



Students' Perceptions of the Educational Environment in Relation to Nationalism Values at Pamulang University

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Abstract

Abstract:

This study on Students' Perceptions of the Educational Environment in Relation to Nationalism Values was motivated by the need to explore how Pamulang University students understand and internalize nationalism values within their academic and social lives. The research employed a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants consisted of students, lecturers, and the head of the study program. The findings indicate that students' perceptions encompass cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. The internalization of nationalism values occurs through academic pathways such as lectures and coursework and socio-practical pathways including student organizations, cultural activities, and community service. Supporting factors include lecturer involvement, relevant course material, and active student participation, while inhibiting factors include overly theoretical teaching methods, limited creative platforms for cultural expression, and the influence of foreign popular culture. In conclusion, Pamulang University students demonstrate diverse understandings of nationalism, reflected across cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. The internalization process occurs through a combination of institutional-academic channels and socio-practical experiences, highlighting the strategic role of the university's educational environment in shaping students' perceptions of nationalism values.

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INTRODUCTION

Nationalism can be understood as an “*imagined community*” that fosters a sense of unity and collective belonging among members of society, even though they may not know each other personally. However, nationalism may decline when a strong shared identity is gradually replaced by a broader but less deeply rooted global identity (Chaniago et al., 2020).



In contemporary society, nationalism among younger generations, including university students, faces serious challenges. Studies by Rahman and Pd (2019) and Fauziah and Dewi (2021) indicate that the influence of foreign popular culture, combined with apathetic attitudes toward national issues, has contributed to the weakening of students' perceptions of nationalism.

Empirically, the decline in national spirit is not only influenced by modernization but also by the lack of public understanding of the essence of nationalism values. This reality is reflected in various domestic issues, such as corruption, violence in the name of religion or group identity, interethnic conflicts, and acts of terrorism. These phenomena serve as concrete evidence of the erosion of nationalism within society (Rahman & Pd, 2019).

Historically, nationalism played a crucial role in Indonesia's struggle for independence, serving as a unifying force that enabled the nation to break free from colonial domination and achieve sovereignty. Conversely, nations with weak nationalism have often faced decline and instability. In the present context, it is essential to question whether nationalism still exists as a lived value in society or whether it has become merely a rhetorical concept without practical implementation (Rahman & Pd, 2019).

On the other hand, the development of the digital era has significantly transformed the way students communicate and interact. Social media, which has become an integral part of their daily lives, is more frequently used for entertainment and social interaction rather than for seeking information or engaging in discussions on national issues. This trend indicates that attention to nationalism values is increasingly marginalized in students' everyday lives (Rahawarin, 2022).

This phenomenon highlights the urgency of exploring how students at Pamulang University understand nationalism values within their academic and social contexts. This study not only aims to describe the level of students' perceptions but also seeks to identify the underlying factors influencing these perceptions, as well as the role of the educational environment in shaping students' national awareness. As intellectuals, university students have significant potential to act as agents of change. Therefore, their perceptions of nationalism play a crucial role in maintaining national resilience.

The use of a qualitative phenomenological approach, which is relatively rare in studies on student nationalism, allows for an in-depth exploration of students' subjective experiences and their understanding of national values. Conducting this study at Pamulang University, a multicultural institution with a growing student population, provides a more specific and contextual perspective compared to general studies on youth nationalism.

Strategic recommendations derived from field findings are expected to contribute to the development of more relevant, contextual, and participatory student engagement in addressing both national and global issues. Maintaining national unity in the modern era is no longer solely about physical struggle, as in the colonial period, but also about addressing various internal threats that may divide society. As a pluralistic nation, Indonesia faces numerous social challenges, including conflicts based on ethnicity, religion, and race. These conditions can threaten national cohesion, making education one



of the most effective means of instilling unity and national awareness (Tumimbang, 2024).

This research is significant as it aims to address the challenges that may weaken nationalism among university students. It also represents a concrete effort to strengthen patriotism through the active role of higher education institutions as agents of character development. By focusing on students at Pamulang University, this study offers a more specific perspective that differs from previous general studies.

The primary objective of this research is to examine the extent to which students at Pamulang University understand nationalism values and to identify the factors influencing these perceptions. The findings are expected to provide a realistic overview of the current state of nationalism among university students and offer valuable insights for the development of civic education curricula in higher education. Furthermore, the results of this study may serve as a foundation for formulating strategic policies aimed at strengthening nationalism among younger generations. Overall, this study is expected to make significant contributions, both theoretically and practically, in the field of character education and nationalism in higher education.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a phenomenological methodology. This approach focuses on individuals' direct and subjective experiences of a particular phenomenon. In this context, the study aims to explore how students experience, interpret, and understand nationalism values in their daily lives, both within the university environment and in the broader social context.

A qualitative approach is appropriate for this research as it seeks to understand and explain natural phenomena through various scientific methods within a specific context. Qualitative research enables researchers to obtain in-depth insights into participants' perceptions, meanings, and lived experiences. The primary data collection techniques used in this study include in-depth interviews and observation, which are intended to capture the meanings embedded in students' real-life experiences. These methods allow for a comprehensive understanding of how nationalism values are perceived and internalized by students.

This study adopts a phenomenological research design, meaning that the data are derived from participants' direct experiences in real-life settings (Nasir et al., 2023). The research was conducted at Pamulang University, located in South Tangerang City. The selection of this site is based on its multicultural student population, which provides a relevant context for examining the dynamics of nationalism values among university students.

Through this phenomenological approach, the researcher seeks to transform real-world phenomena into a structured academic analysis, identifying key issues related to students' perceptions of nationalism as well as proposing potential solutions. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the complexities surrounding nationalism in higher education settings, ensuring that the findings are both meaningful and contextually grounded.



Furthermore, the researcher adopts a qualitative descriptive method to provide a detailed, transparent, and in-depth description of the observed phenomena. This method is particularly suitable for capturing the realities of students' perceptions regarding the educational environment and its role in shaping nationalism values at Pamulang University. Overall, this methodological approach enables the study to present a clear, comprehensive, and nuanced understanding of how nationalism values are perceived and constructed within the academic environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the open and axial coding analysis indicate that students interpret nationalism through several interconnected dimensions: cognitive (understanding and definition), affective (feelings of love and pride), and conative or behavioral (real actions such as maintaining unity, using local products, and participating in social activities). Within the category of *Definition of Nationalism*, informants expressed diverse meanings, including "love for the homeland," "maintaining unity," "cultural preservation," "national loyalty," and "readiness to defend the nation."

These findings suggest that students' perceptions are not monolithic; rather, they exist along a continuum ranging from normative-textual understandings (knowledge of definitions and symbols) to more practical and action-oriented interpretations (linking nationalism to everyday behavior).

Further analysis through axial coding reveals differences in the depth of perception. Some students demonstrate a conceptual orientation, focusing primarily on theoretical definitions and values, while others exhibit a contextual or relational understanding by connecting nationalism values to real-life situations, such as participation in student organizations, community service, or the habit of choosing local products. This finding is closely related to the category of *Civic Education (PPKn) relevance*, where informants noted that course material has the potential to shape meaningful perceptions when delivered in a contextual and interactive manner. Conversely, when the material is overly theoretical and based on memorization, students' perceptions tend to remain superficial and do not progress toward internalization.

From an analytical perspective, two important conclusions emerge. First, students' perceptions of nationalism are inherently multidimensional; cognition alone is insufficient to fully represent nationalism perception. Second, variations in perception are strongly influenced by real-life experiences and access to non-formal learning environments. Students who actively participate in campus activities such as cultural organizations, national seminars, and community service tend to demonstrate more applicable and meaningful perceptions compared to those with limited participation.

Students' Perceptions of the Educational Environment

In general, students understand nationalism as a combination of love for the homeland, cultural preservation, and commitment to unity. However, the depth and interpretation of these values vary significantly depending on their learning experiences,



both formal and non-formal. Some students possess only a theoretical understanding, while others have successfully internalized nationalism values into their daily actions. The internalization process identified in this study occurs through two primary pathways derived from axial coding: (a) the academic-institutional pathway and (b) the social-practical pathway, each of which plays a distinct role in shaping students' perceptions.

Academic-Institutional Pathway

Formal academic activities, such as Civic Education (PPKn) courses, public lectures, and national seminars, are frequently identified as the main sources of knowledge about nationalism. However, axial coding reveals a key limitation, categorized as *over-theorization*. Many informants perceive that the delivery of material remains abstract and theoretical, resulting in declarative knowledge students “know” nationalism but do not necessarily “practice” it.

To address this issue, it is suggested that Civic Education be delivered in a more contextual and participatory manner, incorporating case-based learning and interactive approaches. Such strategies would allow cognitive understanding to be accompanied by the development of attitudes and behaviors.

Social-Practical Pathway

Non-formal campus activities play a crucial role in transforming knowledge into practice. Activities such as flag ceremonies, cultural student organizations, community service, cultural competitions, and interdisciplinary programs provide direct experiential learning. These activities foster emotional engagement and collective identity, strengthening students' sense of belonging and national pride. Axial coding shows that students who are actively involved in such activities tend to demonstrate concrete actions, such as using local products, participating in social initiatives, and creating content related to nationalism. This finding confirms that deep internalization is more likely to occur through direct experience and social participation.

Psychological Process of Internalization

The data indicate that internalization occurs through a combination of three processes: conceptual understanding (knowledge), emotional engagement (participation in activities or rituals), and repeated practice (habitual actions). When students experience all three stages such as learning about cultural values, participating in cultural events, and consistently practicing these values nationalism becomes part of their identity. In contrast, when students are exposed only to theoretical knowledge without practical engagement, internalization remains weak and is more susceptible to external influences.

Barriers to Internalization

Axial coding also identifies several significant barriers to the internalization of nationalism values. These include the influence of global culture (particularly through social media and foreign popular culture), student apathy or lack of interest in national issues, and limited or less engaging institutional programs.



Informants emphasized that without relevant platforms that align with students' interests such as programs that integrate modern cultural expressions with local values students are more easily influenced by global popular culture. This highlights the need for adaptive and innovative strategies in promoting nationalism among younger generations.

Factors Influencing Students' Perceptions

The findings indicate that students' perceptions are shaped by the interaction of internal and external factors. Internal factors include family background, prior educational experiences, personal understanding of nationalism, and individual motivation to participate in campus activities. Open coding results show that students who were introduced to nationalism values from an early age tend to have more positive perceptions. Axial coding further reveals the relationship between family upbringing, educational experience, and personal motivation in shaping students' attitudes.

External factors include the quality of instruction, the role of lecturers as role models, university policies that support character development, campus facilities, and an inclusive academic culture that promotes tolerance and unity. Selective coding demonstrates that a supportive educational environment strengthens students' national awareness, whereas weak institutional support may weaken positive perceptions, even when internal factors are strong.

Overall, students' perceptions are formed through the synergy of these internal and external factors. Therefore, Pamulang University needs to develop more targeted policies, provide engaging nationalism programs, and ensure that lecturers and student activities serve as effective platforms for value internalization.

The Role of the Educational Environment

Pamulang University plays a strategic role in shaping students' perceptions of nationalism through its curriculum, extracurricular activities, and cultural literacy programs. However, for this role to be effective, it must be supported by contextual teaching methods, engaging cultural platforms, and adaptive literacy programs that address the challenges of globalization.

Selective coding synthesizes the findings into a central idea: the formation and internalization of nationalism among students is an interactive process involving knowledge (Civic Education), experience (student activities and community service), attitudes (emotional attachment to culture), and institutional structures (university policies).

The main challenges include the mismatch between teaching methods (overly theoretical without practical application), limited platforms for cultural expression, and the strong influence of global popular culture, which offers alternative identities appealing to younger generations. Therefore, strengthening nationalism cannot rely on a single pathway. A holistic strategy is required, involving contextual curriculum design, systematic social practices, and adaptive cultural literacy interventions.



CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that students generally perceive the educational environment at Pamulang University as positive in supporting the internalization of nationalism values. Students believe that lecturers not only deliver academic content but also guide them in developing national character. Student activities, such as national seminars, flag ceremonies, and both intra- and extracurricular organizations, are considered effective means of strengthening patriotism and solidarity. In addition, adequate campus facilities and an inclusive academic atmosphere contribute to the perception that Pamulang University places strong emphasis on fostering nationalism values.

However, the study also reveals diverse perceptions among students. Some students argue that the development of nationalism should be further enhanced through more intensive and innovative programs, such as integrating national values into all courses and non-academic activities. This indicates that although the majority of students hold positive views, their perceptions are not entirely uniform.

The factors influencing students' perceptions of the educational environment in relation to nationalism values at Pamulang University consist of both internal and external factors that are interrelated. Internal factors include family background, prior educational experiences, individual understanding of nationalism, and personal motivation to participate in campus activities related to national values. Meanwhile, external factors include the quality of teaching that incorporates nationalism values, the role of lecturers as role models, university policies that support character-building programs, the availability of campus facilities, and a social-academic climate that promotes tolerance and unity.

These factors interact in shaping students' perceptions. A supportive campus environment can strengthen students' internal factors, while weak institutional support may reduce students' national awareness, even when they possess a strong internal foundation. The educational environment at Pamulang University plays a strategic role in shaping students' perceptions of nationalism values. Through a curriculum integrated with national values, supportive extracurricular activities, and cultural literacy education, the university can create a conducive atmosphere for fostering nationalism. However, to ensure effectiveness, innovation in teaching methods is necessary to align with students' realities and characteristics. Additionally, the provision of engaging and adaptive cultural platforms is essential to attract the interest of younger generations.

In the context of globalization and the strong influence of popular culture, a holistic approach is required. Strengthening nationalism should not rely on a single pathway but should involve collaboration between curriculum design, social practices, and cultural literacy initiatives. In this way, the university can function not only as an educational institution but also as a facilitator that equips students with critical skills to navigate identity challenges in the modern era.

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