (Prasetyo, 2021). In contrast, emotional solemnity involves sustained attention, symbolic meaning interpretation, and affect regulation, which are cognitively demanding processes that continue to develop throughout early childhood (Kirisci et al. 2025). Teachers consistently remarked that even students who maintained excellent posture sometimes displayed neutral or playful facial expressions, indicating an emerging but not fully mature affective grasp of the anthem's symbolic gravity. This finding resonates with developmental psychology research, which posits that affective engagement with symbolic content becomes stable only after motor and basic cognitive skills have been internalized (Capio et al., 2024).

Interaction Between Habituation and Drill: Mechanisms of Internalization

The mechanisms through which habituation and drill support character internalization involve intertwined cognitive, behavioral, and contextual processes. Repetition through daily singing enables lyric memorization and melodic automaticity, which in turn reduces cognitive load (Rorintulus & Wuntu, 2023). As lyric recall becomes procedural, cognitive resources can be redirected toward behavioral refinement and emotional attention. This pattern echoes general learning theories in early childhood that identify repetition as a foundational mechanism for encoding complex patterns into automatic neural responses. Modeling provides a concrete template for action. In Grade 1, students rely heavily on imitation; the teacher's posture, tone, and facial expressiveness served as anchors that students could replicate. Without modeling, drill alone risks devolving into mechanical repetition devoid of moral direction. With modeling, repetition acquires intentionality, channeling students toward disciplined participation rather than perfunctory chanting. Crucially, contextual explanations transform ritual into lived experience. When teachers explicitly connect anthem values such as unity, pride, and responsibility to daily classroom expectations, students begin to associate these abstract principles with tangible behaviors. For example, linking the meaning of

"protecting the homeland" to group activities such as cleaning the classroom or cooperating in group tasks bridges the symbolic content of the anthem with lived moral conduct. This contextual linkage is necessary for the habituation to transcend mere procedural compliance and enter the domain of internalized value systems.

Theoretical Significance: Conceptualizing the Maxi–Consistent–Developing–Intervention Framework

A significant contribution of this study lies in the conceptualization of the **Maxi–**Consistent–Developing–Intervention framework as a developmental continuum of character internalization. Traditional character assessment approaches often categorize student behavior into binary outcomes such as disciplined versus undisciplined behavior. While such classifications provide general indicators of conduct, they do not adequately capture the gradual and developmental nature of character formation in early childhood education. The framework proposed in this study conceptualizes character internalization as a progressive process influenced by repetition, behavioral modeling, and pedagogical reinforcement.

- Maxi category reflects autonomous discipline and stable attentional engagement.
- Consistent category represents students who follow routines but occasionally require minor guidance.
- Developing category captures students whose attentional regulation is still emerging.
- Intervention category identifies students who require targeted pedagogical support.

This conceptualization aligns with broader perspectives on character education, which emphasize that moral and civic values are gradually internalized through repeated practice and guided social interaction in school environments. Within this perspective, students develop values through consistent participation in structured educational activities and social learning experiences. Character development therefore cannot be viewed as an instantaneous outcome. Instead, it emerges progressively through continuous engagement with pedagogical routines and social learning dynamics.

Implications for Pedagogical Practice

The findings suggest that physical discipline such as posture and synchronized participation tends to develop earlier than emotional expressions of patriotism. Many students were able to maintain proper posture and actively participate in singing the anthem even though their emotional understanding of patriotic values was still developing. Teacher modeling also played a crucial role in supporting the habituation process (Siddiq, 2024). During the singing activity, the teacher consistently demonstrated appropriate posture and guided students throughout the anthem (Khasanah & Lestari, 2024). This modeling process provided students with a behavioral reference that they could imitate.

Dialogue with Prior Research

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of structured routines and teacher modeling in character education. Dewi et al. (2025) emphasize that effective character education requires consistent pedagogical practices within classroom settings. Hardiman et al. (2025) note that repeated participation in guided activities can strengthen students' behavioral discipline. This study extends previous research by demonstrating that musical habituation can function as a practical classroom-based strategy for cultivating patriotic character among early elementary students (Andaryani et al., 2025). Music-based learning activities, including children's songs, can function as an effective medium for integrating character education within classroom instruction (Tambunan et al. 2024).

4. Conclusion

This study investigated how the habituation of singing the national anthem *Indonesia Raya* contributes to the development of disciplined behavior among Grade 1 students in elementary school. The findings suggest that routine patriotic singing activities function as a structured pedagogical practice that supports the gradual formation of disciplined behavioral patterns. Through repeated participation in both ceremonial and classroom contexts, students develop attentional regulation, coordinated participation, and behavioral conformity to collective norms, indicating that routine-based character education practices can effectively support early behavioral discipline. The study contributes theoretically to the literature on character education by introducing the Maxi–Consistent–Developing–Intervention framework as a developmental continuum of behavioral engagement. Unlike binary categorizations of discipline commonly used in character education studies, this framework conceptualizes behavioral participation as a progressive process shaped by repeated routines, peer modeling, and teacher mediation.

This perspective highlights that character formation in early education emerges gradually through sustained social interaction and pedagogical reinforcement rather than through isolated instructional interventions. From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the importance of integrating structured patriotic routines into daily school practices as part of character education strategies. Teachers play a critical role in facilitating this process by guiding students' participation, modeling disciplined behavior, and contextualizing symbolic national values within everyday classroom experiences. Such pedagogical mediation enables ceremonial activities to evolve into meaningful learning opportunities that support both behavioral regulation and civic awareness among young learners. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within a single school context and relied on a relatively limited observation period, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the analysis focused specifically on the habituation of a single patriotic song, *Indonesia Raya*, without examining other musical or civic routines that may similarly influence character development.

Future research could expand this line of inquiry by employing longitudinal designs, involving multiple school contexts, and exploring diverse forms of routine-based civic practices to better understand how structured school rituals contribute to the long-term development of students' civic character and behavioral discipline.

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