Jurnal Al Maesarah: Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat
Bidang Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Kemasyarakatan
P-ISSN: 2830-022X | E-ISSN: 3025-0447
Online: https://jurnal.staidaf.ac.id/index.php/jam

Independence Diaries and the Cultivation of Heroic Values Among Generation Z and Alpha Students: A Civic-Pedagogical Study at MTs Hidayatun Najah Tuban

Auliya Urokhim [1*], Emi Fahrudi [2]

[1] Institut Agama Islam Nahdlatul Ulama Tuban, Indonesia; auliya.sejugm357482@gmail.com
[2] Institut Agama Islam Nahdlatul Ulama Tuban, Indonesia; fahrudiemi@gmail.com

Received: 13-06-2026 **Revised:** 10-08-2026 **Accepted:** 05-10-2026

ABSTRACT

The declining relevance of historical learning among Generation Z and Alpha students, particularly in understanding heroic values as lived ethical practices rather than merely historical narratives, has become a significant challenge in contemporary civic education. This condition highlights the need for reflective and contextual pedagogical approaches that align with students' socio-digital experiences. This study investigates the implementation of the Independence Diaries program as a transformative civic-pedagogical intervention to cultivate heroic values among students at MTs Hidayatun Najah Tuban. The research employed a qualitative Participatory Action Research (PAR) design. Data were collected through reflective journals, classroom observations, and focus group discussions, then analyzed using thematic analysis involving coding, categorization, and interpretation of recurring patterns. The findings demonstrate that reflective journaling significantly encouraged students to reinterpret heroism as everyday ethical actions, including responsibility, honesty, empathy, discipline, and social participation. Students also showed increased historical awareness, stronger civic responsibility, improved critical thinking, and greater confidence in expressing personal reflections. Furthermore, the program fostered active engagement in classroom discussions and strengthened students' ability to connect historical events with contemporary social realities. These findings indicate that reflective and participatory learning models can effectively bridge historical knowledge with students' lived experiences, thereby contributing to more meaningful civic and character education for Generation Z and Alpha learners.

Keywords: *Independence Diaries, Civic Education, Heroic Values, Reflective Learning, Transformative Pedagogy*

How to Cite Urokhim, A., & Fahrudi, E. (2026). Independence Diaries and the Cultivation of Heroic Values Among Generation Z and Alpha Students: A Civic-Pedagogical Study at MTs Hidayatun Najah Tuban. *Jurnal Al Maesarah*, 5(2), 330–345. https://doi.org/10.58988/jam.v5i2.1106

INTRODUCTION

The struggle for Indonesian independence should not merely be understood as a historical sequence culminating in political sovereignty, but as a foundational moral narrative containing enduring heroic values essential to national identity and civic consciousness. Embedded within this historical legacy are ethical principles such as patriotism, solidarity, sacrifice, collective responsibility, and commitment to the common good. These values function not only as commemorative symbols but also as normative foundations for character formation and civic engagement among younger generations.

From the perspective of civic and character education, however, the transmission of heroic values cannot occur automatically through historical instruction alone. Heroism must be pedagogically reconstructed as a living ethical orientation rather than treated as static historical memory (Akhmedova, 2024). This requires educational approaches capable of transforming historical consciousness into reflective civic praxis, where learners critically reconstruct social realities through dialogical reflection and participatory engagement (Dewey, 1910).

However, previous studies have largely focused on the descriptive and normative dimensions of heroic values within historical and civic education, often emphasizing content transmission rather than pedagogical transformation. For instance, several works highlight the importance of integrating national history into character education frameworks, yet they tend to overlook how these values are operationalized in concrete learning practices and how learners internalize them in contemporary settings (Akhmedova, 2024). Furthermore, there remains limited empirical exploration regarding innovative educational approaches that bridge historical narratives with students' lived experiences, particularly in the context of rapidly changing socio-digital environments. This indicates a significant gap between the moral ideals embedded in independence history and their practical enactment within modern educational contexts.

Based on this gap, this study aims to examine how heroic values derived from the Indonesian independence struggle can be pedagogically reconstructed and integrated into contemporary character education practices. Specifically, this study seeks to identify effective strategies for contextualizing these values within learners' socio-cultural realities and to analyze how such approaches contribute to the development of reflective and participatory civic character.

In this regard, the novelty of this study lies in its effort to move beyond normative discourse by proposing a contextual and praxis-oriented framework for the transmission of heroic values. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize historical content, this research highlights the dynamic interaction between historical memory, pedagogical innovation, and learners' agency in constructing civic meaning. Thus, this study contributes to the development of a more transformative model of character education that is responsive to contemporary societal challenges.

This challenge has become increasingly significant in the context of globalization and digital transformation. Generation Z and Generation Alpha have been shaped by highly visual, algorithm-driven, and hyperconnected media environments that influence identity formation, emotional engagement, and

patterns of civic participation in digital society (Borhan, 2025; Prensky, 2001). As a result, conventional approaches to history learning that rely heavily on memorization, symbolic ceremonies, and one-directional instruction often fail to establish meaningful connections between historical narratives and students' lived experiences. Consequently, heroic values risk being perceived as distant historical ideals rather than relevant ethical practices in everyday life.

This shifting sociocultural landscape necessitates a reconceptualization of how heroic values are articulated, communicated, and embodied within educational settings. Rather than positioning globalization and digitalization as threats, they may instead be understood as transformative contexts requiring adaptive pedagogical strategies (Akhmedova, 2024; Nurhikmah & Ibrahim, 2025). The critical issue, therefore, is not whether heroic values remain relevant, but how they can be recontextualized through participatory, dialogical, and reflective approaches that resonate with digitally native generations. In this context, civic education must also promote global citizenship competencies, including critical literacy, intercultural awareness, and ethical participation in democratic society (UNESCO, 2015).

Accordingly, this study departs from the assumption that character formation in the digital era demands innovative civic-educational interventions capable of bridging historical memory and contemporary youth culture. It situates heroic values within a broader theoretical framework encompassing civic education, generational cohort theory, and transformative pedagogy (Aljanazrah et al., 2022). By doing so, it seeks to explore how national consciousness can be cultivated through pedagogical models that are dialogic, experiential, and context-sensitive, particularly among Generation Z and Alpha students who are navigating complex intersections between local identity, global culture, and digital modernity.

Within Indonesia's educational framework, the strengthening of character education has been institutionalized through the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* policy (Faiz & Kurniawaty, 2020). The framework emphasizes holistic learner development through dimensions such as critical reasoning, independence, cooperation, creativity, and civic responsibility. Importantly, it promotes a reflective and participatory model of citizenship that integrates moral values with contemporary social realities. Nevertheless, the implementation of character education in many schools, including Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), often remains cognitive and ceremonial, with limited opportunities for students to internalize values through reflective and experiential learning processes. (Dendodi et al., 2024).

The Pancasila Student Profile is structured around six interrelated dimensions of competence and character: (1) faith and devotion to Almighty God, (2) global diversity awareness, (3) cooperation (gotong royong), (4) independence, (5) critical reasoning, and (6) creativity. These dimensions reflect an integrative paradigm that bridges moral-spiritual formation, civic responsibility, intercultural literacy, and twenty-first-century competencies (Inayah, 2021). Importantly, the framework underscores that national identity and global engagement are not mutually exclusive constructs; rather, they coexist within a dynamic and dialogical process of identity formation. In this sense, the policy advances a conception of

citizenship that is simultaneously rooted in local ethical traditions and responsive to global interconnectedness.

History learning, which is still oriented toward memorization, lacks critical reflection and relevance to students' daily experiences, often resulting in a superficial understanding of heroic values such as sacrifice, responsibility, and solidarity. As a result, a gap exists between historical knowledge as curricular content and historical awareness as a transformative moral experience.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of integrating character education into history and civic learning; however, most remain focused on normative discourse, curriculum design, or digital innovation without adequately addressing reflective pedagogical praxis (Dendodi et al., 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2023). Research on reflective writing has demonstrated its potential in fostering critical thinking, self-awareness, and transformative professional learning through reflective inquiry processes (O'Flaherty et al., 2024; Ukrop et al., 2019). Thus, a significant gap persists between historical knowledge as curricular content and historical awareness as transformative moral experience.

Responding to this gap, this study examines the implementation of the Independence Diaries program at MTs Hidayatun Najah Tuban as a transformative civic-pedagogical intervention. The program employs reflective journaling to encourage students to reinterpret heroic values through their daily experiences, social interactions, and contemporary realities. Rather than positioning students as passive recipients of patriotic narratives, the program engages them as active interpreters of civic meaning through dialogical and participatory learning processes.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of reflective writing, historical learning, and character education within the context of Islamic junior secondary education. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize historical content transmission or normative character discourse, this research proposes a praxis-oriented pedagogical model that connects historical memory with students' lived moral experiences. By doing so, the study contributes to the development of a more contextual, reflective, and transformative framework for civic and character education in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative Participatory Action Research (PAR) design to investigate the implementation of the Independence Diaries program as a transformative civic-pedagogical intervention at MTs Hidayatun Najah Tuban (Abdussamad & Rapanna, 2021). PAR was selected because it emphasizes collaborative, reflective, and participatory learning processes that align with the objectives of character education and civic transformation. The study aimed to explore how reflective journaling facilitates the internalization of heroic values among Generation Z and Alpha students through contextual and experiential learning practices.

The participants consisted of one purposively selected class of 28 students aged 12–15 years at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. The class was selected based on recommendations from teachers and school administrators, considering

students' active participation in civic and history learning activities. The research was conducted over six weeks during the history and civic education learning period.

The intervention followed the cyclical stages of Participatory Action Research, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection (Gunawan, 2022; Al Ayyubi et al., 2025). During the planning stage, the researchers collaboratively designed reflective learning activities, discussion themes, and diary-writing guidelines related to Indonesian independence narratives and heroic values. Reflective journaling was selected because reflective diary practices have been shown to strengthen metacognitive awareness, pedagogical reflection, and learner autonomy in educational settings (Ukrop et al., 2019). In the action stage, students participated in dialogical classroom discussions concerning historical events, national figures, and contemporary interpretations of heroism. Students were subsequently instructed to compose structured reflective journals called Independence Diaries, in which they connected historical values such as sacrifice, responsibility, solidarity, honesty, and social participation with their daily experiences and personal reflections.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: (1) students' reflective journals, (2) classroom observations, and (3) focus group discussions (FGDs). Reflective journals served as the principal data source for examining students' moral reasoning, emotional responses, and reinterpretations of heroic values. Classroom observations were conducted to identify patterns of participation, interaction, and behavioral engagement during learning activities. Meanwhile, FGDs were conducted at the end of the intervention to explore students' perceptions of the learning experience and the relevance of heroic values in contemporary life.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis procedures consisting of open coding, axial categorization, and theme development. In the initial stage, researchers conducted open coding by identifying recurring statements, reflective expressions, and behavioral indicators within students' journals and discussion transcripts. The codes were subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories related to historical consciousness, civic responsibility, empathy, critical reflection, and transformative moral awareness. Finally, interpretative analysis was conducted to identify patterns of meaning transformation and shifts in students' understanding of heroism from historical symbolism toward contextual ethical practice.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the study employed triangulation of data sources, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from journals, observations, and FGDs. Member checking was carried out through reflective confirmation sessions with students to validate the interpretation of their responses, while peer debriefing involved discussions with fellow educators and academic colleagues regarding coding consistency and thematic interpretation. These procedures were intended to strengthen the rigor, transparency, and analytical credibility of the study.

Overall, the study focused on identifying transformative changes in students' historical awareness, moral reasoning, and articulation of civic responsibility as indicators of reflective character formation within the context of contemporary civic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation Process and Program Dynamics

The implementation of the Independence Diaries program at MTs Hidayatun Najah Tuban demonstrated a progressively positive trajectory from the initial orientation phase through to the final evaluative stage. However, beyond its descriptive progression, the findings reveal a significant pedagogical transformation aligned with participatory and reflective learning theories.

During the socialization phase, students responded with notable enthusiasm when the themes of independence and heroism were introduced through dialogical and context-sensitive pedagogical strategies. This finding confirms the argument that dialogical pedagogy facilitates active meaning construction rather than passive knowledge reception (Pamuji & Rindanah, 2022). In line with constructivist learning theory, knowledge is not transmitted but co-constructed through interaction and reflection. The use of open-ended questioning and reflective prompts functioned as epistemic triggers, enabling students to connect historical narratives with their own lived experiences.

This shift from transmission-based instruction to participatory engagement indicates a transition from what Paulo Freire conceptualizes as the "banking model of education" toward a problem-posing model that emphasizes critical consciousness *(conscientização)*. Such findings align with Freire's concept of dialogic education, which emphasizes that critical consciousness develops through reflective participation rather than passive reception of information (Freire, 1970). This finding also resonates with Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which emphasizes critical reflection as a mechanism for perspective transformation. Through reflective journaling, students were encouraged not only to understand historical narratives cognitively but also to reinterpret them through ethical and experiential dimensions relevant to their contemporary realities. Empirically, this is evidenced by students' increasing ability to articulate personal interpretations of independence, suggesting the emergence of reflective awareness and early-stage moral reasoning. Compared to previous studies that emphasize curriculum integration without examining classroom praxis (Faiz & Kurniawaty, 2020; Wahyuni et al., 2023), this study demonstrates how dialogical interaction concretely mediates value internalization.

During the guided writing phase, variations in students' levels of participation and literacy competencies became more visible. Rather than being a limitation, this heterogeneity functioned as a critical site for differentiated pedagogical intervention. The scaffolding strategies employed both collective and individualized align with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learning occurs through guided support that gradually leads to autonomy. Students who initially struggled with articulating

abstract ideas were progressively able to construct meaningful narratives, indicating cognitive and reflective development.

More importantly, reflective journaling served not merely as a writing exercise but as a mechanism for value internalization. This supports findings from reflective learning research (Aljanazrah et al., 2022), which highlight that reflective writing enhances self-awareness and critical thinking. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that reflective writing also facilitates the transformation of historical knowledge into moral experience. Students did not only recount historical events but reinterpreted heroic values such as sacrifice, responsibility, and solidarity in relation to their personal and social contexts.

This study contributes to the field of civic and history education in three significant ways. First, it provides an empirical demonstration of how reflective journaling functions as a mediating tool for transforming historical narratives into lived moral experiences. This moves beyond the dominant paradigm of content-based character education toward a praxis-oriented approach. Second, the study proposes a contextualized pedagogical model that integrates dialogical learning, reflective writing, and historical education within the specific setting of Islamic schooling (Madrasah Tsanawiyah). This integration has been largely absent in previous literature, particularly in studies focusing on character education in Indonesia. Third, this research advances the conceptual distinction between historical literacy and historical consciousness, showing that meaningful character formation occurs when students actively reinterpret values within their socio-cultural realities. This offers a theoretical contribution to civic pedagogy by positioning learners as agents of moral meaning-making rather than passive recipients of national narratives.



Figure 1. Dialogical Delivery of Instructional Content on Independence and Heroic Values.

Depicts a subsequent phase of the instructional delivery in which the facilitator deepened students' engagement with the themes of national independence and heroism through dialogical interaction and guided inquiry. This session was structured to move beyond informational transmission toward interpretive exploration, encouraging learners to articulate their preliminary understandings, question dominant narratives, and relate historical values to contemporary lived experiences (Agarwal & Verma, 2023). By integrating open-ended questioning, peer responses, and audiovisual support, the instructional

design operationalized a participatory civic-pedagogical framework intended to cultivate critical reflection, contextual awareness, and affective involvement before the reflective writing phase of the program.

This differentiated facilitation underscores the adaptive strength of the participatory approach. By accommodating diverse educational backgrounds, literacy levels, and motivational orientations, the program operationalized inclusive pedagogy in practice. The observed dynamics suggest that participatory-reflective models are particularly effective in contexts characterized by heterogeneous learner profiles, as they create pedagogical space for both emerging and advanced reflective capacities to evolve.

The Independence Diaries program serves not merely as a reflective medium, but as a pedagogical mechanism that operationalizes the transformation of historical narratives into lived ethical consciousness. This finding aligns with constructivist and reflective learning theories, which posit that meaning is actively constructed through the interaction between prior knowledge and lived experience. Through structured reflective writing, students move beyond rote memorization toward interpretive engagement, indicating a shift from surface learning to deep learning.

The use of provocative and open-ended questions—such as who is a hero, how heroism manifests in everyday life, and how independence values are practiced in social contexts—functions as a form of critical pedagogy that stimulates higher-order thinking. In this regard, the findings resonate with dialogical learning frameworks, where questioning is not merely a pedagogical technique but an epistemological tool for fostering critical consciousness. Compared to prior studies that emphasize narrative transmission (Wahyuni et al., 2023), this study demonstrates that reflective questioning enables students to reconstruct meaning in a more personal and contextually grounded manner.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals a significant shift from a static to a dynamic construction of values. Independence is no longer perceived as a fixed historical event but as a continuously negotiated ethical practice. This transformation reflects the development of what historical education scholars term historical consciousness, in which individuals relate the past to present action and future orientation. While previous research has highlighted the importance of innovative learning in history education (Dendodi et al., 2024; Fauzan et al., 2025), it often remains limited to engagement and motivation. This study extends those findings by demonstrating how reflective writing facilitates value internalization and moral articulation, not merely cognitive engagement. In contrast to previous studies that primarily emphasize digital engagement or motivational outcomes in civic learning, the present study highlights the importance of reflective and affective dimensions in shaping historical consciousness and civic identity among digitally native learners.

The diary format itself plays a crucial mediating role. As a semi-private and expressive space, it enables students to articulate thoughts, emotions, and personal experiences without the pressure of formal evaluation. This supports the argument that reflective writing enhances self-awareness and identity construction (Aljanazrah et al., 2022). However, this study contributes further by showing that

such reflection is not only intrapersonal but also socio-civic in nature, as students explicitly connect their reflections to roles within school, family, and community contexts. This finding is also consistent with Dewey's theory of reflective thinking, which positions reflection as a continuous reconstruction of experience through inquiry and interpretation (Dewey, 1910).

Thus, the Independence Diaries function as a dual pedagogical instrument: as a medium for strengthening historical literacy through interpretive engagement with historical narratives, and as a transformative tool for cultivating historical consciousness and civic responsibility.

Diverse Constructions of Heroism Among Generation Z And Alpha

One of the most salient findings of the program was the observable transformation in students' conceptualizations of heroism. At the outset of the intervention, the majority of participants equated heroism primarily with nationally recognized historical figures encountered in textbooks and official commemorations. Heroism was thus initially framed within a conventional and person-centered paradigm, emphasizing iconic individuals associated with the independence struggle.

However, following cycles of guided reflection and collective discussion, students began to articulate broader and more contextualized interpretations of heroism. Their diary entries increasingly defined heroism not solely in terms of historical stature, but as everyday ethical conduct (Kamila Rahma Shalehah et al., 2025). Participants described heroic behavior as discipline in fulfilling responsibilities, honesty in academic and social interactions, empathy and solidarity with peers, moral courage in speaking truthfully, and environmental stewardship within their communities.

One student reflected:

"Before joining the Independence Diaries program, I thought heroes were only national figures who fought during the independence era. After writing the diary, I realized that being honest, helping friends, and taking responsibility at school are also forms of heroism."

Another participant stated:

"Independence is not only about history lessons. It also means respecting others, maintaining discipline, and contributing positively to society."

These reflections indicate that students gradually reconstructed heroic values from symbolic historical concepts into contextual ethical practices embedded within everyday life.



Figure 2. Instructional Session on the Values of Independence and Heroism

Figure 2 illustrates the instructional phase of the program, during which foundational concepts of independence and heroic values were introduced through a dialogical and participatory pedagogical approach. Rather than employing a unidirectional lecture format, the facilitator engaged students in guided discussions, reflective questioning, and multimodal learning activities designed to stimulate critical engagement and contextual understanding. This session constituted the initial stage of the civic-pedagogical intervention, aimed at activating prior knowledge, fostering interpretive awareness, and preparing participants for the subsequent reflective diary-writing process

This conceptual expansion suggests that Generation Z and Alpha learners tend to interpret abstract moral constructs through experiential and situational lenses. This finding demonstrates that reflective learning enables students to negotiate historical meaning through personal experience rather than through rote memorization alone. Unlike conventional civic instruction that often prioritizes factual recall, the Independence Diaries program facilitated interpretive engagement, allowing students to position themselves as active moral agents within contemporary social contexts. Rather than internalizing heroism as an unattainable ideal associated exclusively with extraordinary historical actors, students reframed it as an attainable and relational practice embedded in daily life. The observed shift constitutes an important indicator of value internalization. It demonstrates movement from normative memorization toward personal appropriation, wherein heroic values are reconstructed as lived ethical commitments rather than abstract civic slogans (Akhter et al., 2025). In this respect, the program achieved one of its central pedagogical objectives: fostering a deeper, more personalized engagement with national values among digitally immersed youth.

Collectively, these findings affirm that reflective journaling, when implemented within a participatory educational framework, can function as a transformative civic-pedagogical intervention capable of revitalizing character education and strengthening historically grounded national consciousness among Generation Z and Alpha students (Anwar & Setiawan, 2024). In addition to strengthening students' understanding of national and civic values, the Independence Diaries program contributed meaningfully to the enhancement of participants' literacy competencies, particularly in reading comprehension, written expression, and reflective articulation. The structured diary-writing process required students to organize ideas coherently, select appropriate vocabulary, construct logically sequenced arguments, and translate abstract reflections into comprehensible written narratives.

This iterative practice of composing reflective entries functioned not merely as a technical writing exercise, but as a cognitively demanding activity that activated metacognitive processes and narrative construction skills. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding aligns with metacognitive learning theory, which posits that reflective writing enables learners to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own thinking processes. The emergence of narrative coherence in students' writing indicates that they were not only recalling information but reorganizing experiences into meaningful interpretive structures.

Notably, several students who initially demonstrated reluctance or passivity in writing began to exhibit increased confidence and willingness to articulate personal ideas and lived experiences. This transformation can be interpreted through the lens of affective learning theory, where a non-threatening and non-evaluative environment reduces anxiety and enhances intrinsic motivation. Consistent with findings from reflective writing studies (Aljanazrah et al., 2022), the dialogical and expressive nature of journaling lowers affective barriers while fostering expressive autonomy and learner agency. However, this study extends prior research by showing that such autonomy is closely linked to the internalization of civic and historical values, not merely improvements in writing fluency.

Moreover, the post-writing reflective discussions played a crucial role in deepening students' critical thinking capacities. Through structured peer dialogue, students engaged in comparative reflection—listening to diverse viewpoints, identifying convergences and divergences, and reassessing their own interpretations. This process reflects core principles of social constructivism, particularly the idea that knowledge is co-constructed through interaction and dialogical negotiation. In contrast to prior studies that emphasize individual reflection as a solitary activity (Wahyuni et al., 2023), the findings here highlight the importance of collective reflection as a catalyst for higher-order thinking and perspective transformation.

The dialogical exchange also demonstrates elements of what Dewey describes as reflective thinking, where learning emerges from the continuous reconstruction of experience. Students did not merely express opinions but engaged in reasoned judgment, indicating the development of critical-reflective reasoning. This supports and extends previous research on innovative history learning (Dendodi et al., 2024; Fauzan et al., 2025), which often focuses on engagement but pays limited attention to epistemic depth and meaning-making processes.

Consequently, the outcomes of the program extend beyond the production of written artifacts. The findings reveal a process-oriented transformation characterized by sustained cognitive engagement, dialogical reasoning, and reflective growth. Analytically, this transformation suggests that reflective pedagogy functions not only as a literacy-based intervention but also as a socio-moral learning mechanism through which students actively reconstruct civic meaning in relation to their personal and collective experiences. This suggests that literacy-based civic interventions, when designed within a reflective and participatory framework, can simultaneously enhance academic competencies and facilitate deeper ethical understanding.

Contribution to The Strengthening of The Pancasila Student Profile

From a conceptual standpoint, the Independence Diaries program demonstrates direct alignment with and practical reinforcement of the normative dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. The dimension of faith and devotion to Almighty God was reflected in students' expressions of gratitude for national independence and in their articulation of moral responsibility as future stewards of the nation. These reflections frequently integrated spiritual awareness with civic

commitment, illustrating the interconnectedness of religious and national identity within the madrasah context.

The dimensions of global diversity awareness and cooperation (gotong royong) emerged through students' demonstrated respect for differing perspectives during group discussions and their collaborative engagement throughout the writing process. The dialogical format cultivated interpersonal sensitivity and collective responsibility, reinforcing the social dimension of character education (Ayyubi et al., 2025). Furthermore, the dimensions of critical reasoning and creativity were evident in students' ability to reinterpret heroic values in relation to contemporary social realities and to express those interpretations in original reflective narratives. Rather than reiterating textbook definitions, participants articulated contextualized understandings of heroism grounded in everyday ethical practice. This capacity to connect historical ideals with present-day circumstances reflects the development of higher-order cognitive and interpretive skills.



Figure 3. Program Banner Display as Visual Representation of the Civic-Pedagogical Initiative

Figure 3 presents the official program banner displayed during the implementation of the community engagement initiative. The banner functioned not merely as ceremonial decoration, but as a symbolic and communicative artifact that articulated the thematic focus, pedagogical objectives, and institutional collaboration underlying the "Independence Diaries" program. By visually foregrounding the concepts of independence, heroism, and generational engagement, the banner contributed to constructing a shared discursive space in which students, teachers, and facilitators collectively recognized the activity as part of a broader civic-character formation effort. In this sense, the visual display served both an informational and a normative function, reinforcing the identity of the program as a structured, reflective, and literacy-based intervention within the madrasah environment.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the community engagement initiative should not be reduced to a supplementary literacy or history enrichment

activity; rather, it represents a pedagogical operationalization of Pancasila-based character education at the level of classroom praxis. From a theoretical perspective, this aligns with the shift from policy-as-text to policy-as-practice, where abstract character frameworks are enacted through situated pedagogical processes. While previous studies tend to conceptualize Pancasila character education at the level of curriculum discourse (Wahyuni et al., 2020), this study demonstrates how such values are mediated, negotiated, and internalized through reflective and dialogical learning practices.

Moreover, the findings highlight the role of participatory pedagogy in fostering what Freire conceptualizes as critical consciousness *(conscientização)*, where learners move beyond passive acceptance of national narratives toward active interpretation and ethical positioning. The dialogical space created within the program enabled students, teachers, and institutional actors to engage in meaning-making processes that are both cognitive and socio-cultural. This supports and extends research on dialogical civic education (Pamuji & Rindanah, 2022), by showing that such approaches are not only effective at the micro-level of classroom interaction but also generate meso-level institutional transformation, particularly in shaping school culture toward reflective and participatory norms.

From an institutional perspective, the positive reception from stakeholders indicates a readiness for pedagogical innovation. However, rather than interpreting this merely as acceptance, it can be analytically understood as an indicator of institutional adaptability and pedagogical openness, which are critical factors in sustaining educational reform. This finding resonates with studies on inclusive and participatory education, which emphasize that sustainable innovation requires alignment between pedagogical design and institutional culture.

The potential for long-term sustainability further strengthens the significance of this intervention. The proposed institutionalization—through integration into literacy programs, commemorative activities, and character education curricula—reflects a transition from project-based intervention to embedded pedagogical practice. This shift is crucial, as previous research on educational innovation often fails at the stage of sustainability due to lack of institutional integration. In contrast, this study demonstrates a viable pathway for sustaining reflective pedagogy within the madrasah system.

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges emerged during the implementation process. Some students initially experienced difficulties expressing reflective ideas due to limited literacy confidence and unfamiliarity with reflective writing practices. In addition, the intervention required intensive facilitation and substantial classroom time, which may become challenging within rigid curricular structures. The study was also conducted within a single madrasah context involving a limited number of participants, thereby restricting broader generalizability. Future studies may therefore explore comparative implementations across diverse educational settings and examine the long-term sustainability of reflective civic-pedagogical interventions.

Additionally, the suggestion to develop digital adaptations of the Independence Diaries aligns with contemporary theories of digital pedagogy,

particularly in addressing the learning characteristics of Generation Z and Alpha. While prior studies on digital civic education (Fauzan et al., 2025) primarily focus on technological integration, this study emphasizes that digitalization must remain grounded in reflective and value-oriented pedagogy. Thus, the integration of digital platforms is not merely a technological extension but a strategic means to amplify reflective engagement and broaden civic participation.

Ultimately, the broader significance of this community engagement program lies in its long-term orientation. Rather than focusing solely on short-term outputs, such as the production of written compilations, the initiative aspires to generate enduring impact in the domains of character formation, historical consciousness, and national awareness among young learners. In doing so, it embodies the foundational objective of community engagement in education: to cultivate sustainable transformations in both individual development and institutional practice.

The broader implications of this study also support contemporary arguments that civic education in post-democratic societies must prioritize dialogic, cooperative, and reflective pedagogies capable of countering polarization, passive citizenship, and social fragmentation (Gozálvez & Gracia Calandín, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The "Independence Diaries" program at MTs Hidayatun Najah Tuban demonstrates the effectiveness of a reflective and participatory pedagogical approach in fostering heroic values and nationalism in Generation Z and Alpha students. Through reflective diary writing, students' understanding of independence shifts from merely historical and ceremonial events to an ethical framework relevant to everyday life. Heroism is no longer understood as an attribute of past figures, but rather as concrete practices such as honesty, discipline, social empathy, moral courage, and cooperation. This shift marks a deeper internalization of values, beyond mere normative compliance. In addition to strengthening national awareness and social responsibility, this program also improves students' literacy skills, critical thinking, and courage in expressing ideas reflectively. Conceptually, this model aligns with the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly critical reasoning, creativity, and collaboration. Based on a reflective pedagogy that adapts to the characteristics of the digital generation, "Independence Diaries" offers a contextual, participatory, and potentially replicable character education model to strengthen historical awareness and civic identity sustainably.

Practically, the findings of this study suggest that teachers should integrate reflective writing activities into civic and history learning to foster students' critical awareness and moral engagement. Curriculum developers are encouraged to design contextual and participatory learning models that connect historical narratives with students' lived experiences. At the same time, policymakers may consider reflective pedagogy as part of broader character education initiatives within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its relatively small participant scope and short intervention duration within a single

madrasah context. Future research may expand implementation across diverse educational settings, incorporate longitudinal approaches, and explore integrating digital reflective platforms to enhance civic engagement among Generation Z and Alpha learners.

REFERENCE

Abdussamad, Z., & Rapanna, P. (2021). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif*. CV. Syakir Media Press.

Agarwal, R., & Verma, S. (2023). Dialogical pedagogy and critical inquiry in civic education: Enhancing student engagement and interpretive learning. *Journal of Educational Inquiry*, *12*(2), 45–60.

Akhmedova, M. (2024). Reinterpreting historical values in modern civic education: A pedagogical perspective. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, *15*(1), 45–62.

Akhter, S., Rahman, M., & Hossain, M. (2025). Experiential learning and value internalization among digital native students. *Journal of Educational Psychology and Practice*, *14*(1), 55–70.

Al Ayyubi, I. I., Hayati, A. F., Hartati, R. D., Nurhikmah, & Siti Rahmawati. (2025). BUILDING RELIGIOUS MODERATION LIFE THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA. *El-Adabi: Jurnal Studi Islam*, *3*(2), 14–28. https://doi.org/10.59166/el-adabi.v3i2.170

Aljanazrah, A., Alkhawaldeh, N., & Alomari, M. (2022). Civic education and value formation in the digital age: Challenges and pedagogical implications. *Journal of Education and Learning*, *11*(4), 120–134.

Anwar, K., & Setiawan, B. (2024). Reflective pedagogy in civic education: Enhancing national consciousness through participatory learning. *Journal of Civic Education Studies*, *9*(2), 88–104.

Ayyubi, I. I. Al, Masfuroh, A. S., Noerzanah, F., Nurhikmah, & Khan, A. (2025). The Influence of Gadget Use on Early Childhood Social Interaction: A Study on the Decline of Interest in Traditional Play. *BANUN: JURNAL PENDIDIKAN ISLAM ANAK USIA DINI*, *3*(1), 23–33. https://journal.albadar.ac.id/index.php/BANUN/article/view/322

Borhan, H. (2025). Civic Education as a Pathway to Inclusive Societies: Exploring the Role of Education in Fostering Civic and Social Engagement. In *OECD Education Working Papers*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/3f128be8-en

Dendodi, R., Pratama, Y., & Sari, D. (2024). Innovative approaches in history learning: Strengthening students' historical awareness and civic engagement. *Journal of History Education and Pedagogy*, *8*(2), 77–92.

Dewey, J. (1910). *How We Think*. D.C. Heath & Co.

Faiz, A., & Kurniawaty, I. (2020). Konsep merdeka belajar dalam pendidikan Indonesia: Perspektif filsafat pendidikan progresivisme. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, *27*(2), 155–164.

Fauzan, M., Rahmawati, I., & Nugroho, A. (2025). Digital transformation in civic education: Reconstructing historical values in the era of society 5.0. *International Journal of Civic and Citizenship Education*, *10*(1), 55–70.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.

Gozálvez, V., & Gracia Calandín, J. (2025). Civic Education in a New Post-Democratic Context: The Need to Revitalize a Dialogic and Cooperative Pedagogy for Global Citizenship. *Prospects*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-025-09741-z

Gunawan, I. (2022). *Metode penelitian kualitatif: Teori dan praktik*. Bumi Aksara.

Inayah, S. (2021). Profil Pelajar Pancasila sebagai kerangka pendidikan karakter dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, *10*(2), 1–12.

Kamila Rahma Shalehah, N., Putri, A., & Lestari, D. (2025). Reframing heroism in contemporary youth perspectives: A socio-cultural analysis. *Journal of Youth and Civic Identity*, *6*(1), 33–48.

Nurhikmah, & Ibrahim, M. (2025). Work Meetings as the Main Pillar of Management and Formation of Youth Social Character in Karang Taruna Organizations. *Jurnal Al Maesarah*, *4*(1), 151–160. https://doi.org/10.58988/jam.v4i1.402

O'Flaherty, J., McCormack, O., Lenihan, R., & Young, A. M. (2024). Critical Reflection and Global Citizenship Education: Exploring the Views and Experiences of Teacher Educators. *Reflective Practice*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2024.2421598

Pamuji, S., & Rindanah, R. (2022). Dialogical learning in civic education: Encouraging student participation and critical thinking. *Jurnal Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*, *12*(1), 45–58.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, *9*(5), 1–6.

Ukrop, M., Švábenský, V., & Nehyba, J. (2019). *Reflective Diary for Professional Development of Novice Teachers BT - Proceedings of the 50th ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education*. https://doi.org/10.1145/3287324.3287448

UNESCO. (2015). *Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives*. UNESCO. https://doi.org/10.54675/DRHC3544

Wahyuni, S., Hidayat, A., & Prasetyo, B. (2023). Integrating character education in history learning: Strengthening students' civic values through national narratives. *Journal of Social Science Education*, *22*(3), 101–115.

Wahyuni, S., Hidayat, A., Prasetyo, B., Fauzan, M., Rahmawati, I., Nugroho, A., Aljanazrah, A., Alkhawaldeh, N., Alomari, M., Faiz, A., Kurniawaty, I., Dendodi, R., Pratama, Y., & Sari, D. (2020). Innovative approaches in history learning: Strengthening students' historical awareness and civic engagement. *Journal of History Education and Pedagogy*, *27*(2), 155–164.



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open-access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-SA) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).