



## The Implementation of Unity Values among Generation Z in Shaping Nationalism Character

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### Abstract

#### Abstract:

Indonesia is a multicultural nation that faces major challenges in maintaining unity amidst its ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity. The value of unity, as reflected in the national motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversity), is a key foundation for national stability and integrity. Generation Z, born in the digital era, holds great potential in preserving national unity but is also vulnerable to the effects of globalization and social media, which can influence national identity. This study explores how the value of unity is implemented by Generation Z in shaping patriotic character. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Informants included a Civics teacher, the vice principal, and Grade IX.1 students at SMP PGRI 1 Ciputat. The data analysis followed open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify patterns of unity implementation and its impact. Findings show that Generation Z understands and applies the value of unity through tolerance, cooperation, and togetherness in school activities like flag ceremonies, class duties, P5 projects, and honoring national symbols. The study concludes that embedding unity values in education effectively fosters a sense of patriotism in Generation Z.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a multicultural nation, is characterized by its diversity in ethnicity, religion, language, and culture. This diversity represents both a valuable asset and a significant challenge in maintaining national unity. The value of unity, as reflected in the national motto “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversity), serves as a fundamental foundation for preserving national integrity. Unity is one of the essential pillars in the life of a nation and state, particularly in a country as diverse as Indonesia. However, the era of globalization, marked by rapid advancements in information and communication technology, has introduced new challenges to national unity. The widespread and often uncontrolled access to information, the proliferation of misinformation and hoaxes, and



increasing social polarization through social media pose serious threats to the value of unity.

Young people, especially Generation Z, who are digital natives, are among the most vulnerable groups to these influences. As the future leaders of the nation, Generation Z needs to understand and internalize the values of unity in order to contribute positively to society and the state. Born between 1997 and 2012, Generation Z possesses unique characteristics, including a high dependence on technology, critical thinking skills, and openness to change. However, they also face challenges in developing emotional connections to national values, including unity. Therefore, fostering a sense of patriotism through the internalization of unity values is highly relevant and urgent in the current era. Pancasila, as the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state, along with the 1945 Constitution, emphasizes the importance of unity in national life. This is reflected in the third principle of Pancasila, “*The Unity of Indonesia*,” as well as in Article 1 Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that “*Indonesia is a unitary state in the form of a republic*.” Furthermore, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System highlights the importance of character education, particularly the value of unity, as a fundamental component of the educational process. Article 3 of the law states that national education aims to develop students’ potential to become individuals who are faithful, morally upright, and possess a strong sense of patriotism. This legal foundation strongly supports the cultivation of unity among younger generations, especially Generation Z, as part of strengthening national identity.

Character education is a systematic effort to build individual character through learning processes and the habituation of moral values. According to Lickona (1991), as cited in Sulistyorini (2021), character education consists of three main components: *moral knowing* (understanding moral values such as unity), *moral feeling* (the emotional motivation to uphold these values), and *moral action* (the actual implementation of these values in daily life). Unity is categorized as a moral value that must be taught, internalized, and practiced in order to develop a strong sense of patriotism among young people. In the context of Generation Z, integrating unity values into the school curriculum is essential to foster their understanding and appreciation of national identity.

According to Strauss and Howe (1991), as cited in Wahyuni (2022), Generation Z is characterized by a high level of technological dependency, critical thinking, openness to change, and sensitivity to global issues, but they tend to have weaker emotional connections to traditional values. Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development (1968), as cited in Ardhani and Arianti (2022), explains that individuals in adolescence and early adulthood (ages 12–20) are in the stage of identity formation. At this stage, Generation Z seeks meaning and identity within their social environment. Therefore, unity values can serve as an essential component of national identity that should be introduced and reinforced.

Furthermore, Horton and Hunt (1984), as cited in Mutmainnah and Kurniasih (2021), explain that social values such as unity are instilled through the process of socialization involving three main environments: family, school, and society. The family serves as the first environment where unity values are introduced through parental



example, schools act as formal institutions responsible for teaching national values, and society becomes the space where these values are practiced in everyday life.

The integration of character education for Generation Z requires a holistic approach that encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. According to Ryan and Bohlin (1999), this can be achieved through direct instruction of national values, habituation of behaviors reflecting unity, and providing real-life experiences through social activities involving youth participation.

In reality, the challenges to implementing unity values are increasingly evident in the digital era. Previous studies have shown threats to national unity due to the spread of hate speech, misinformation, and social polarization through social media. A survey conducted by the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) in 2022 revealed that 60% of Generation Z have been exposed to intolerant content online. Additionally, limited understanding of national values among young people remains a concern. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021) indicates that only 40% of high school students understand the importance of unity in daily life.

Moreover, many Generation Z individuals show low interest in history lessons and national ceremonies, perceiving them as unengaging. A survey by Kompas Research and Development (2020) found that 58% of teenagers do not understand the meaning of National Awakening Day or Pancasila Sanctity Day. Supporting studies by Sari and Nasution (2022) and Wulandari and Nugroho (2021) reveal that students' understanding of national historical events remains limited due to insufficient contextual learning and low interest in historical materials.

Social issues such as student brawls, bullying, and discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, and race further indicate a lack of understanding of unity and tolerance values. Additionally, Generation Z's active engagement on social media often exposes them to political polarization, religious intolerance, and hate speech, particularly during national elections such as those in 2019 and 2024.

Previous research suggests that although Generation Z tends to be more open and tolerant, they often lack strong national identity. Prabowo (2021) found that Generation Z shows high interest in social and environmental issues but relatively low participation in activities related to patriotism. Mulyana (2019) and Amalia (2020) highlight that social media can be an effective tool for promoting unity values if used positively. Similarly, Sukardi (2020), Nugroho (2021), Suyanto (2021), and Yusup (2022) emphasize that character education, curriculum integration, and collaboration between family and society play crucial roles in strengthening patriotism.

Based on preliminary observations at SMP PGRI 1 Ciputat, students demonstrate a relatively high level of patriotic character, as evidenced by activities such as flag ceremonies, scouting programs, and classroom responsibilities. This study argues that effective implementation of unity values can foster patriotism among Generation Z. By utilizing innovative teaching strategies and digital media, students can be encouraged to understand and internalize unity values.

This study aims to examine how the implementation of unity values among Generation Z contributes to the formation of patriotic character. It seeks to provide



insights and recommendations for educators, parents, and policymakers in fostering strong national identity among young people.

## **METHODS**

This study was conducted at SMP PGRI 1 Ciputat over a period from March to May. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, aiming to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Qualitative research was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations regarding the implementation of unity values and the development of patriotic character among Generation Z.

The subjects of this study consisted of human participants who served as primary data sources. The research utilized primary data obtained directly from key informants, including the vice principal for student affairs, a Pancasila Education teacher, and students from Class IX.1. In this study, the vice principal and the Pancasila Education teacher acted as key informants, while the students served as supporting informants. In total, 33 participants were involved, consisting of 1 vice principal for student affairs, 1 Pancasila Education teacher, and 31 students from Class IX.1.

In addition to primary data, secondary data were also collected to support the findings, including observations, relevant references, and official documents obtained from the research site. These data sources were used to strengthen the validity and depth of the research findings.

The data collection techniques employed in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine students' behavior and the implementation of unity values in school activities. Interviews were carried out to gather in-depth information from participants regarding their understanding and experiences. Documentation was used to collect supporting evidence such as school programs, activity reports, and other relevant materials.

The research instrument was designed based on two main variables. The first variable focuses on Generation Z students' understanding of unity values and patriotism. The indicator for this variable includes students' ability and confidence in expressing their opinions. The interview question for this variable was: *"What do you understand about the values of unity and patriotism?"*

The second variable examines how the implementation of unity values contributes to the development of patriotic character. The indicator for this variable is the application of unity values in school activities and programs that foster patriotism. The corresponding interview question was: *"How does the implementation of unity values shape patriotic character among Generation Z?"*

Data analysis in this study employed an inductive approach, allowing patterns and meanings to emerge from the data. The analysis process consisted of three main stages. The first stage involved data presentation, which began with organizing the results of interviews conducted with the vice principal for student affairs, the Pancasila Education teacher, and the students of Class IX.1 at SMP PGRI 1 Ciputat. The second stage was data reduction, which involved coding processes, including open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, to categorize and refine the data. The final stage involved



interpreting the results of the coding process to generate meaningful conclusions and insights related to the research objectives.

Through this systematic qualitative approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how unity values are implemented and how they contribute to shaping patriotic character among Generation Z students.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Generation Z's Understanding of Unity Values and Patriotism**

This study employed qualitative data analysis techniques, including open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, to interpret the data collected from interviews with the vice principal for student affairs, the Pancasila Education teacher, and students of Class IX.1 at SMP PGRI 1 Ciputat. Through the open coding process, the data were categorized into key themes related to students' understanding of unity values and patriotism, as well as their practical implementation in daily life.

The results indicate that students possess a relatively good understanding of unity values and patriotism, although the depth of understanding varies among individuals. This finding aligns with the statement of the vice principal for student affairs, who emphasized that unity values are reflected in maintaining harmony and peace in daily life, while patriotism is characterized by a sense of pride, belonging, respect, and loyalty toward the nation (Kono, 2025).

Similarly, the Pancasila Education teacher highlighted that unity is a fundamental value in a diverse country like Indonesia, which consists of various ethnicities, cultures, and religions. The teacher emphasized that unity values must be introduced early in the educational process to ensure that students are able to understand diversity and behave appropriately within a pluralistic society. Patriotism, in this context, is expressed through actions such as diligence in learning, appreciation of local products, environmental awareness, obedience to rules, and participation in national ceremonies (Even, 2025).

These findings are supported by previous studies. According to Gunawan (2021), Generation Z has significant potential to uphold unity values due to their ability to build cross-cultural social networks in the digital era. However, without proper character education, they are vulnerable to the influence of global individualism. Furthermore, Subekti (2022) argues that patriotism among Generation Z should not be measured solely through symbolic actions but through real-life behaviors such as environmental care, social harmony, and cultural appreciation.

From the students' perspective, unity is understood as the integration of diverse elements into a harmonious whole, while patriotism is perceived as deep affection and loyalty toward Indonesia (Ghaisanie, 2025). This indicates that Generation Z students already possess a conceptual understanding of unity and patriotism, although continuous reinforcement is still needed to deepen their internalization of these values.

These findings are consistent with character education theory proposed by Lickona (1991), which emphasizes that moral development involves three components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In this study, students demonstrate moral knowing through their understanding of unity values, which needs to be strengthened through emotional engagement and real-life practice.



## **2. The Implementation of Unity Values in Shaping Patriotic Character**

The findings also reveal that SMP PGRI 1 Ciputat has actively implemented unity values through various school activities and programs designed to foster students' patriotic character. Based on the selective coding analysis, it was found that unity values are not only taught theoretically but are also consistently practiced in daily school activities.

The vice principal for student affairs explained that activities such as flag ceremonies, singing the national anthem, commemorating national holidays, maintaining environmental cleanliness, and treating others equally are routinely implemented to instill unity values (Kono, 2025). These activities serve as practical tools for cultivating discipline, respect, and national pride among students.

Similarly, the Pancasila Education teacher stated that the school promotes unity and patriotism through various programs, including classroom duties, group work, religious activities, physical exercise, and cultural-based learning. The integration of national values into subjects such as Pancasila Education, arts, social studies, and language learning helps students connect theoretical knowledge with real-life experiences. Additionally, programs such as the P5 project, cultural celebrations, and extracurricular activities like traditional dance and martial arts further strengthen students' sense of national identity (Even, 2025).

These findings support the theory proposed by Ryan and Bohlin (1999), which emphasizes that character education should involve cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The implementation of unity values through both formal and informal activities enables students to experience and internalize these values holistically.

From the students' perspective, the implementation of unity values is reflected in their daily behavior, such as avoiding hate speech, supporting local products, helping others, and expressing pride in Indonesia's cultural diversity (Safela, 2025). These behaviors indicate that unity values have been successfully translated into practical actions, contributing to the development of patriotic character.

Furthermore, the school functions not only as a place for knowledge transfer but also as a social environment where values are internalized through interaction and experience. This aligns with the perspective of Horton and Hunt (1984), who argue that social values are developed through socialization processes involving family, school, and society. In this case, the school plays a crucial role as an agent of value internalization for Generation Z.

The findings also highlight that teachers and school authorities play a significant role in shaping students' character. Their role extends beyond classroom instruction to include modeling behavior, designing character-based programs, and creating a positive school culture. This supports the view that effective character education must integrate knowledge, values, and practice simultaneously (Lickona, 1991).

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that Generation Z students at SMP PGRI 1 Ciputat have a good understanding of unity values and patriotism, which is further strengthened through consistent implementation in school activities. The integration of unity values into both curricular and extracurricular programs has proven effective in shaping students' patriotic character.



However, continuous efforts are required to ensure that these values are not only understood but also deeply internalized and consistently practiced. In the context of rapid technological development and globalization, strengthening character education based on unity values is essential to maintain national identity and social cohesion among Generation Z.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of unity values among Generation Z can be effectively initiated through habituation activities integrated into school programs. These include flag ceremonies held every Monday, singing regional and national songs, commemorating national holidays, participating in extracurricular activities, and engaging in the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) programs. Such activities serve as practical means of instilling unity values in students' daily lives. The role of school stakeholders is crucial in this process. The vice principal for student affairs is not only responsible for supervising students but also for actively participating in and embodying these values as a role model. Similarly, Pancasila Education teachers are expected not only to deliver instructional content but also to act as moral exemplars for students. Teachers, school leaders, and staff collectively play an important role in shaping students' character through consistent modeling of positive behavior.

The study also reveals that schools have made various efforts to implement unity values in order to shape students' sense of patriotism. Generation Z students generally demonstrate a good understanding of unity and nationalism. They interpret unity as mutual respect, cooperation, and harmony within diversity. Meanwhile, patriotism is understood as a sense of pride, belonging, and loyalty toward the nation, expressed through actions such as respecting national symbols, preserving the environment, and appreciating local culture.

However, challenges remain in the implementation process. The rapid development of globalization and the influence of foreign cultures, particularly through digital media, may weaken the character of Generation Z in maintaining unity values and patriotism. Therefore, it is essential to continuously strengthen students' understanding of unity values to prevent them from being negatively influenced by external cultural trends. Collaboration among school principals, vice principals, teachers, staff, parents, and students is essential to ensure the successful implementation of unity values and the development of patriotic character. SMP PGRI 1 Ciputat has implemented unity values through various school activities, such as flag ceremonies, group work, classroom duties, P5 projects, national-themed competitions, and the cultivation of tolerance and mutual cooperation. Students have demonstrated behaviors that reflect unity in their daily lives. The findings also highlight that both internal and external factors influence the success of implementing unity values. Supportive family and school environments, along with teacher guidance, act as enabling factors. On the other hand, negative influences from social media and limited digital literacy present significant challenges that must be addressed. Overall, unity values have proven to be effective in shaping patriotic character among Generation Z when they are continuously internalized through character



education, positive behavioral habituation, and approaches tailored to the characteristics of Generation Z, who are adaptive, digitally oriented, and open to change.

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