

## THE CHARACTER OF LOVE FOR THE HOMELAND IN THE TEACHINGS OF KI AGENG SURYOMENTARAM FOR STUDENTS OF SMP NEGERI 11 MADIUN

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### ABSTRACT

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This study explores the implementation of the character of love for the homeland based on the teachings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram among students of SMP Negeri 11 Madiun. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of how patriotic values derived from Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's philosophy are internalized through educational practices. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis. The credibility of the findings was ensured using source and method triangulation, while data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the character of love for the homeland is developed through the integration of local wisdom into classroom instruction, school culture, and extracurricular activities. Teachers play a significant role as moral role models by encouraging discipline, responsibility, respect for national symbols, appreciation of local culture, and active participation in community life. The philosophy of *rumangsa melu handarbeni negara* (feeling a sense of ownership toward the nation) emerged as the central value that encourages students to perceive patriotism as responsibility rather than merely symbolic nationalism. These findings demonstrate that Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's teachings remain highly relevant to contemporary character education because they promote civic responsibility, moral awareness, cultural identity, and national unity. Integrating indigenous philosophical values into school-based character education provides an effective strategy for strengthening students' patriotism while preserving Indonesian cultural heritage in the era of globalization.



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### INTRODUCTION

Character education has become one of the central priorities of educational systems worldwide because schools are expected not only to develop students' academic competence but also to cultivate moral integrity, civic responsibility, and social awareness. In the twenty-first century, rapid technological advancement, globalization, and digital transformation have created unprecedented opportunities for learning while simultaneously exposing young people to various social, cultural, and moral challenges (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). The widespread use of social media, unrestricted access to global information, and increasing cultural interaction have transformed adolescents' attitudes, values, and behaviors. Consequently, educational institutions are increasingly required to strengthen students' character development to enable them to become responsible citizens capable of preserving their cultural identity while adapting to global change (Berkowitz & Bier, 2021; World

Economic Forum, 2023).

Indonesia faces similar challenges in maintaining the nation's cultural identity amid globalization. While international cultural exchange contributes positively to knowledge development and global awareness, excessive exposure to foreign values may gradually weaken young people's appreciation of national identity, local wisdom, and cultural heritage (Rahmawati & Widodo, 2024). Recent educational reports indicate that many Indonesian adolescents demonstrate declining interest in national history, traditional arts, regional languages, and civic activities, while simultaneously showing stronger preferences for foreign popular culture disseminated through digital media (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Widodo, 2021). This phenomenon has raised concerns regarding the sustainability of patriotic values among future generations and highlights the urgent need for educational strategies that strengthen students' love for their homeland through culturally relevant approaches.

Recognizing these challenges, the Indonesian Government has positioned character education as a strategic national priority. Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education (Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter) emphasizes that educational institutions should integrate character values into every learning activity while promoting collaboration among schools, families, and communities (Kemendikbud, 2017). Furthermore, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum reinforces this commitment through the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes global diversity, mutual cooperation, critical thinking, creativity, independence, faith, and noble character as essential competencies for Indonesian learners (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). These policies demonstrate that character education is no longer considered a complementary component of schooling but rather an integral element of educational quality and national development.

Among the numerous character values promoted in Indonesian education, love for the homeland (*cinta tanah air*) occupies a particularly important position because it reflects students' awareness of national identity, cultural heritage, social responsibility, and commitment to preserving the unity of the Indonesian nation. Love for the homeland extends beyond symbolic expressions of nationalism; it encompasses respect for Indonesia's cultural diversity, appreciation of local wisdom, preservation of national traditions, responsible citizenship, and willingness to contribute to national development (Rahmawati & Widodo, 2024; Samani & Hariyanto, 2020). Students who develop patriotic character are expected to demonstrate loyalty toward national values while remaining open to positive global influences through critical and responsible decision-making.

Developing patriotic character has become increasingly challenging during the digital era. Indonesian adolescents are continuously exposed to global entertainment, consumer culture, and transnational lifestyles that often receive greater attention than local cultural traditions. Previous studies have shown that excessive identification with foreign popular culture may reduce students' appreciation of indigenous values and weaken their attachment to national identity (Fitriani & Wahyuni, 2023; Widodo, 2021). Consequently, schools are expected to provide educational experiences that not only transmit knowledge but also strengthen students' emotional attachment to Indonesian culture, history, and national values. Such efforts are particularly important during adolescence, a developmental period characterized by identity formation, value internalization, and increasing moral reasoning (Santrock, 2020).

One promising approach to strengthening patriotic character is the integration of local

wisdom into educational practice. Local wisdom represents the collective knowledge, philosophical values, ethical principles, and cultural traditions developed within Indonesian society over generations. Previous research has demonstrated that incorporating local wisdom into classroom learning contributes positively to students' character development, cultural awareness, and civic responsibility (Darmawan & Suyanto, 2021; Rahmawati & Widodo, 2024). Rather than relying exclusively on universal educational theories, character education grounded in indigenous philosophy enables students to develop moral values that are closely connected to their social and cultural contexts.

Among Indonesia's indigenous philosophers, Ki Ageng Suryomentaram occupies a unique position because his philosophical teachings emphasize self-awareness, emotional maturity, inner balance, and harmonious social relationships through the concept of *Kawruh Jiwa* (Science of the Soul). Unlike conventional approaches that emphasize external discipline, Ki Ageng Suryomentaram argued that genuine moral behavior originates from an individual's understanding of oneself and one's relationship with others (Endraswara, 2019; Suryomentaram, 2018). His philosophy encourages individuals to overcome selfish desires, develop empathy, appreciate human dignity, and cultivate inner peace as the foundation for ethical behavior. These principles remain highly relevant for contemporary character education because they encourage students to internalize moral values rather than merely comply with external rules.

The teachings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram also provide a meaningful philosophical foundation for cultivating love for the homeland. Patriotism, from his perspective, should emerge naturally from self-awareness, gratitude, respect for cultural identity, and responsibility toward society rather than from coercive nationalism or symbolic rituals alone. Students who understand themselves and appreciate the values inherited from their communities are more likely to develop respect for Indonesia's cultural diversity and demonstrate responsible citizenship. Therefore, integrating Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's educational philosophy into school-based character education offers an alternative framework for strengthening patriotic values while preserving Indonesia's rich cultural heritage.

Junior high school students represent an especially important target for character education because early adolescence is a critical developmental period during which values, attitudes, and identities become increasingly stable. Adolescents begin to develop abstract thinking, independent judgment, and stronger sensitivity toward social issues, making them more receptive to moral education and value internalization (Santrock, 2020; Yusuf, 2021). Schools therefore have a strategic responsibility to provide learning experiences that encourage students to appreciate national identity while simultaneously developing critical thinking and global competence.

Although numerous studies have examined character education, patriotism, and local wisdom in Indonesian schools, relatively few have explored the philosophy of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram as a foundation for developing the character of love for the homeland among junior high school students. Most existing studies focus on curriculum implementation, civic education, or general character education without examining indigenous philosophical perspectives that originate from Indonesian intellectual traditions. This represents an important research gap because local philosophical values may provide culturally authentic approaches to strengthening national identity in the era of globalization.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the character of love for the homeland in the teachings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram among students of SMP Negeri 11 Madiun. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on indigenous philosophy and character education while providing practical recommendations for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers regarding the integration of local wisdom into school-based character education programs. Furthermore, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen patriotic values among Indonesian adolescents through educational approaches that are culturally relevant, philosophically grounded, and responsive to contemporary societal challenges.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the character of love for the homeland reflected in the teachings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram among students of SMP Negeri 11 Madiun. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to understand participants' perceptions, experiences, values, and interpretations regarding patriotism within their educational context rather than to measure variables quantitatively (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The descriptive qualitative design enabled the researchers to examine naturally occurring phenomena and provide a comprehensive description of how the values of love for the homeland were understood and implemented in school activities based on Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's philosophical teachings. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 11 Madiun, East Java, Indonesia, involving school principals, teachers, and students selected through purposive sampling because they possessed relevant knowledge and direct experience related to the implementation of character education (Patton, 2015).

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, including school policies, learning materials, and character education programs. The use of multiple data sources allowed the researchers to obtain comprehensive information while increasing the credibility of the findings. Data trustworthiness was ensured through methodological triangulation, whereby information obtained from observations was compared with interview findings and documentary evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The collected data were analyzed following the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Throughout the analytical process, emerging themes were continuously compared across data sources to ensure consistency and to generate an in-depth understanding of the implementation of patriotic character based on Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's educational philosophy.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Character Education

Character education is a deliberate and systematic process of developing moral values and positive behaviors through schools, families, and communities to produce individuals with integrity, responsibility, and social awareness (Lickona, 2021). It encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions that encourage students to internalize ethical values and apply them consistently in everyday life (Berkowitz & Bier, 2017). In Indonesia, character

education is rooted in the values of Pancasila and aims to develop students who are intellectually competent while demonstrating noble character and civic responsibility (Kemdikbud, 2020).

Character education is not limited to moral instruction but emphasizes continuous habituation and value internalization through educational experiences. Students are expected to recognize moral values, appreciate their importance, and translate them into responsible actions. Consequently, character education contributes to developing learners who are academically competent, socially responsible, and emotionally mature (Arthur et al., 2021).

### **Principles of Character Education**

Character education integrates knowledge, attitudes, and behavior through meaningful interactions between teachers and students. The ultimate objective is not merely intellectual development but the transformation of students' attitudes and behaviors toward positive, constructive, and ethical conduct (Lickona, 2021). Educational success is reflected in students' ability to demonstrate self-confidence, responsibility, critical thinking, respect for diversity, environmental awareness, independent learning, and problem-solving skills (Mulyasa, 2018). Therefore, character education should be implemented holistically across curriculum, school culture, and extracurricular activities.

### **Character Education Strategy**

Several complementary approaches can be employed to strengthen character education. The value inculcation approach emphasizes internalizing moral values through modeling, reinforcement, and social interaction. The cognitive development approach encourages students to analyze ethical dilemmas critically and make responsible moral decisions. The values clarification approach facilitates students in identifying and reflecting upon their personal beliefs, while the learning-by-doing approach provides opportunities to practice moral values through authentic experiences and collaborative activities (Amri et al., 2018). Combining these approaches enables students to develop both moral reasoning and ethical behavior simultaneously.

### **Character Education Model**

Character-based education aims to develop students holistically by integrating intellectual, emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and creative development. Effective implementation requires active learning, contextual teaching, inquiry-based learning, collaborative learning environments, and continuous character reinforcement (Arthur et al., 2021). Teachers serve as role models by demonstrating desirable behaviors while providing meaningful learning experiences that encourage responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and leadership. Character education may also be implemented through habituation, role modeling, positive discipline, contextual teaching and learning (CTL), role-playing, and participatory learning activities that strengthen students' moral development (Mulyasa, 2018).

### **Character of Love for the Motherland**

Love for the homeland refers to attitudes and behaviors reflecting loyalty, responsibility, and appreciation toward one's nation, including its language, culture, society, economy, and political institutions (Wibowo, 2019). Patriotism encourages citizens to preserve national identity, respect cultural diversity, and actively contribute to national development. Rather than merely expressing emotional attachment, patriotism involves concrete actions that

protect and advance the nation's interests (Miranda, 2019).

Developing patriotic character should begin during childhood because schools play a central role in shaping students' civic identity and national awareness. Students who appreciate local culture, respect national symbols, participate in civic activities, and demonstrate responsibility toward society are more likely to develop strong national commitment. Therefore, schools are expected to integrate patriotic values into both classroom instruction and everyday school culture to prepare students as responsible citizens capable of preserving Indonesia's cultural heritage amid globalization (Kemdikbud, 2020).

### **Character of Love for the Country According to the Teachings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram**

Ki Ageng Suryomentaram viewed patriotism as a moral commitment rooted in self-awareness and collective responsibility rather than emotional nationalism. During Indonesia's struggle for independence, he emphasized that national unity represented the nation's greatest strength because collective solidarity enabled citizens from different backgrounds to defend their country together (Suryomentaram, 1986).

According to his philosophy, patriotism is expressed through the principle of "rumangsa melu handarbeni negara" – feeling that one belongs to the nation. This sense of ownership motivates individuals to protect public interests, obey laws, respect cultural traditions, and contribute positively to society. Individuals who perceive the nation as their shared responsibility are more likely to reject unethical behaviors such as corruption because harming the nation is equivalent to harming themselves and fellow citizens.

Although Indonesia no longer experiences colonial warfare, Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's teachings remain highly relevant in contemporary education. Today's students are expected to demonstrate patriotism through integrity, discipline, social responsibility, environmental stewardship, respect for cultural diversity, and active participation in community development. His philosophy therefore provides an indigenous foundation for strengthening character education by encouraging students to internalize patriotic values through everyday actions rather than symbolic expressions alone. This perspective aligns with current educational approaches that emphasize integrating local wisdom into character education to cultivate responsible, ethical, and globally competitive citizens while preserving Indonesian cultural identity (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024).

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings demonstrate that the teachings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram provide a relevant philosophical foundation for strengthening the character of love for the homeland among junior high school students. Patriotism is not merely understood as respect for national symbols but is internalized through responsibility, discipline, integrity, cultural appreciation, and active participation in community life. The philosophy of *rumangsa melu handarbeni negara* encourages students to develop a sense of ownership toward the nation, motivating them to contribute positively to society while preserving national unity and cultural identity. These values were effectively integrated into classroom learning, school culture, and extracurricular activities through habituation, teacher role modeling, and contextual learning experiences.

The study further indicates that incorporating local philosophical values into character education enhances students' moral awareness and civic responsibility in a manner that is both culturally relevant and educationally meaningful. The teachings of Ki Ageng

Suryomentaram offer an indigenous approach to character education that complements contemporary educational policies emphasizing holistic student development. Therefore, schools are encouraged to integrate local wisdom systematically into learning activities and character-building programs, while future research should investigate the implementation of these values across different educational contexts and broader student populations to strengthen evidence-based character education practices in Indonesia.

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