Promoting Cultural Tolerance Through Website-Based Multicultural Content of Bengkulu Province for Elementary School Students

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the content and function of a website developed as a digital learning medium to introduce the multicultural heritage of Bengkulu Province to elementary school students. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The instruments used include observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation notes. Direct observations were conducted on the website's content, while interviews involved the website developers and elementary school teachers as early users. The results indicate that the website presents cultural information from nine regencies and one city in Bengkulu Province. The content includes aspects such as History and Geographical Location, Social and Economic Background, Community Diversity, Cultural Heritage, Traditions and Celebrations, Tourism and Historical Sites, and Local Narratives. Each region is presented interactively through a combination of text, images, videos, and simple quizzes to enhance student engagement and understanding of cultural diversity. The content is considered effective as a learning resource for fostering appreciation of cultural differences and promoting tolerance values in the context of digital-era education. The findings recommend further development of collaborative content and integration with local curriculum in elementary schools.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has profoundly transformed various aspects of human life, including the field of education. In the digital era, the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) has become an essential component in supporting effective and contemporary learning processes (Budiarto et al., 2024). Serrano et al. (2019) and Zhao et al. (2024) emphasized that incorporating technology into education enhances access to information, diversifies learning resources, and fosters active student engagement. At the same time, multicultural education plays a pivotal role in shaping a generation capable of coexisting peacefully within a culturally diverse society (Devaki et al., 2025; Jajat, 2025). In the Indonesian context where cultural heterogeneity is deeply embedded instilling values of tolerance and respect for cultural differences from an early age is imperative.

According to Hunduma and Mekuria (2024), multicultural education aims to cultivate cultural awareness, inclusivity, and the capacity to understand diverse cultural perspectives. Supporting this view, Setiawan et al. (2024) and Bustomi et al. (2025) found that integrating multicultural values through digital learning media significantly enhances students' tolerance

and sense of national identity at the elementary level. These findings highlight the urgent need to develop culturally responsive digital learning tools that not only preserve local cultural heritage but also serve as effective instruments for promoting inclusive citizenship and national cohesion among young learners.

This study addresses a critical and timely need in response to the growing demand for contextual, interactive, and culturally relevant digital learning media, especially in the face of ongoing technological advancements and sociocultural challenges. In an era marked by globalization and rapid digitalization, primary school students must be equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with an early understanding of cultural diversity and the values of tolerance. However, existing learning practices at the elementary level remain predominantly text-based and have yet to fully leverage the potential of digital technology as an engaging and educational medium. This gap highlights the urgency of developing culturally responsive digital learning resources that can enhance student engagement, foster intercultural understanding, and support the formation of inclusive character from an early age.

Bengkulu is one of the provinces in Indonesia that possesses a highly diverse cultural heritage, reflecting the identity and local richness of its nine regencies and one municipality. This diversity encompasses historical narratives, traditional customs, languages, and artistic expressions that are integral to the everyday life of its people. The region's cultural wealth originates from the presence of various ethnic groups, including Rejang, Serawai, Pekal, Lembak, Pasemah, Enggano, and Melayu Bengkulu. In addition, the social and cultural landscape of Bengkulu is further enriched by migrant communities such as the Javanese, Minangkabau, Batak, Bugis, and Chinese.

Bengkulu, as a region rich in local culture and traditions, holds significant potential to be utilized as a learning resource, particularly in the context of elementary education. Each ethnic group in Bengkulu maintains its own distinctive characteristics, ranging from local dialects, traditional attire, performing arts, kinship systems, and oral traditions to religious rituals (Reshma, 2023). Cultural expressions such as the Tabot festival from the Melayu Bengkulu, Tari Andun from the Rejang and Serawai communities, and traditional ceremonies of the Enggano people are vivid examples of living heritage that continue to be passed down through generations. This multicultural environment positions Bengkulu as a valuable context for cultivating values of tolerance, mutual respect, and unity.

According to Fitriadi et al. (2024) and Faridah et al. (2024), incorporating this cultural richness into the learning process is essential for enhancing student engagement, strengthening cultural identity, and promoting character development. For instance, the poetry found in the Sekujang tradition carries moral values that are highly relevant to elementary school curricula (Susanti & Darmansyah, 2022). Similar educational potential can be found in the Nujuh Likur and Tabot traditions, both of which are rich in moral messages that support the development of students' cultural literacy (Darmansyah & Susanti, 2022; Ariffiando & Susanti, 2024). In addition to these traditions, Bengkulu's abundant folktales also serve as meaningful, experience-based learning resources that can further enrich students' understanding of their cultural environment (Ariffiando et al., 2024). However, this rich cultural potential has not yet been fully integrated into the learning process at the elementary school level.

One of the primary challenges is the limited availability of digital learning media that explicitly highlight local cultural heritage as a central educational resource (Orphanidou et al., 2024). This gap contributes to a diminished awareness among younger generations of their regional identity, ultimately impeding efforts to preserve local wisdom and traditional values. Tazhenova et al. (2024) and Ahmar & Azzajjad (2025) found that the incorporation of local culture into educational media significantly enhances students' sense of cultural pride and engagement in the learning process. Furthermore, Heleem (2025) demonstrated that digital technology, when used as a pedagogical tool, can effectively deliver contextual learning materials that are relevant to students' everyday lives. In this context, the development of a website-based learning platform that showcases Bengkulu's multicultural richness becomes both timely and pedagogically relevant. As Liu et al. (2023) and Sakti et al. (2024) emphasize, such platforms not only offer an engaging and interactive medium for introducing local culture but also function as strategic instruments for instilling values of tolerance, mutual respect, and cultural appreciation.

The integration of multicultural content into website-based digital learning media has been shown to significantly enhance cultural awareness and foster tolerance among students from an early age. Ashrafova (2024) emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive teaching in creating inclusive and equitable learning environments. Similarly, Fox and Gay (1995) as well as Banks (2015) argue that when multicultural education is embedded within the curriculum, it can effectively promote cross-cultural understanding and reduce ethnic prejudice particularly at the elementary school level.

In the realm of digital integration, Gan et al. (2015) and Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020) found that digital media especially interactive websites can boost student motivation and expand access to authentic, contextually rich cultural knowledge. Furthermore, Başaran and Turan (2025) demonstrated that the use of locally grounded digital learning platforms can reinforce students' cultural identity and foster social empathy in multicultural settings. Collectively, these findings support the notion that developing multicultural content through website-based media, as proposed in this study, constitutes a relevant and effective strategy for advancing cultural tolerance in primary education.

This study was conducted in response to the growing need for digital learning media that can introduce the multicultural heritage of Bengkulu in an interactive and engaging way for elementary school students. According to Fadhilah & Sumarni (2025) and Efthymiou (2025), the integration of indigenous media into modern educational systems is essential for promoting culturally relevant and inclusive learning. In this context, the development of a locally-based educational website offers an alternative solution to bridge the need for multicultural content while addressing the challenges of implementing multicultural education through digital platforms at the primary school level. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze and describe the content and functions of the developed website as a potential learning tool.

The novelty of this research lies in the creation of a regionally contextualized, interactive website that integrates multicultural content specific to Bengkulu's nine regencies and one city, a type of educational media that remains underexplored in elementary education. The study addresses a clear research gap, namely the lack of empirical studies examining the effectiveness of digital learning platforms that comprehensively incorporate local multicultural content to

support character education, particularly the development of tolerance and cultural identity among young learners. Previous research has largely focused on theoretical discussions of multicultural education or relied on conventional media. Therefore, this study offers a meaningful contribution to the development of culturally relevant digital learning resources tailored to the needs of 21st-century learners in a local Indonesian context.

This study plays a strategic role in supporting the direction of the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) policy, particularly in implementing a deep learning approach that emphasizes contextual, culturally based education integrated with the use of digital technology. By developing digital learning media grounded in the richness of local culture, this research aligns with the principles of *mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning*, learning that is consciously undertaken, meaningful to students, and engaging in nature. Such an approach not only fosters active student participation in the learning process but also cultivates a deeper understanding of tolerance and an appreciation for cultural diversity in their surrounding environment.

The findings of this study are expected to make a tangible contribution to the development of digital learning resources that are responsive to the needs of both students and teachers, while also being relevant to local cultural contexts. Moreover, the learning media developed through this study holds the potential to be replicated and adapted in other regions with similar cultural characteristics, thereby strengthening multicultural education at the elementary level on a broader scale.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which is appropriate for investigating educational phenomena in their natural context without manipulating variables. As noted by Stanley (2023), descriptive qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive summary of specific events or experiences in everyday terms. Sutisna (2021), it seeks to describe and understand phenomena in depth based on data collected from real-life settings, focusing on factual, detailed, and systematic representations of behaviors, processes, or situations. This methodological approach is particularly suitable for exploring and interpreting the content, function, and educational potential of a digital learning platform within a contextualized and naturalistic environment. The qualitative design enables a nuanced understanding of how the website delivers multicultural content and how this content is perceived by its initial users especially teachers and content developers.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted directly on the website to examine the structure, interface, types of content, and interactive features, including the use of multimedia elements such as text, images, videos, and quizzes. Observation sheets were used as instruments to guide systematic documentation of the website's components. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including website developers and elementary school teachers who served as early users of the platform. These interviews aimed to gather insights regarding the design process, pedagogical intentions, user experience, and perceived educational value of the website. Interview guidelines were developed to ensure consistency across sessions while allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes.

Additionally, document analysis was carried out on related materials, including content outlines, planning documents, and user feedback. Documentation notes were used to capture

relevant information that supports triangulation and strengthens the validity of the findings. The combination of these methods provides a rich and comprehensive understanding of the website's role as a digital learning medium for promoting multicultural awareness and cultural tolerance among elementary school students.

Finding and Discussion

As an effort to support contextual and culturally grounded learning, this study analyzes the development of a digital learning medium in the form of a website designed to introduce the rich cultural heritage of Bengkulu Province to elementary school students. The website was developed not merely as an informational platform, but as an educational tool intended to instill values of multiculturalism and tolerance from an early age. An interactive design approach was employed to ensure that the content would be easily accessible and engaging for young learners. The platform showcases cultural representations from various regions across Bengkulu, emphasizing educational, visual, and participatory elements. As a result, students are not only exposed to knowledge, but are also encouraged to explore, appreciate, and develop a sense of pride in their local culture. Following a comprehensive analysis, the findings reveal that the website successfully presents cultural information from nine regencies and one city in Bengkulu Province in a structured, systematic, and interactive manner.
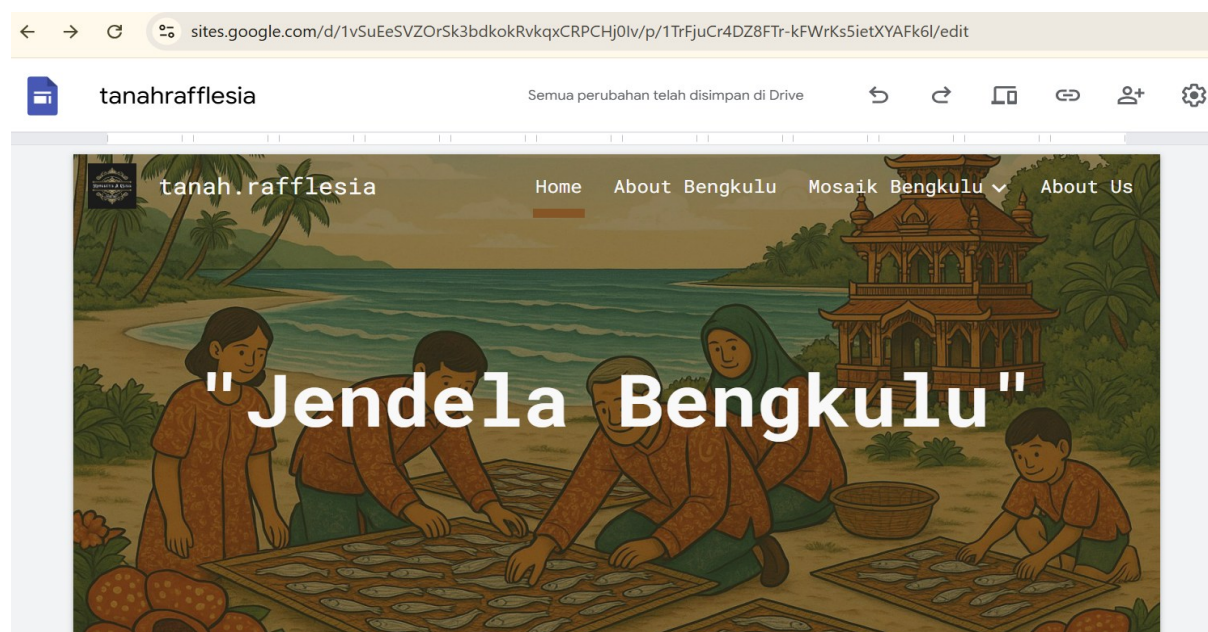

Figure 1. Home Menu Interface of the Website

The website presents content that highlights the richness of local culture using a thematic approach, covering seven main aspects: History and Geographical Location, Social and Economic Background, Community Diversity, Cultural Heritage, Traditions and Celebrations, Tourism and Historical Sites, and Local Narratives. Each administrative region including South Bengkulu Regency (Manna City), Central Bengkulu, North Bengkulu, Kaur, Kepahiang, Lebong, Mukomuko, Rejang Lebong, Seluma, and Bengkulu City is introduced comprehensively through a combination of descriptive texts, illustrative images, short documentary videos, and interactive quizzes specifically designed to increase student engagement. This multimedia integration aims to make cultural learning more accessible, engaging, and meaningful for elementary school students.

Each cultural region in Bengkulu Province is introduced comprehensively through a combination of media specifically designed to support an engaging and interactive learning process for elementary school students. The website presents information in the form of descriptive texts written in simple and communicative language, making it accessible and easy for young learners to understand. These texts provide explanations about the history of each region, community diversity, local traditions, and distinctive cultural heritage of each regency and city. To strengthen students' visual understanding, illustrative images are included, depicting cultural elements such as traditional clothing, local houses, regional cuisine, and ceremonial activities.

In addition, short documentary videos are embedded to provide a more authentic and contextual learning experience. These videos visualize various cultural activities and traditions practiced by the people of Bengkulu in their daily lives, offering not only information but also fostering students' empathy and appreciation for local cultural richness. To make the learning process more engaging, the website also includes simple interactive quizzes designed to assess students' understanding of the material presented. These quizzes are developed in a light and enjoyable format, encouraging active participation and critical thinking. The combination of these diverse media formats works synergistically to create a holistic and enjoyable learning experience, aligning with the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in 21st-century education. The following section presents the research findings regarding the key components integrated into the website.

1. History and Geographical Location

The "History and Geographical Location" component of the website serves as a foundational entry point for learners to explore the socio-cultural identity of each region within Bengkulu Province. This section introduces students to the historical origins of each regency and city, including brief narratives about the formation of administrative regions, the emergence of local heroes, and their contributions to national or regional movements. These historical elements are intentionally simplified in language yet remain contextually rich, making them highly suitable for elementary school students. By highlighting key historical milestones and linking them to present-day regional identities, the platform encourages students to develop a sense of historical continuity and belonging.
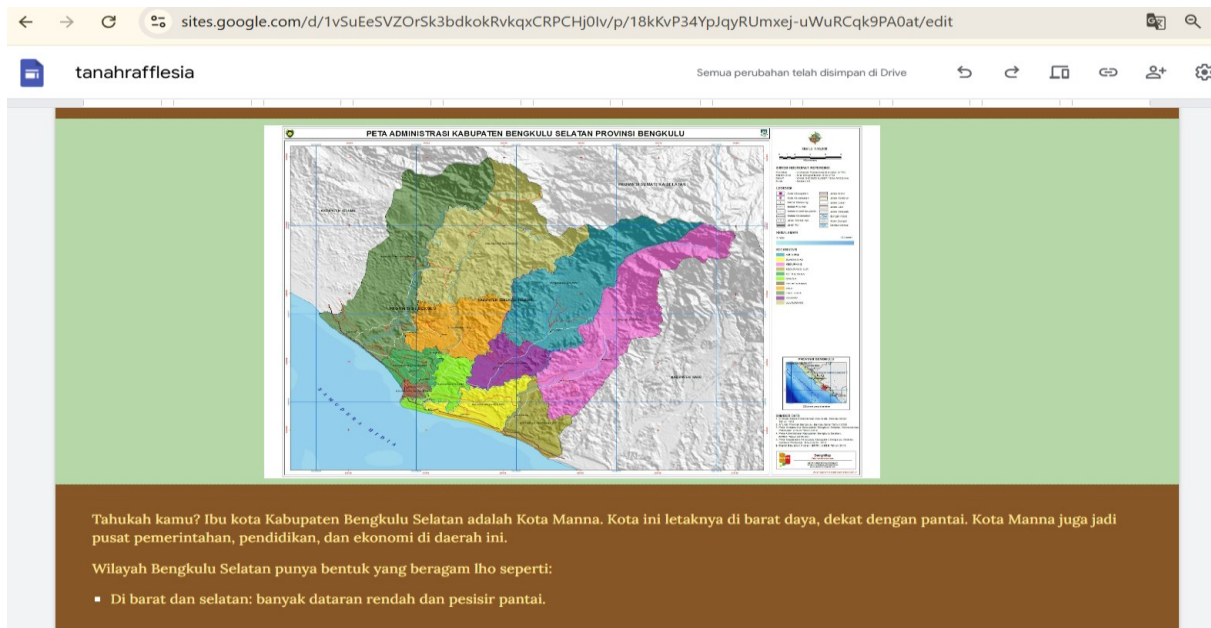
Figure 2. Display of the History and Geographical Location Menu

Geographical information is presented in a visually engaging and pedagogically sound manner, featuring maps that depict the physical boundaries, major landforms such as mountains and rivers, coastal areas, and transport networks. The inclusion of climate descriptions, such as the tropical rainforest climate characterized by high humidity, warm temperatures, and frequent rainfall, allows students to understand how geography shapes daily life and cultural practices. For instance, students learn how the local environment influences traditional housing structures, agricultural cycles, and clothing.

To enhance student engagement and comprehension, this section is enriched with interactive visuals and concise textual explanations. The maps are not static; they are designed to be explored interactively, enabling students to zoom in on specific regencies, observe topographic details, and identify neighboring regions. Furthermore, each region's profile is accompanied by short narrative texts describing how historical events and geographical features intertwine to influence the development of local traditions, livelihoods, and settlement patterns.

This component does not merely present factual data; it is strategically constructed to promote critical cultural inquiry, where students are encouraged to ask questions about their heritage and environment. By integrating local history with geographic context, the website facilitates place-based learning, a pedagogical approach shown to increase student motivation, cultural empathy, and environmental awareness (Gruenewald, 2014). Ultimately, the history and geography component provides a critical platform for fostering identity formation, cultural appreciation, and a deeper connection between students and their own localities in Bengkulu Province.

2. Social and Economic Background

This section illustrates the everyday life of local communities, including their main occupations, local economic systems (such as agriculture, fisheries, and trade), and the evolving social structures. The research findings indicate that the social and economic life of

communities across various regions in Bengkulu Province is deeply influenced by geographical conditions and the availability of natural resources. The majority of the population is engaged in agriculture, fisheries, plantations, and, to a lesser extent, trade and service sectors. The local economy is predominantly agrarian and community-based, characterized by strong values of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) in activities such as farming, infrastructure development, and the organization of traditional ceremonies. Social structures reflect the active roles of families, educational institutions, and customary bodies in maintaining social order and preserving local cultural heritage.

Figure 3. Display of the Social and Economic Background Menu

Kusnanto et al. (2025) note that despite limited access in some remote areas, there remains a strong community commitment to education. The coexistence of diverse ethnic and cultural groups contributes to a harmonious environment that fosters tolerance, intergroup collaboration, and the preservation of traditional heritage (Pamuji, 2024). According to Sariyatun and Marpelina (2024), the integration of social and economic content into educational websites not only deepens students' understanding of community dynamics but also encourages them to value the importance of cooperation, tolerance, and active participation in cultural diversity as essential components of national character development.

3. Community Diversity

The findings of this study reveal that the "Community Diversity" component within the digital learning website successfully represents the social and cultural plurality of Bengkulu Province in an authentic and educational manner. The platform highlights the dynamics of coexistence among various ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups across the nine regencies and one city of the province. Local communities such as Rejang, Serawai, Lembak, Bengkulu Malays, and Enggano are featured alongside migrant communities including Javanese, Minangkabau, Batak, Bugis, and Chinese Indonesians, all of whom have contributed to shaping the region's rich cultural identity. Each group is presented with its distinctive features, including traditional languages, kinship systems, clothing styles, culinary heritage,

oral traditions, and ceremonial practices that are still preserved today. This representation does not merely portray diversity as a social reality, but elevates it as a foundation for fostering social harmony in a multicultural society.
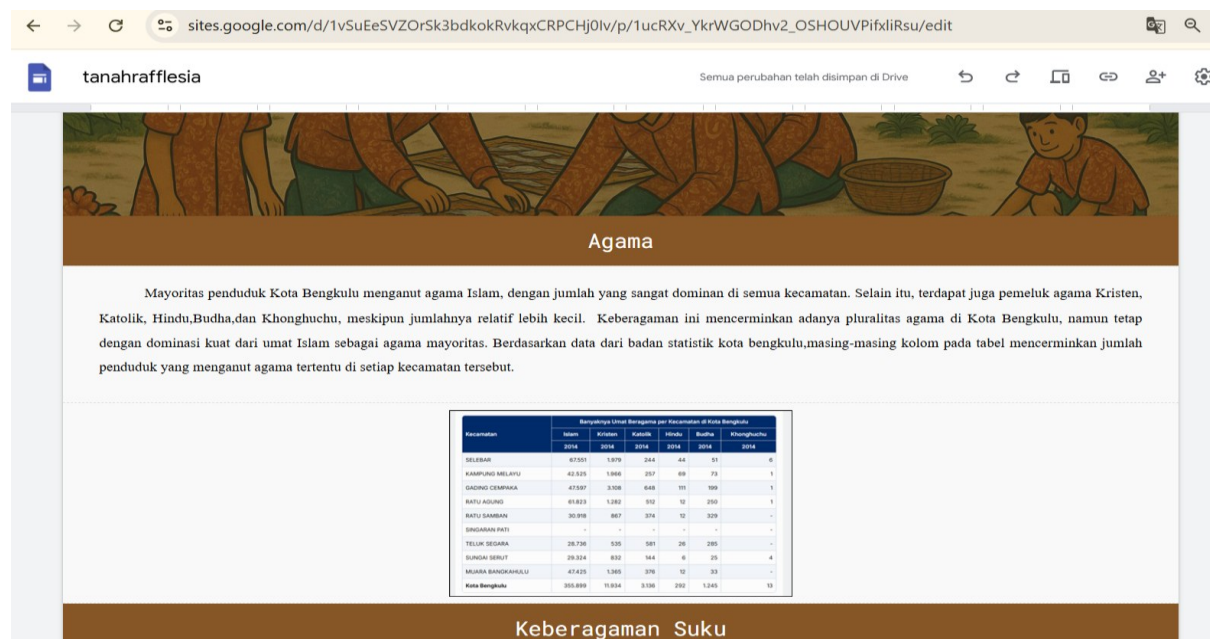

Figure 4. Display of the Community Diversity Menu

What distinguishes this content is its transformative rather than purely descriptive approach. Through interactive narratives, illustrative imagery, and short documentary videos, students are not only introduced to various ethnic groups but are also encouraged to internalize the human values underlying intergroup relationships. This aligns with Banks' (2017) framework on multicultural education as a means to develop pluralistic awareness, strengthen social identity, and reduce stereotypes from an early age. Within the context of 21st-century learning, the content promotes essential socio-cultural competencies that shape inclusive, empathetic, and culturally adaptive learners.

The integration of community diversity content into this digital platform represents a strategic effort to instill values of tolerance, mutual respect, and unity through a contextual and engaging educational approach. The findings of this study demonstrate that locally grounded, visually enriched, and interactively delivered cultural learning can effectively bridge the gap between sociocultural realities and the development of civic character in elementary school students. These results further highlight the urgency of developing digital learning resources that are not only informative, but also educationally empowering and transformational supporting the creation of a generation prepared to live harmoniously in an increasingly plural society.

4. Cultural Heritage

The research findings indicate that the "Cultural Heritage" component of the website serves as a powerful medium for introducing elementary school students to the richness and uniqueness of Bengkulu's local identity. This section encompasses both tangible and intangible cultural elements, including traditional houses, regional languages, crafts, culinary heritage,

and indigenous knowledge systems that have been passed down through generations. By systematically presenting cultural artifacts such as the Rumah Bubungan Lima, Batik Besurek, the Rejang language, and traditional food practices, the platform facilitates a multidimensional understanding of local identity and cultural continuity.
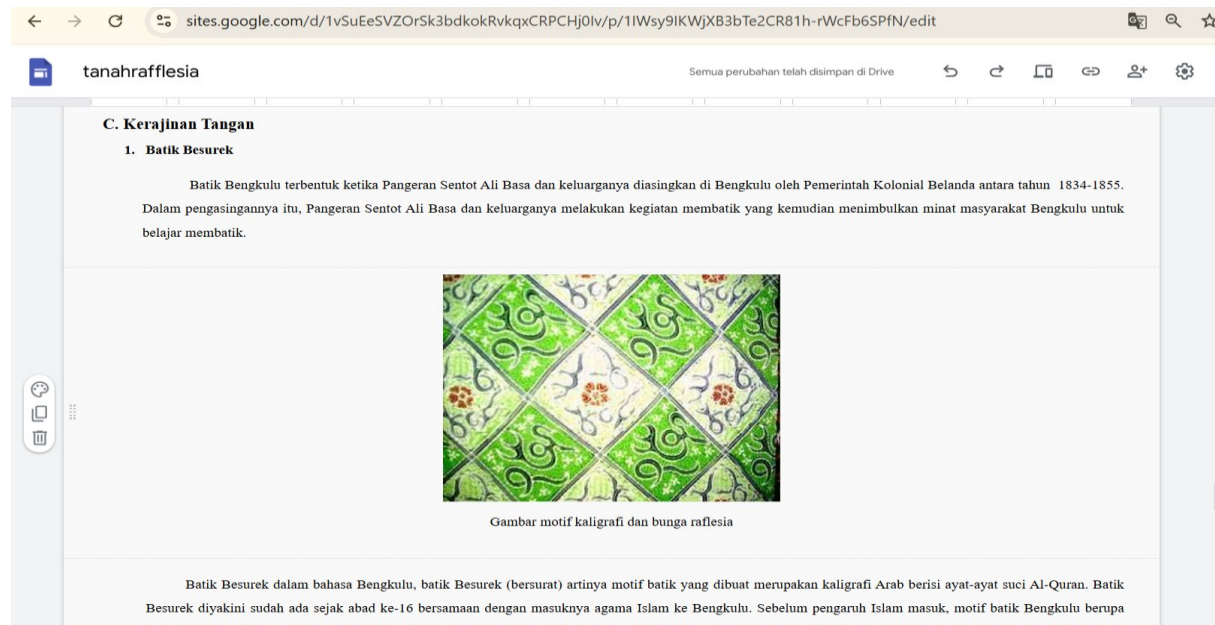

Figure 5. Display of the Cultural Heritage Menu

The strength of this component lies in its educational richness and cultural relevance. Rather than simply presenting cultural artifacts and traditions, the website contextualizes them through engaging narratives, visual storytelling, and age-appropriate descriptive text. For example, Batik Besurek, known for its incorporation of Arabic calligraphy motifs, is presented not just as a textile art form, but within a broader cultural narrative that includes Islamic heritage, anti-colonial expression, and local craftsmanship. In the same way, the Rejang language is showcased as a vibrant linguistic legacy explored not only through its sounds and vocabulary, but also through its integral role in oral storytelling, traditional knowledge, and the shaping of regional identity.

This approach aligns with UNESCO's (2003) Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which emphasizes the importance of education in transmitting cultural heritage to future generations. Furthermore, it resonates with the framework of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), which asserts that students learn more effectively when educational content reflects their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences.

The cultural heritage content on the website contributes not only to knowledge acquisition but also to the development of cultural pride and preservation awareness among students. By engaging interactively with their own heritage through digital galleries, guided narratives, and reflection prompts, students are encouraged to view their local culture as a valuable asset rather than a relic of the past. This immersive exposure is essential in combating the growing disconnection between youth and traditional values in the digital era.

This component of the website effectively bridges the gap between tradition and innovation, presenting cultural heritage not as static information, but as a living, evolving part

of students' identities. The findings underscore the potential of digital platforms to serve as tools for cultural transmission, particularly when they are designed to be educational, interactive, and emotionally resonant. Such integration not only reinforces students' understanding of their roots but also fosters a sense of responsibility toward cultural sustainability, an outcome that is crucial for developing globally aware yet locally grounded citizens.

5. Traditions and Celebrations

This section introduces students to the traditional customs and cultural festivals that are still practiced by local communities, such as the Tabot Festival, Tari Andun, Enggano Traditional Ceremonies, Rice Planting Rituals, and others. These traditions are explained in terms of their symbolic meanings, timing, and the roles played by community members. The goal is for students to understand that traditions are not merely forms of entertainment, but are embedded with spiritual, social, and educational values.

Research findings indicate that the "Traditions and Celebrations" component of the digital learning website plays a significant role in transforming cultural practices into meaningful learning experiences for elementary school students. Local traditions such as the Tabot Festival, rooted in religious and historical heritage and symbolizing the struggle and spirituality of the Bengkulu Malay people; Tari Andun, a Serawai communal dance that embodies togetherness and respect for women; and the Enggano Rituals and Rice Planting Ceremonies, which reflect the sacred relationship between humans and nature are introduced in a systematic and contextual manner.
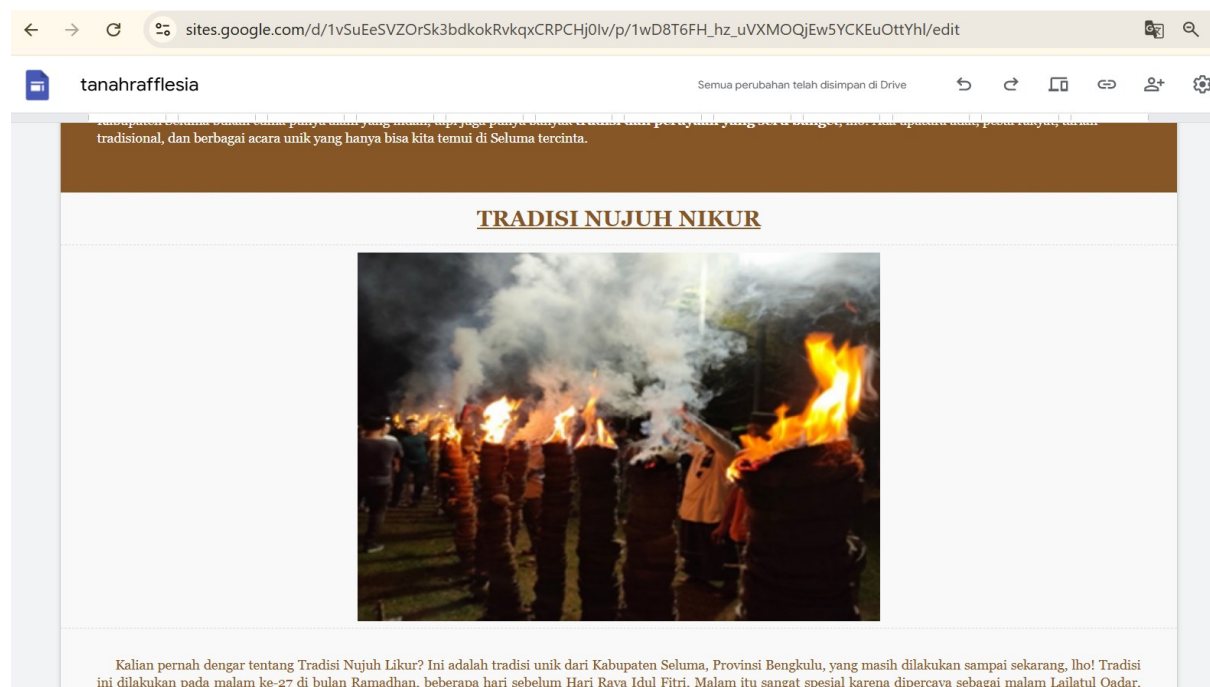

Figure 6. Display of the Traditions and Celebrations Menu

Each tradition is presented through narrative and visual approaches that prioritize educational value over mere spectacle. The materials are structured to highlight symbolic dimensions, chronological execution, the involvement of social actors, and the moral and

cultural messages they carry. For example, Tabot is not merely portrayed as an annual celebration, but as a medium for transmitting values of heroism, communal solidarity, and spiritual heritage within a multicultural society.

A key strength of this content lies in its ability to present cultural practices as transformative learning resources. By integrating interactive elements such as documentary videos, short interviews with cultural figures, and reflective quizzes, students are engaged not only as passive recipients of knowledge but as active participants in the process of cultural meaning-making. This aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and Banks' (2017) framework of multicultural education, both of which emphasize the importance of contextual, experience-based learning in fostering deep cultural understanding.

Furthermore, the presentation of traditional and celebratory content serves as a strategic medium for revitalizing local culture in the digital era. Through the integration of tradition into technology-based media, oral knowledge is preserved and made widely accessible. This supports 21st-century educational goals by promoting cultural literacy and increasing students' awareness of the importance of preserving intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that the integration of traditions and celebrations through a digital platform not only enriches thematic learning but also strengthens students' character development by deepening their connection to cultural roots. Cultural education, therefore, moves beyond symbolic representation and becomes an authentic and relevant process of identity and nation-building. The "Traditions and Celebrations" component thus contributes significantly to bridging formal education with the cultural realities of local communities in a holistic and sustainable way.

6. Tourism and Historical Sites

The findings reveal that the Tourism and Historical Sites component of the digital learning website plays a crucial role in introducing elementary school students to the natural attractions, cultural landmarks, and historical heritage of Bengkulu Province. Key sites featured include Fort Marlborough, Danau Dendam Tak Sudah (Lake of Unfinished Revenge), Pantai Panjang (Long Beach), Curug 9 Waterfall, Sungai Air Nipis (Thin Water River), and others. These destinations are presented through a blend of informative narratives, illustrative photographs, and short documentary videos that not only highlight visual beauty but also emphasize their historical, cultural, and ecological significance.

Figure 7. Display of the Tourism and Historical Sites Menu

The distinctive feature of this component lies in its educational and contextual approach. The material encourages students to understand the cultural significance and the importance of environmental preservation at each site. For example, Fort Marlborough is not merely presented as a colonial relic, but as a symbol of local resistance and a historical landmark within Bengkulu's maritime context. Meanwhile, Danau Dendam Tak Sudah is portrayed as a blend of natural richness and local legend, reflecting the deep interconnection between nature and culture in the daily lives of the community.

This pedagogical strategy aligns closely with the principles of place-based education (Gruenewald, 2014), which advocate for integrating local environments and community contexts into the curriculum to enhance students' relevance and engagement. Pageh (2025) states that the integration of local culture into the learning process can strengthen the moral dimension and cultural identity of students. By connecting the material to creative economy initiatives such as promoting cultural tourism, traditional crafts, culinary heritage, and eco-tourism the content fosters student awareness of local economic potential rooted in cultural identity and communal participation.

Interactive features, including simple virtual tours, reflective questions, and themed quizzes, further enrich student engagement, transforming passive learning into active exploration. These elements help nurture cultural literacy and strengthen students' sense of place, critical for character building in the context of national identity and civic responsibility.

Overall, the integration of tourism and historical content into this digital learning platform demonstrates how technology can be creatively leveraged to support interdisciplinary education across culture, history, economy, and the environment. The findings underscore the transformative potential of culturally grounded, digitally enabled education in shaping socially conscious and culturally informed learners. This component not only enhances the learning

experience but also offers a replicable model for other regions that aim to connect education with local cultural and environmental sustainability.

7. Local Narratives

This section of the website presents local folklore, legends, and community-based stories that are deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Bengkulu society. Narratives such as The Legend of Putri Gading Cempaka, The Origin of Sungai Hitam, The Legend of Batu Ampar, Aswanda, Sekujang and Kera Sepiak are presented in an engaging and educational manner. These stories not only entertain but also convey moral lessons, life values, and socio-cultural teachings relevant to students' everyday experiences. The local narratives serve as a powerful medium to foster cultural literacy and a deep appreciation of regional literary heritage.

Figure 8. Display of the Local Narratives Menu

Findings from this study indicate that the Local Narratives component of the digital learning website serves not merely as a source of entertainment but as a strategic pedagogical tool. It effectively enhances cultural understanding, reinforces local identity, and instills core character values among elementary school students. These stories are presented using clear, descriptive language and are enriched with vivid illustrations and background audio to create an immersive and imaginative learning experience.

A key strength of this component lies in its ability to encapsulate complex cultural values into formats that are accessible and meaningful to young learners. The stories feature not only moral conflicts and resolutions but also emphasize important cultural dimensions such as respect for elders, the value of hard work, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), and the spiritual connection between humans and nature. This aligns with Rosenblatt's (2018) transactional theory of reading, where learners are not passive recipients but active meaning-makers who interpret texts through personal experiences and values.

Moreover, these local narratives bridge traditional oral literature with 21st-century digital literacy. Within the framework of multicultural education and character development, folklore becomes a contextualized and engaging vehicle for internalizing universal human values. This

approach is consistent with Cai's (2002) theory of multicultural literature education, which emphasizes the role of culturally diverse texts in fostering empathy and cross-cultural understanding from an early age.

Student engagement is significantly enhanced through interactive features such as audio storytelling, animated illustrations, and reflective quizzes (Shelton et al., 2016). These tools stimulate critical thinking, interpretative skills, and moral reflection—demonstrating that literacy today is not merely about reading and writing, but also about emotional and intellectual engagement with one's cultural identity (Kellner & Share, 2019). The integration of local narratives into digital learning platforms has proven to be both effective and transformative in the context of primary education (Pavlou, 2020). Local stories not only deepen students' cultural knowledge but also provide a solid foundation for identity formation, empathy development, and emotional connection to their cultural heritage (Ummah & Saputra, 2025). As such, this component plays a vital role in ensuring that the younger generation grows up not only digitally literate but also culturally grounded, ready to navigate the complexities of a diverse and globalized world.

Through this multimedia-based approach, students are not merely exposed to factual information about cultural diversity; they are also encouraged to understand, appreciate, and reflect upon the richness of the cultural environment around them. According to Makransky and Petersen (2021), this presentation model is more engaging than conventional methods, as it fosters both cognitive and affective involvement simultaneously. Similarly, Magdalena (2023) emphasizes that the learning materials are carefully designed using simple language and visually appealing elements, making them well-suited to the developmental characteristics of elementary school students.

The website also offers flexible access for both teachers and students, supporting its use in classroom instruction as well as for independent learning beyond school hours. The interactivity provided through quiz features serves not only as a tool for assessing comprehension, but also as a means of fostering early interest in learning and cultural sensitivity. The content presented for each region highlights the unique aspects of local culture such as traditional dances, vernacular houses, local cuisine, and cultural rituals broadening students' understanding of their regional identity and nurturing pride in their cultural heritage.

Conclusion
This study concludes that the website-based learning platform featuring the local culture of Bengkulu has made a strategic contribution to strengthening multicultural education at the elementary school level. By showcasing cultural content from nine regencies and one city, and addressing seven key cultural dimensions, the platform not only broadens students' understanding of cultural diversity but also cultivates values of tolerance, empathy, and pride in local identity. Its delivery through interactive media narrative texts, illustrative visuals, documentary videos, and quizzes has proven effective in fostering contextual and enjoyable learning engagement. More than just an informational source, the website functions as an educational intervention that addresses the urgent need for culturally responsive learning in the digital era. The findings highlight the significance of integrating cultural content into educational media as a means to shape inclusive character development and promote a form of nationalism that is adaptive to global realities. For future development, it is recommended to incorporate features such as virtual tours, educational games, and student discussion forums to enhance interactivity and learner engagement. Furthermore, ensuring equitable digital access

should be a key consideration so that all students including those in underserved and remote areas can fully benefit from the platform.

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