

## Forms of Nationalism Spirit in Generation Z Students of Indonesian Senior High Schools

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores how the spirit of nationalism is expressed in the daily attitudes, practices, and participation of Generation Z students in Indonesian senior high schools within the context of globalization and digital culture. Rather than viewing nationalism merely as symbolic or ceremonial expressions, this research focuses on how national values are experienced and practiced in everyday school life. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study was conducted in two different settings: a public senior high school (SMAN 7 Mataram) and a private inclusive senior high school (SMA Abata Lombok). Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, extracurricular advisors, and school principals, as well as document analysis. The findings show that student's nationalism is reflected in values of unity, solidarity, independence, responsibility, and willingness to sacrifice. These values are manifested through inclusive peer interactions, collaborative learning, participation in extracurricular and commemorative activities, and routine school practices. The study also indicates that school context influences the form of nationalism, public schools tend to emphasize collective identity and ceremonial discipline, while private inclusive schools place greater emphasis on relational engagement and social responsibility. Overall, nationalism among Generation Z is constructed as an everyday civic practice embedded in school culture and experiential learning. This study is limited to two schools and Grade 10 students, so the findings cannot be generalized widely. Future research is recommended to involve broader contexts and longitudinal designs.*

*Keywords: Nationalism, Generation Z, Senior High Schools*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana semangat nasionalisme diekspresikan dalam sikap, perilaku, dan partisipasi siswa Generasi Z di Sekolah Menengah Atas di Indonesia dalam konteks globalisasi dan budaya digital. Nasionalisme tidak dipahami semata sebagai simbol atau aktivitas seremonial, melainkan sebagai nilai yang dihayati dan dipraktikkan dalam kehidupan sekolah sehari-hari. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan Lokasi di SMAN 7 Mataram dan SMA Abata Lombok sebagai sekolah inklusi. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan siswa, guru, pembina ekstrakurikuler, dan kepala sekolah, serta analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nasionalisme tercermin dalam nilai persatuan, solidaritas, kemandirian, tanggung jawab, dan rela berkorban yang tampak dalam interaksi sosial, pembelajaran kolaboratif, kegiatan ekstrakurikuler, dan rutinitas sekolah. Konteks sekolah memengaruhi bentuk ekspresi nasionalisme, di mana sekolah negeri menekankan disiplin dan identitas kolektif, sedangkan sekolah inklusi menonjolkan kepedulian sosial dan relasi antarindividu. Penelitian ini terbatas pada dua sekolah dan siswa kelas X sehingga temuan belum dapat digeneralisasikan secara luas. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan melibatkan konteks yang lebih beragam dan menggunakan desain penelitian berkelanjutan.

**Kata Kunci:** Nasionalisme, Generasi Z, Sekolah Menengah Atas

## INTRODUCTION

The intensification of digital culture and the circulation of global information have influenced Generation Z constructs its social and national identity. Growing up in an environment characterized by continuous exposure to transnational discourses through social media and digital platforms, this generation is increasingly connected to global values that are sometimes weakly anchored in local and national contexts (Siswanti, 2024). Although such openness encourages cosmopolitan awareness, it simultaneously raises critical concerns regarding the erosion of emotional attachment to the nation and the internalization of national character values. In the absence of systematic and sustainable character education, Generation Z students may experience fragmented identity formation and a diminishing orientation toward national belonging.

In contemporary educational discourse, nationalism is no longer conceptualized merely as ideological loyalty or affective attachment to state symbols. Rather, it is increasingly understood as a form of civic practice that is continuously produced and reproduced through everyday interactions, routines, and participatory experiences. Billig's notion of banal nationalism draws attention to the subtle and often unnoticed ways in which national belonging is sustained through practices embedded in daily life, rather than through overt ideological expressions (Billig, 2010). Similarly, Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008) frame nationalism as "everyday nationhood," emphasizing how peer relations, routine activities, and institutional arrangements contribute to the ongoing construction of national meanings in lived contexts. From this perspective, Brubaker argues that nationalism should be approached as a category of practice rather than a fixed ideological condition, thereby shifting analytical focus from defining nationalism to examining what individuals do in the name of nation within their everyday social worlds (Brubaker, 2002).

Within educational settings, this perspective situates the spirit of nationalism as a lived civic orientation reflected in students' attitudes, patterns of behavior, and forms of participation. National values are expressed through students' readiness to respect diversity, demonstrate solidarity, take responsibility, and engage in collective activities that prioritize common interest over individual preferences. Such values are not transmitted solely through formal instruction, rather, they are continuously constructed through everyday school experiences, peer relationships, and participatory practices that shape students' social learning processes (Wardhana & Samsiyah, 2020; Arkan & Najicha, 2025). Consequently, this study of nationalism in schools requires attention to how national character values are enacted in routine interactions and institutional practices, rather than being limited to symbolic rituals or declarative expressions of patriotism.

In the Indonesian context, national character education is positioned as a strategic means of strengthening students' sense of nationalism and civic responsibility. Core values, including patriotism, discipline, social solidarity, and respect for diversity, are systematically integrated into the formal education system to balance global engagement with loyalty to the nation (Puspamurti & Najicha, 2023).

This orientation is institutionally reinforced through the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which places character formation alongside competence development. The aim of this curriculum is nurturing learners who are grounded in national values while remaining adaptive to global challenges (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, 2025).

For Generation Z, however, the internalization of national character values is closely related to their relevance to lived experience. As digital natives, these students tend to be less responsive to abstract moral instruction or symbolic rituals when such practices are disconnected from their everyday realities. Empirical studies indicate that values are more effectively internalized when they are embedded in authentic learning experiences, collaborative processes, and meaningful social interactions that resonate with students' daily lives (Daffa et al., 2024; Urba et al., 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2021). In this regard, the spirit of nationalism among Generation Z is expressed less through verbal affirmations of national identity and more through the translation of national values into concrete practices within classrooms, extracurricular activities, and broader school communities.

Various findings indicate that the implementation of national character education varies across school contexts. In public schools, national character formation tends to focus on formal and symbolic activities, such as flag ceremonies, which are not always deeply internalized by students (Diana & Chotimah, 2024). At the same time, the decline in student engagement with local culture and national symbols reflects the growing influence of global popular culture in students' daily lives (Fransyaigu, 2022). In contrast, private schools especially those with religious backgrounds tend to adopt a more contextual approach to character education. However, this approach often emphasizes the moral and spiritual dimensions rather than explicitly strengthening civic awareness and national identity (Maulana, 2024). These differences suggest that the institutional context plays a significant role in shaping how national character values are understood and experienced by students.

Schools thus function as strategic social arenas in mediating the relationship between national character education and the everyday practices in which nationalism is lived. Beyond the formal curriculum, school culture, teacher role models, peer interactions, and institutional norms collectively influence how national values are interpreted and embodied by students (Hikmasari et al., 2021). Differences in governance structures, educational orientations, and the social context of the surrounding community have implications for variations in value emphases and implementation patterns of character education. In this regard, public and private schools operate within different institutional logics, which shape how nationalism is constructed, practiced, and experienced by students. This situation emphasizes the importance of a comparative approach in studying national character education.

Most research on national character education has focused on pedagogical innovation, cultural integration, or the development of teaching materials (Purwono, 2024; Perdana et al., 2024). While these studies emphasize the importance of contextual and innovative approaches, empirical studies examining how national character values manifest as concrete forms of nationalism in students' attitudes, behaviors, and participation especially across institutional contexts remain limited. Furthermore,

comparative research specifically examining public and private high schools within the Merdeka Curriculum framework, focusing on Generation Z, is also relatively rare.

In response to this gap, this study examines the implementation of national character values at SMAN 7 Mataram as a public high school and SMA Abata Lombok as an inclusive private school, and analyzes how this implementation is reflected in the spirit of nationalism among Generation Z students. Based on NCSS Theme 10 (Civic Ideals and Practices), this study goes beyond the normative discussion of character education by examining its practical manifestation in students' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and participation. The results of the study are expected to enrich the contextual and practice-based understanding of nationalism education, while providing input for the development of character education strategies that more responsive to the realities of Generation Z's lives in diverse school environments.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore and describe how nationalism is reflected in the attitudes, behaviors, and participation patterns of Generation Z students in high schools. A qualitative approach is deemed appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives, lived experiences, and daily practices within a natural educational context (Malahati et al., 2023; Sutikno & Hadisaputra, 2020). Rather than measuring nationalism through pre-determined indicators, this approach allows researchers to examine how national values are interpreted, negotiated, and embodied by students in daily school activities.

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design aimed at depicting character education practices as they occur naturally, without experimental manipulation or external intervention (Rusandi & Rusli, 2021). This design is relevant for educational research seeking to understand social interactions, school culture, and the process of internalizing values in real-life contexts. Through this design, nationalism is understood as a social phenomenon internalized and integrated into routine school practices, rather than as an abstract or merely normative concept.

The research was conducted in two high schools: SMAN 7 Mataram, a public school, and SMA Abata Lombok, a foundation-based private school with an inclusive orientation. These two locations were selected purposively to capture variations in governance structures, school cultures, and approaches to national character education. SMAN 7 Mataram represents a public school operating under government regulations and implementing a standardized curriculum, while SMA Abata Lombok reflects a private educational institution that integrates inclusive education and values-based learning into its institutional culture. This comparative context allows for analysis of how different institutional environments shape the implementation of national character values and their manifestation in students' expressions of nationalism.

The research participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the relevance and depth of the data. The primary participants were 10th grade students (Grade 10), who are in the crucial phase of identity formation during early adolescence.

At SMAN 7 Mataram, 10th grade consists of 12 classes, namely 10th grade to 11th grade, with approximately 35 students per class. Two students were selected from each class, resulting in a total of 24 participants. At SMA Abata Lombok, there are two 10th grade classes with an average of 16 students per class, and two students were selected from each class, resulting in four participants. Overall, this study involved 28 students as interview informants.

To gain pedagogical and institutional perspectives, this study also involved teachers and school leaders. At SMAN 7 Mataram, participants included one History teacher, one Geography teacher, one homeroom teacher, and one Paskibra extracurricular activity supervisor. At SMA Abata Lombok, participants included one History and Civics teacher, one Biology teacher, and one homeroom teacher who also served as the Scouting coordinator. Additionally, principals from both schools were interviewed as key informants to provide strategic and policy insights regarding the implementation of national character education. Secondary data were obtained from school documents, such as visions and missions, curriculum guidelines, character education programs, and documentation of activities related to national values and citizenship. The use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the research findings (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2022).

Data were collected from October to November 2024 through limited participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations focused on classroom interactions, school routines, ceremonial activities, and extracurricular programs related to national character development. This technique enabled researchers to capture students' spontaneous behavior and daily social practices that reflect the embodiment of nationalist values in an authentic school context (Nelyahardi, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were used to explore students' and teachers' understanding of national values, their experiences in school activities, and their perceptions of how nationalism is fostered. Document analysis was conducted to complement and contextualize the observation and interview data by examining how national character education is formulated and formally institutionalized in school policies, curricula, and programs (Arikunto, 2013).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis procedures, implemented iteratively through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Fadli, 2021; Moleong, 2011). Interview transcripts and observation notes were read repeatedly and coded inductively to identify units of meaning related to students' expressions of nationalism. Initial codes were developed based on recurring patterns in the data, such as tolerance, solidarity, independence, responsibility, and willingness to sacrifice. These codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories according to the main dimensions of nationalism examined in this study. The analysis process employed constant comparison between data sources to refine themes and maintain consistency of analysis. To enhance the validity of the findings, source triangulation (students, teachers, principals, and documents) and method triangulation (observation, interviews, and documentation) were conducted to verify the consistency and validity of data from various perspectives and techniques (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2022).

## RESULTS

### 1. Forms and Practices of Nationalism among Generation Z Students

This section presents a comparative study of how Generation Z students express their nationalistic spirit in two different high school contexts: a public school (SMAN 7 Mataram) and an inclusive private school (SMA Abata Lombok). This comparison considers differences in governance systems, school culture, and character education approaches, which are assumed to influence how national values are interpreted and practiced in everyday school life.

#### Expressions of Nationalism in a Public School Context (SMAN 7 Mataram)

Nationalism among Generation Z students at SMAN 7 Mataram is expressed through attitudes, behavioral patterns, and forms of daily participation integrated into the routine of school life. Nationalism is not only limited to national symbols, but is manifested in the practice of core national values, such as unity, solidarity, independence, responsibility, and a willingness to sacrifice (Rohmah et al., 2024). These values are continuously reproduced through daily social interactions and various institutional activities at school, although the level of intensity of their manifestation can vary from student to student.

##### 1. Unity and Tolerance

Unity is a central dimension of student nationalism and showed in inclusive peer relationship. Observations in grade 10 showed that students did not discriminate against their peers based on ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic, background, or gender. As shown in Figure 1, students interacted in heterogeneous learning groups during collaborative learning activities, indicating that inclusiveness has functioned as an internalized social norm, not simply a value transmitted through formal learning.



Figure 1. Inclusive peer interactions among Grade 10 students during collaborative classroom activities.

Source: Author's documentation, 2024

Interview data further corroborates these observational findings. Students stated that friendship are not shaped by differences in background, but rather by comfort, mutual respect, and everyday interactions. This demonstrates that diversity does not hinder social relations among students. These findings indicate that unity among Generation Z students is manifested pragmatically through the practice of

social tolerance in everyday life, rather than articulated through explicit ideological discourse. This pattern aligns with the concept of everyday nationalism, where a sense of nationality is reproduced through ordinary and routine social practices, rather than solely through formal or symbolic expressions.

Within the framework of Indonesian civics education, this daily practice of tolerance has broader national significance because it reflects the constitutional principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and the ideal of unity in diversity. Thus, peer interactions in everyday life serve as a concrete form of civic nationalism, through which students learn to interpret diversity not as a source of division, but as a foundation for togetherness and a sense of belonging to the nation.

## 2. Solidarity and Collection Responsibility

Solidarity is reflected in students' willingness to spontaneously help their peers, especially in academic situations. A history teacher revealed that in several 10th-grade classes, students frequently help friends who are having difficulty understanding the material, even without direct instruction from the teacher. This practice demonstrates an internalized sense of collective responsibility, not simply behavior driven by adherence to formal school rules.

Student participation in communal activities, such as cleaning classrooms and preparing school facilities for exams or institutional activities, increasingly demonstrates an orientation toward solidarity. These activities reflect an awareness of shared responsibility within the school community and align with the Indonesian nationalist value of social solidarity, reflected in the principle of social solidarity (*gotong royong*). Interview findings indicate that students view these actions as a routine part of daily school life, rather than an obligation imposed by authority, indicating that solidarity has become an internalized and normalized aspect of students' social experiences.

Within the broader framework of Indonesian civic culture, these daily practices signify the internalization of collective responsibility as a civic virtue rooted in the value of social solidarity. Therefore, solidarity is not only interpreted as an attitude of interpersonal mutual assistance, but also functions as a form of everyday civic nationalism that strengthens students' sense of belonging to a national community built on shared responsibility and mutual support.

## 3. Independence and Intellectual Responsibility

Another dimension of nationalism is reflected in students' independence and sense of responsibility in academic engagement. Classroom observations indicate that most students strive to complete individual assignments independently, although the level of consistency varies among students. Furthermore, students demonstrate confidence in expressing their opinions during class discussions and presentations.

These findings are reinforced by teacher interview data, which indicate that students are generally willing to present arguments, ask questions, and seek

clarification in front of their peers. These practices demonstrate the development of intellectual responsibility and civic confidence, positioning students as active and reflective participants in the learning process, rather than simply passive recipients of instruction.

For Generation Z, expressions of nationalism thus intersect with agency and self-expression, where independence and responsibility are realized through everyday academic practices, rather than mere obedience to authority. These forms of agency acquire civic and national significance to the extent that they contribute to the formation of active and responsible citizens, a primary goal of citizenship-oriented nationalism in a democratic society. In this sense, intellectual independence and responsibility serve not only as academic dispositions but also as foundations for participatory national citizenship.

#### 4. Willingness to Sacrifice Commitment

A more visible expression of nationalism can be observed through students' ongoing involvement in extracurricular activities that demand a high level of discipline and commitment, particularly in the school flag-raising unit (*Pasukan Pengibar Bendera/Paskibra*) (Utami et al., 2020). As shown in Figure 2, students routinely participate in intensive training sessions held in the afternoon and late evening leading up to national commemorative. These activities reflect the students' strong commitment, which requires them to prioritize collective responsibility over personal comfort and leisure.



Figure 2. Paskibra training sessions in preparation for national commemorative ceremonies.  
Source: Author's documentation, 2024

Interview findings further reinforced this pattern. An extracurricular activity instructor explained that students consistently attended long practice sessions because they viewed their participation as both a representation of the school's name and a symbol of nationalism. As the instructor put it, "They were willing to stay until the evening because they felt they were representing the school and carrying out a national duty" (Paskibra instructor). This demonstrates the internalization of national responsibility, where commitment and sacrifice are realized through embodied

involvement in symbolic civic activities, rather than simply expressed through abstract ideological statements.

This embodied form of commitment demonstrates that nationalism is not only learned cognitively but also through performative experiences. Through practices of discipline and symbolic service, students internalize the idea that in certain situations, personal interest can be set aside for collective goals and the national interest.

### **Expressions of Nationalism in a Private School Context (SMA Abata Lombok)**

Findings from classroom observations and interviews at SMA Abata Lombok indicate that students' sense of nationalism is manifested in daily attitudes and practices that reflect the values of unity, solidarity, independence, responsibility, and self-sacrifice. In an inclusive learning environment, where students with and without disabilities learn together in one educational setting, national character education is realized through routine social interactions, classroom learning dynamics, and the overall school culture. Nationalism at SMA Abata Lombok is not primarily transmitted through symbolic or ceremonial forms, but rather is internalized through structured daily practices that foster moral responsibility, discipline, and mutual concern, in line with the institution's core values and educational orientation.

#### **1. Unity (Inclusivity and Tolerance)**

Unity is a central dimension of nationalism at SMA Abata Lombok and shown in the inclusive interactions among students. Observations in Jalaluddin Ar-Rumi's 10th grade class showed that students did not discriminate against their peers based on academic ability, physical condition, or family background. Students without disabilities interacted with students with disabilities as equal members of the learning community and actively supported their participation and comfort during classroom activities.

This inclusive culture is further strengthened by teachers' perspectives. As explained by Ms. Maharani, a History and Civics teacher, students at SMA Abata Lombok have become accustomed to inclusive social relationships and do not exhibit social distancing toward peers with disabilities. She noted that students often respond when inappropriate behaviors occurs, indicating an internalized understanding of equality and mutual respect in peer interactions. These practices indicate that unity at SMA Abata Lombok is not simply expressed as an institutional value but has evolved into a shared social norm embedded in daily school life.

In contrast to the context of public schools, where unity is generally expressed through attitudes of tolerance within relatively homogeneous classrooms, unity at SMA Abata Lombok is realized through sustained, inclusive engagement across differing abilities. This pattern suggests that an inclusive educational environment fosters a more relational and practice-oriented form of nationalism, rooted in everyday experiences of equality and shared belonging. Such interactions acquire national significance to the extent that they reflect the principle of equal citizenship, where all members of the nation regardless of physical condition or social background are recognized as having equal rights to participate and attain dignity. Thus, unity is

realized not merely as social harmony, but as a concrete expression of the national ideals of equality and social cohesion.

## 2. Solidarity (Care and Mutual Support)

Students' sense of solidarity is reflected in their willingness to assist peers experiencing learning difficulties, particularly students with disabilities. Classroom observations show that students without disabilities frequently act as informal learning companions, helping their peers follow instructions, helping for academic assignments, and manage emotions during times of overstimulation. These forms of support emerge naturally without direct prompting from teachers, indicating that empathy-based collaboration has become an integral part of daily classroom interactions.



Figure 3. Peer support and inclusive interaction between general education students and students with special educational needs in classroom activities.

Source: Author's documentation, 2024

As depicted in Figure 3, peer support functions as a routine social practice, not as an obligation imposed by authority. During learning activities, students are seen guiding and assisting classmates with disabilities to maintain their engagement in learning activities, reflecting a contemporary form of *gotong royong* (social solidarity) practiced in everyday school life. This pattern represents an expression of nationalism rooted in social responsibility and collective concern in the context of inclusive education. From the perspective of citizenship-oriented nationalism, this daily practice of *gotong royong* reflects the internalization of collective responsibility as a national virtue, where caring for vulnerable community members is understood as part of civic duty. Thus, solidarity is not limited to interpersonal empathy but becomes a socially embedded expression of nationality and reflects shared civic responsibility.

## 3. Independence and Responsibility

Student independence at SMA Abata Lombok is expressed in various forms tailored to each individual's capacity. Students in regular classes generally demonstrate the ability to complete individual assignments independently, follow classroom instructions, and manage study time effectively. Class discussions and presentations also demonstrate students' confidence in expressing their views,

including opinions differing from those of their peers, reflecting their growing intellectual responsibility.

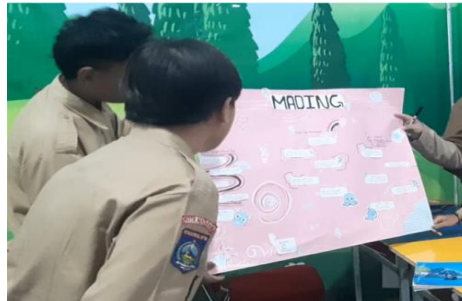


Figure 4. Student participation in small-group classroom discussions  
Source: Author's documentation, 2024

Furthermore, students often demonstrate initiative in seeking clarification from teachers when experiencing learning difficulties, indicating a growing sense of independence and accountability in the learning process. These expressions of intellectual independence and responsibility acquire civic and national significance insofar as they contribute to the formation of active, reflective, and responsible citizens, the primary goal of civic education in a democratic society. From this perspective, intellectual independence and responsibility are not merely academic attributes but are fundamental capacities for the formation of participatory national citizenship.

#### 4. Willingness to Sacrifice

The value of self-sacrifice was evident in students' involvement in activities commemorating national history, particularly in the creation of a video themed Heroes' Day. Each class collaboratively produced a short video expressing their interpretation of heroism, including simple reenactments of colonial figures and national heroes. While technically simple, this activity required students to devote additional time, effort, and creativity beyond regular class hours.

The video-making process involved group coordination, role assignments, and repeated practice. A history teacher who supervised the activity explained, "The video was simple, but the students worked on it with great enthusiasm. They were willing to gather together, practice dialogue, and retake scenes several times. This demonstrated their commitment to involvement." This kind of involvement demonstrates the students' readiness to devote personal time and energy to a collective activity that commemorates the nation's past, while also demonstrating an internalized commitment and willingness to sacrifice for the common national goal.

These practices acquire national significance to the extent that they connect students' personal efforts and time allocation to collective memories and symbolic

representations of historical struggles. In this context, self-sacrifice not only reflects dedication to school activities but also demonstrates the internalization of national memory and civic commitment as integral parts of students' developing national identity.

Overall, the research findings indicate that Generation Z students in both school contexts display a sense of nationalism through a combination of cognitive understanding, attitude orientation, and concrete practices embedded in daily interactions, involvement in extracurricular activities, and the broader school culture. While some aspects, such as punctuality and consistency in academic responsibilities, still require further development, fundamental national values including unity, solidarity, independence, responsibility, and willingness to sacrifice have been clearly demonstrated and continue to be reinforced through routine practices in the school.

## **2. Comparative Analysis of Nationalism Expressions across School Contexts**

Research findings indicate that although expressions of nationalism in public and private schools are based on similar normative values, they differ in the way they are expressed, the focus of emphasis, and patterns of daily practice. In public schools, nationalism is largely institutionalized through formal curricular arrangements, ritualistic activities, and state-oriented narratives that emphasize unity, discipline, and civic duty. In contrast, private schools tend to articulate nationalism in a more contextual and value-based manner, embedded in school culture, moral education, and interpersonal relationships, thus opening up greater space for flexibility in interpretation and lived experiences for students.

These differences demonstrate not only variations in pedagogical implementation but also the existence of different institutional logics that shape how national character is constructed and experienced by students. While public schools emphasize standardization and symbolic regulation, private schools are more oriented towards the internalization and affective engagement with national values. Overall, this comparative synthesis confirms that nationalist education is not a uniform or homogeneous process, but rather a contextual practice mediated by governance structures, educational orientations, and school cultures. This variation underscores the importance of a comparative approach in understanding how national character values are negotiated, realized, and reproduced in diverse educational environments.

## **3. Theoretical Contributions and International Contexts**

This study contributes to the international discourse on nationalism and civic education by demonstrating that the spirit of nationalism among Generation Z is not formed solely through formal civics learning or state-oriented rituals, but is continuously constructed through daily practices at school, peer interactions, and institutional culture. In line with the concepts of banal nationalism and everyday nationhood (Billig, 2010; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008), the findings of this study indicate that a sense of nationhood is reproduced through routine social relations, collaborative learning, inclusive practices, and participatory activities, not only through explicit ideological transmission.

Through a comparison between public and inclusive private schools, this study also expands Brubaker's notion of nationalism as a category of practice by demonstrating how differences in institutional logics shape the way national values are interpreted and realized in students' lived experiences. The public school context reflects a more state-oriented and ritualistic form of nationalism, while inclusive private schools demonstrate a more relational and values-based articulation of nationalism, rooted in moral interactions in everyday life. This distinction emphasizes that nationalism is not a singular or homogeneous phenomenon, but rather a social practice situated in specific contexts and mediated by school governance structures, pedagogical orientations, and culture.

From an international perspective, the findings of this study suggest that education systems in multicultural and digitally mediated societies can benefit from interpreting nationalism not merely as symbolic loyalty to the state, but as a civic practice grounded in inclusivity, social responsibility, agency, and collective commitment. The Indonesian case thus provides a relevant comparative reference for other contexts seeking to foster civic-oriented nationalism among Generation Z, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning, inclusive school environments, and participatory culture in maintaining national identity in the era of globalization and digital connectivity.

## CONCLUSION

Based on qualitative evidence obtained from two different high school contexts, the findings indicate that nationalism among high school students in Indonesia is not limited to symbolic displays or formal citizenship ceremonies, but is manifested through everyday practices embedded in school life. Unity, solidarity, independence, responsibility, and self-sacrifice are core values which Generation Z students internalize and embody national identity in the educational context.

Nationalism is manifested through inclusive peer relationships, collaborative learning processes, and active student involvement in various school activities. Unity and tolerance are reflected in daily social interactions characterized by mutual respect across differences in background, ability, and identity. Solidarity is evident in spontaneous assistance among students and a growing sense of collective responsibility, particularly in learning activities and school routines. Independence and responsibility are evident in students' confidence in expressing opinions, completing assignments independently, and actively participating in academic discussions. Meanwhile, a willingness to sacrifice is demonstrated through sustained involvement in extracurricular activities and national-themed programs that require time, discipline, and collective commitment.

This study also reveals that the school context plays a significant role in shaping how nationalism is articulated and experienced by students. In public schools, expressions of nationalism are more closely linked to peer inclusivity and participation in ceremonial and symbolic activities. In contrast, inclusive private schools emphasize collaborative interactions between students with and without disabilities, as well as participatory projects that integrate national values into creative and experiential learning. These findings suggest that nationalism among

Generation Z is not a uniform phenomenon but is contextually constructed through institutional culture, pedagogical orientation, and the daily social environment.

This study has several limitations; the focus on only two high schools limits the transferability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Furthermore, the emphasis on 10th grade students does not fully capture the variations in the development and expression of nationalism across different age levels. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution.

Further research is recommended to involve more schools from diverse regions and sociocultural backgrounds, and to use a longitudinal approach to examine the development of nationalism across grade levels. Further studies could also explore the role of digital media and the family environment in shaping, strengthening, or even challenging national character education. These efforts are expected to enrich a more comprehensive understanding of how nationalism is developed among Generation Z amidst globalization and digital connectivity.

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