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Culture-Based Short Story Learning for Strengthening Students' Patriotic Character

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Abstract

General Background: Literature-based character education is essential for strengthening students' cultural awareness and national identity. **Specific Background:** Despite its potential, the use of culture-based short stories in Indonesian language learning is often not optimally aligned with students' sociocultural contexts. **Knowledge Gap:** Few studies have examined how locally rooted short stories function as contextual tools for cultivating patriotism within madrasah-level education. **Aims:** This study analyzes the use of two cultural short stories—"Yogyakarta" and "Mencintai Budaya Sendiri"—to reinforce patriotic character values among students at MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol. **Results:** The findings show that "Yogyakarta" fosters religiosity, curiosity, perseverance, and appreciation for national heritage, while "Mencintai Budaya Sendiri" strengthens cultural pride, tolerance, responsibility, and identity preservation. Integrating both texts increased students' reading interest, cultural awareness, and patriotic attitudes. **Novelty:** This research demonstrates that local literary works serve not only as aesthetic reading materials but also as effective instruments of cultural resistance amid globalization by embedding contextual, relatable values. **Implications:** Schools are encouraged to adopt local culture-based literature to enhance character education, support literacy improvement, and reinforce national identity among the younger generation.

Highlights:

- ♦ Use of local culture-based short stories to strengthen students' patriotic character
- ♦ Integration of "Yogyakarta" and "Mencintai Budaya Sendiri" increases reading interest and cultural awareness.
- ♦ Shows that local literature can act as an effective, contextual medium for character education in the digital/global era.

Keywords: Short Stories, Character Education, Patriotism, Indonesian Language Learning, Local Culture

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Introduction

Character education is a means of transforming individuals into quality persons who are capable of restraining themselves from negative influences [1]. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), character refers to spiritual traits and behaviors that distinguish one person from another; inherent nature [2]. Furthermore, state that "character is closely related to morality, namely human reflex actions that have become internalized, so that when performed, they are done without much thought." [3]

The foundation of character and cultural education, as identified by [4] consists of 18 core values derived from cultural and national character education values based on divinity, Pancasila, culture, and the goals of national education. These values are: religiousness, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, patriotism, appreciation of achievement, friendliness or communicativeness, love of peace, reading interest, environmental care, social care, and responsibility. Meanwhile, patriotism, according to is part of a mindset, behavior, and perspective that places the interests of the nation and state above personal or group interests.

Literature is a work in oral or written form that contains various virtues such as originality, aesthetics, and elegance in every aspect of its content [5]. Meanwhile, based on Eagleton's theory as cited in [6], literature is a refined written work (*belle lettres*), which transcribes forms of daily speech in various ways by making the language more compact, detailed, complex, exaggerated, reversed, and made unusual [7]. Short stories are part of modern prose that continues to thrive today with all their variations [8]. In a short story, the author tells of a life event, and typically, reading time is more efficient than that of a novel. The epilogue of a short story does not affect the nature of its characters, unlike in novels [9].

Although a UNESCO report once stated that the reading interest of Indonesians was only 0.001% equivalent to just one in a thousand people having a high interest in reading recent data from a study by shows a positive trend in the increase of the national Reading Interest Level (TGM), rising from 66.77 in 2023 to 72.44 in 2024. This increase serves as an indicator that literacy efforts across various regions are beginning to show encouraging results, including in East Java, which recorded a TGM score of 77.15 one of the highest nationally [10].

This condition is highly relevant to the context of research conducted at MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol, Tulungagung, East Java, as it reinforces the importance of utilizing locally-themed short stories as literary learning media that can simultaneously foster reading interest and instill patriotic character in students. Learning activities that utilize local short stories help students connect more deeply with the cultural wealth of their own region. At the same time, this approach supports national initiatives to strengthen literacy and character education through contextual learning media that reflect students' everyday experiences.

The reading interest level in Tulungagung Regency has remained relatively stable over the years, according to data published by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of East Java Province. This data is important as a reference to assess the local community's literacy condition. In the educational context, especially in institutions like MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol, understanding this data forms the foundation for designing learning approaches that support literacy improvement, including through literary approaches such as short stories based on local culture.

The consistency of the Reading Interest Level (TGM) score at 67.22 over the past three years reflects that the people of Tulungagung have remained relatively stable in literacy activities. Nevertheless, the longer duration of internet usage also reflects a transformation in literacy behavior toward digital-based reading habits. This condition brings both benefits and challenges for literature instruction in schools. Through the integration of short stories that reflect local cultural elements, teachers can foster meaningful links among culture, literacy, and patriotic character values in ways that relate closely to students' real-life contexts. This study gains its significance from its effort to motivate students not only to read but also to value and internalize their cultural identity.

Literature education holds a vital role in the learning process, as it does not merely teach linguistic beauty and creativity but also embeds moral, cultural, and character formation values [11]. [11]. Among various literary genres, the short story (*cerpen*) is one of the most frequently employed forms in Indonesian language education due to its ability to deliver life lessons relevant to students' social realities [12]. A well-written short story can serve as an effective medium connecting literature with the goals of character education. In the context of character education, literature does not only serve as academic material but also as an effective tool for instilling noble values, including patriotism [13]. Patriotism is one of the key aspects of character education and is essential in shaping national identity [14]. The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasizes that patriotism is part of the Character Education Strengthening (PPK) program, which must be integrated into all learning processes in schools [15]

MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol, Tulungagung, is one of the madrasahs located in a region known for its strong commitment to preserving local culture. Tulungagung Regency itself has a variety of cultural riches, such as the jaranan traditional dance, local batik craftsmanship, and other traditions that are still preserved by the local community [16]. Such an environment greatly supports the integration of cultural values into education. This is particularly relevant for ninth-grade students at MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol, who are in late adolescence a critical stage for character formation. At this stage, students begin to develop critical thinking and social awareness. Therefore, as stated by Haddade character-based learning is highly suitable for this level, especially in cultivating nationalism and pride in the nation's culture

In Indonesian language learning particularly in relation to short stories states that short stories serve as a valuable learning

medium to develop character values. However, according to the selection of short stories used in the classroom often fails to consider the relevance of local culture or the specific character values intended to be developed. As a result, the learning process becomes less meaningful and has little impact on students' personality development [17]. To overcome this, teachers need to select short stories that not only possess strong literary quality but are also relevant to students' cultural context and embed the desired character values. Short stories that draw upon local cultural themes are particularly suitable for learning because they closely relate to students' everyday experiences and help cultivate a deeper sense of appreciation for the preservation of their cultural heritage.

This research employs two short stories centered on the theme of local culture: *"Yogyakarta"* by Muhammad Rahmanuddin Dinejad (2023) and *"Mencintai Budaya Sendiri"* by Vergilia Agam Saputri (2013). Both narratives emphasize the significance of maintaining and cherishing Indonesian cultural identity in the midst of globalization. The short story *"Yogyakarta"* portrays the local wisdom reflected in the modest, warm, and culturally conscious lifestyle of Yogyakarta's residents. In contrast, *"Mencintai Budaya Sendiri"* depicts the journey of a young person striving to defend traditional cultural values against the influence of foreign cultures.

The first story, *"Yogyakarta"* by Muhammad Rahmanuddin Dinejad, recounts a student's vacation experience in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, told through a first-person narrative perspective ("I"). Upon arriving in Yogyakarta, the narrator and their family visit historical tourist sites, namely Borobudur Temple and Prambanan Temple. Not content with just visiting, the narrator also inquires about the history and origin of the temples. In addition, the experience of riding a becak (pedicab), which is closely associated with the unique identity of Yogyakarta, is also highlighted.

The second short story, *"Mencintai Budaya Sendiri"* by Vergilia Agam Saputri, tells the story of a student named Putri Angelia from SMPN 8 Malang, narrated from the third-person point of view ("I"). The narrator is a traditional dancer from the city of Malang. Whenever there is a call to participate in a traditional dance competition, the principal always appoints her to represent the school.

Strengthening the character of patriotism through culture-based short stories is an interesting subject for deeper examination due to the rich content they offer [18]. Additionally, short stories are a type of written work that naturally attract students. Their complex yet concise content makes them suitable as daily or weekly reading materials. The complexity lies in how a short story's title often encompasses a complete issue from beginning to end. Despite that, their brevity typically two to four pages makes them efficient to read. Moreover, short stories contain values and life norms that readers can absorb [19].

The selection of the two short stories used in this study is tailored to the students' cultural background at MTs Darul Falah, who live in a community that still strongly upholds local traditions. With the right learning approach, students are expected not only to understand the content of the stories but also to internalize their moral messages and apply them in daily life as an expression of love for the homeland. The learning process includes shared reading activities, group discussions, and reflections on the character values found in the stories. During these activities, the teacher facilitates students in connecting the story content with their own life experiences, such as how they perceive the local culture around them and their role in preserving it [20]. This method is consistent with the principles of contextual learning, which emphasize connecting instructional content with students' everyday experiences.

Despite its potential, the implementation of character-based literature learning still encounters various obstacles. Hanafiah et al. (2024) note that many teachers have not yet mastered the ability to integrate character education effectively into literature lessons. Furthermore, as highlighted by Fahmy et al. (2024), one of the recurring issues in schools is the scarcity of appropriate short story materials that both meet instructional goals and represent local cultural contexts. This study was conducted to examine how local culture-based short story learning is implemented at MTs Darul Falah and to what extent it can strengthen the patriotism-related character education of Grade IX students. It is hoped that this research will provide a concrete illustration of the impact of culture-based literature learning on the development of students' character [21].

This local literary work, used as the main teaching material, allows students not only to enjoy the story but also to think and feel the importance of Indonesia's cultural identity. Love for the homeland is not merely a theoretical concept; it can be nurtured through learning experiences that touch both the emotions and the minds of students. Ultimately, this research represents a small yet meaningful effort to support the vision of national education, namely, to develop Indonesian citizens with strong character, a love for their country, and readiness to become future generations who care about their own culture [22].

This study aims to examine the local cultural values contained in two short stories titled *"Yogyakarta"* by Muhammad Rahmanuddin Dinejad (2023) and *"Mencintai Budaya Sendiri"* by Vergilia Agam Saputri (2013). The results of the analysis show that both stories represent efforts to preserve local wisdom and the national identity of Indonesia through character development and storylines rich in local culture. In the increasingly strong current of globalization, the presence of literary works such as these short stories becomes essential as a medium for education and strengthening cultural identity.

Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, as described by Harahap (2020), aims to describe and deeply understand the process and impact of using local cultural short stories in increasing reading interest and instilling the character value of patriotism among students at MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol. The qualitative approach was chosen because the researcher intends to observe phenomena naturally and holistically, based on the experiences of students and teachers in the learning

process.

According to (Sugiyono, 2022a) qualitative research focuses on words, actions, and interactions that occur during the learning process of short stories, rather than numerical data. The descriptive approach is used to provide an in-depth overview of the local culture-based short story learning process in instilling the character education of patriotism among ninth-grade students at MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol, Tulungagung Regency. Descriptive qualitative research emphasizes the understanding of meaning, processes, and sociocultural contexts within learning.

The research was carried out at MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol, situated in Tulungagung Regency, East Java a region recognized for its strong dedication to maintaining local cultural traditions. Consequently, the school's socio-cultural environment provides a fitting context for exploring the development of patriotic values through culturally grounded literature learning (Sugiyono, 2022b). Data for this study were gathered using several techniques, namely observation, interviews, documentation, and a review of relevant literature. Observation was conducted to directly monitor the short story learning process based on local culture. In-depth interviews were carried out with the Indonesian language teacher and several students participating in the short story learning. Documentation, such as lesson plans (RPP), teaching materials, and student assignments, was also collected to support the findings from observations and interviews. A literature review was used to examine theories related to character education and culturally-based literature learning (Sugiyono, 2022).

The data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed qualitatively by identifying patterns of patriotism reinforcement that emerged during the learning process of local cultural short stories. The data were analyzed through triangulation, by comparing data from various sources to enhance the validity of the research findings [23].

Result and Discussion

Patriotism means loving the land on which we stand. Pancasila, as the nation's ideology, serves as the foundation for living as a united and sovereign country. The national motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" means "Unity in Diversity," reminding us to embrace one another and preserve the cultural heritage of the various ethnic groups and traditions spread across the 38 provinces of Indonesia .

Table 1. Reading Interest Level (TGM) in Indonesia for the Years 2023–2024

No.	Region	2023	2024	Information
1	National (Indonesia)	66.77	72.44	Increase of 5.67 points
2	Bangka Belitung Islands	-	77.47	Highest nationally
3	East Java	-	77.15	The province with the second highest literacy culture nationally
4	West Java	-	75.07	-
5	South Kalimantan	-	74.63	-
6	South Sulawesi	-	74.46	-
7	Central Java	-	73.91	-

Table 2. Reading Interest Data of the Tulungagung Community for the Years 2022–2024

Year	Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM)	Reading Enthusiasm Level	Reading Duration per Day	Internet Access Duration per Day
2022	-	67.22	1 hour – 1 hour 59 minutes	-
2023	67.32	67.22	1 hour – 1 hour 59 minutes	1 hour – 1 hour 59 minutes
2024	-	67.22	-	1 hour 40 minutes – 2 hours 39 minutes

In the context of literary learning, short stories can provide education to their readers in a flexible and engaging way. Thus, analyzing the content of short stories can be well received by students . In line with the objective of this research to strengthen the character of patriotism through culture-based short stories the researcher selected short stories as a medium to achieve this goal. The first short story, titled "Yogyakarta" by Muhammad Rahmanuddin Dinejad, tells the story of a student's holiday experience with their family in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

Table 3. Summary of Cultural Values in the Short Story "Yogyakarta"

No.	Time	Location	Activity / Event	Characters / Additional Information
1	Saturday afternoon	House	After school, my mother gave me the news that tomorrow we would be going on holiday to Yogyakarta.	Me, Mom
2	Sunday, 3:00 AM	House – Station	Wake up early, pray dawn, get ready to leave	Traffic jam on the way to the station
3	Sunday, 4:19 AM	Station & Restaurants	Arrived at the station, had breakfast while waiting for	Waiting for the 05.00 train

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		near the station	the train to arrive.	
4	Sunday morning	In the train	Sit in a comfortable place, enjoy the view	Me and my family
5	Sunday, 12.00	Yogyakarta Station – Hotel	Arrive in Yogyakarta, take a taxi to the hotel, rest and have lunch	Tiredness after the trip
6	Sunday afternoon, 2:54 PM	Borobudur temple	Tour to Borobudur, take photos, enjoy the view	Met Joko and asked about the history of Borobudur
7	-	Borobudur temple	Get the explanation that Borobudur is the largest Buddhist monument, a holy place & pilgrimage towards enlightenment	Joko explains the philosophical meaning of Borobudur
8	Sunday afternoon, 4:27 PM	Prambanan temple	Tour to Prambanan: visit the Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma temples, take photos, and enjoy the beauty	Souvenir shop, buy souvenirs
9	-	Prambanan temple	Father asked about the history of Prambanan Temple	The officer explained about Siwagrha & Trimurti: Lord Shiva (destroyer), Vishnu (preserver), Brahma (creator)

The short story titled “Yogyakarta” provides readers with an experience related to the origins of Indonesia’s cultural heritage, namely Candhi Borobudur and Candhi Prambanan. The curiosity of the narrator and his father allows readers to obtain information about the origins of the two temples. Although Borobudur is not listed among the Seven Wonders of the World, its uniqueness has been officially recognized by UNESCO and declared as part of the World Heritage List. UNESCO’s reason for designating Borobudur Temple as a world heritage site lies in the artistic value of its structure.

In an interview with the head of the madrasah, Muhtar Lutfi, S.Pd.I., he shared his views on the values of patriotism embedded in the short story "Yogyakarta." According to him, the story is very effective in reminding students of Indonesia's rich local culture. He stated, "The short story 'Yogyakarta' provides an inner experience for students to gain a closer understanding of cultural riches such as Borobudur and Prambanan Temples, as well as local symbols like the becak (rickshaw), which are increasingly rare in big cities."

He also emphasized the importance of integrating literary materials such as this short story into the learning process so that students remain connected to their cultural roots. "If not introduced to them early through reading, our children could lose respect for the nation's cultural heritage. Short stories like this one provide a bridge to fostering love for the homeland in a non-patronizing way," he added.

Meanwhile, Rofiq Daroini, S.Pd., an Indonesian language teacher who teaches the short story material, said that the story "Yogyakarta" is very helpful in instilling the character value of patriotism. According to him, "This short story builds students' imaginations about the simple and unpretentious culture and life of the Yogyakarta people. This is something they rarely get in regular textbooks."

He also explained that during classroom discussions, students showed a high interest in the cultural details described in the story. "For example, when the character 'I' rides a becak (rickshaw) and asks about the history of the temple, students immediately became interested in comparing it with their own local culture. This is a sign that this text successfully arouses cultural curiosity," he said.

The second short story, titled “Mencintai Budaya Sendiri” by Vergilia Agam Saputri, tells the story of a junior high school student from SMPN 8 Malang named Putri Angelia.

Table 4. Summary of Cultural Values in the Short Story “Loving Our Own Culture”

No.	Time	Location	Activity / Event	Characters / Additional Information	No.
1	First day of school	Si Aku returns to school after vacation and meets a new student named Carrol, a transfer student from Korea.	Junior High School 18 Malang	I, Carrol	Curiosity, openness to new people
2	During break time	Carrol, Aurel, and Annisa toured the school and introduced the various rooms. Carrol disliked the Javanese music they heard in the music room.	School area	Me, Carrol, Aurel, Annisa	Cultural education, introducing traditional arts (Javanese music)
3	The next day	The principal called Si Aku to represent the school in a traditional dance competition in	School office	Principal, I	Concern for local culture, self-confidence

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		the context of Malang City's anniversary.			
4	Competition preparation period	Si Aku is actively practicing dancing and invites Carrol to watch his performance.	Home / school	I, Carrol	The spirit of preserving culture through dance
5	Race day	I performed at Malang City Hall, witnessed by the Mayor, friends, and Carrol. After the performance, Carrol apologized for his previous behavior.	Malang City Hall	I, Carrol, Mayor	Appreciation for traditional arts, formation of respectful attitudes towards local culture by foreigners
6	Announcement of the winners	I was crowned as the 1st winner of the traditional dance competition and felt proud to be able to bring honor to the school and introduce traditional culture to my friends.	Malang City Hall	I, the race spectator	Nationalism, love of the homeland through cultural preservation, pride in one's identity as the next generation of the nation's culture
7	Closing message	Si Aku gives a message to readers to continue to preserve traditional culture even though they live in the modern era.	-	I (narrator)	Character values: love of the homeland, cultural responsibility, moral invitation to the younger generation to protect and love their own culture.

The short story titled "Mencintai Budaya Sendiri" by Vergilia Agam Saputri provides readers with an experience of a junior high school student who deeply loves her own culture, which she expresses through the traditional art of dance. Through her persistence, she is able to shape a positive perspective in others, even among those who are less interested in regional arts, especially traditional dance.

The short story "Mencintai Budaya Sendiri" also caught the attention of the Head of Madrasah. The Head of Madrasah, Muhtar Lutfi, S.Pd.I., believes that the story of Putri Angelia, a student who defends local culture amid the influx of foreign culture, reflects the real conditions occurring today. "Putri Angelia's story is very contextual. She is not only a dancer, but a symbol of young people fighting to maintain their identity. This is very important to introduce to our students," he said.

Muhtar Lutfi stated that both of these short stories not only help build cultural insight but also shape attitudes. He noted that the students showed greater appreciation for local wisdom and developed a stronger sense of pride in being part of the Indonesian nation. "After engaging in reading and discussions about these short stories, I observed that students became more eager to mention and share cultural elements from their own regions during class discussions.

This indicates an increasing cultural awareness," he remarked enthusiastically. Meanwhile, Rofiq Daroini, S.Pd., emphasized that the short story "*Mencintai Budaya Sendiri*" serves as a concrete example that inspires students to uphold and preserve traditional values. "Putri Angelia is an inspiring figure. She remains proud to dance traditional dances amidst the dominance of modern culture. This is very relevant to the challenges our students face today, who are increasingly familiar with foreign cultures," he said.

In his teaching, he intentionally asked students to relate the characters' experiences in the stories to their own lives. The results were quite encouraging. "Some students have started re-engaging in dance and karawitan because they feel the stories represent them. That's a tremendous impact of literacy. Discussions are more lively. Students not only understand the story's content but also begin to question their role in preserving local culture," he explained.

He also appreciated the students' more active response when short story learning was integrated. At the end of the interview, Rofiq suggested that the use of culturally themed short stories be expanded further. "There are still many works of Indonesian children that can be used for learning. We just need to explore and adapt them to the context of character education," he concluded.

Both short stories can be presented to students as an invitation to develop a sense of love and appreciation for Indonesia's cultural heritage from various perspectives, both historical and artistic. Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world, located in Southeast Asia. Indonesia itself is highlighted as a country rich in cultural diversity.

The first short story introduces Indonesian culture within the family environment children should be introduced early on to the idea that Indonesia is rich in stunning cultural heritage. It is hoped that they can preserve Indonesian culture and pass it on to the next generation. The second short story presents the introduction of Indonesian culture in the school environment. Slowly but surely, consciously or not, the current of globalization and the development of foreign cultures in Indonesia can easily erase or even mutate traditional culture among the millennial generation [24]. Therefore, it is important to hold competitions aimed at introducing culture involving students in schools, as this is a more effective approach than simply delivering theory without real action.

The short story "Yogyakarta" describes the experience of a teenager visiting various cultural sites in Yogyakarta, such as Candi Borobudur and Prambanan. During the journey, the main character directly experiences the warmth of the Yogyakarta people, their politeness, and the richness of traditional values embedded in daily life. The protagonist "I" in the short story

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also demonstrates a deep curiosity about the historical background of the temples, reflecting a strong awareness of cultural preservation. The values emphasized in this narrative include simplicity, friendliness, and appreciation for the nation's cultural and historical legacy. In contrast, the short story "*Mencintai Budaya Sendiri*" centers on the character Putri Angelia, a student from SMPN 8 Malang who actively participates in maintaining traditional dance. She is depicted as a young learner who takes pride in her cultural roots and remains steadfast in preserving them, even though many of her peers are influenced by foreign trends. Her involvement in a traditional dance competition, where she represents her school, illustrates her dedication to safeguarding regional culture. The story highlights values such as patriotism, cultural pride, perseverance, and commitment to upholding one's identity.

The interpretation of character values in both stories draws upon Lucien Goldmann's theory of genetic structuralism, which views literature as a manifestation of the collective consciousness of society [25]. The short story "*Yogyakarta*" mirrors a community mindset that continues to honor tradition and fosters enthusiasm for learning cultural history. Meanwhile, "*Mencintai Budaya Sendiri*" portrays the spirit of youth who strive to sustain local culture amid the pervasive influence of global culture. Both narratives reveal the dynamic relationship between individuals and their surrounding socio-cultural environment.

In an interview, the Head of the Madrasah, Muhtar Lutfi, S.Pd.I., explained that the short story "*Yogyakarta*" conveys significant moral values aligned with character education. "The main character in this story shows curiosity, a passion for learning history, and a deep love for culture. These aspects are in harmony with our madrasah's vision to nurture students who value national culture," he stated. He further mentioned that such literary materials greatly assist teachers in developing lessons that address not only cognitive skills but also emotional and spiritual aspects.

Similarly, Rofiq Daroini, S.Pd., an Indonesian language teacher, shared his perspective on "*Mencintai Budaya Sendiri*." He expressed that the protagonist, Putri, embodies an exemplary model for today's young generation. "In an era where foreign cultures dominate social media and shape modern youth lifestyles, Putri represents a young person who understands and proudly upholds her true cultural identity," he remarked. She is proud to be a traditional dancer and continues to develop her talents even though her environment sometimes belittles her," explained Rofiq. He hopes that stories like this can be instilled from an early age in classroom learning.

Based on the results of a national literacy assessment, the Reading Enthusiasm Level (TGM) in Indonesia remains relatively low compared to the average for ASEAN countries. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (2022) shows that Indonesia's literacy index only reached 37.32 points, while in the study area, the TGM score of madrasah students was still below the national standard. This condition underscores the need to provide reading materials that are not only linguistically appealing but also relevant to students' social and cultural backgrounds. In this regard, the incorporation of short stories grounded in local culture becomes a strategic approach to enhance reading motivation while simultaneously nurturing character values.

The connection between literacy and character formation can be examined through Lucien Goldmann's theoretical framework of genetic structuralism, which posits that literary works represent the social, historical, and cultural structures of a community. Consequently, when students engage with short stories inspired by local culture, they experience more than just linguistic beauty; they also encounter the shared values and collective consciousness that shape their identity. Introducing this theoretical foundation at the beginning of the analysis clarifies how local literary texts, such as "*Yogyakarta*" and "*Mencintai Budaya Sendiri*" (*Loving Our Own Culture*), can function as effective contextual tools for character education.

Findings from interviews with the madrasah principal and the Indonesian language teacher suggest that students exhibit greater enthusiasm when reading stories connected to their lived experiences and cultural background. The teacher noted, "When students encounter stories about Javanese traditions or local cultural practices, they feel a stronger connection to the narrative." This observation corresponds with classroom findings showing that students engaged in more dynamic discussions and expressed a stronger sense of cultural pride after participating in short story-based learning activities.

An analysis of the character values embedded in both narratives reveals notable psychological dimensions. In "*Yogyakarta*," the protagonist is portrayed as a curious learner who seeks to understand the history and culture of the region, symbolizing the adolescent quest for self-identity amid globalization. Meanwhile, in "*Mencintai Budaya Sendiri*," the main character grapples with a conflict between adopting popular foreign cultural trends and maintaining pride in local heritage. This tension mirrors the real experiences of many students today, where global cultural influences often mediated through digital platforms tend to overshadow local values.

The virtues of patriotism, tolerance, responsibility, and curiosity reflected in both stories transcend abstract moral lessons; they represent a form of cultural resistance against global homogenization. Thus, local short stories function not merely as reading materials but as powerful pedagogical tools that strengthen students' cultural awareness and resilience.

The integration of field findings, literary theory, and psychological analysis of characters demonstrates that culture-based short story learning can bridge literacy needs while simultaneously addressing the challenges of globalization.

Conclusion

This study concludes that culturally based short stories, namely "*Yogyakarta*" by Muhammad Rahmanuddin Dinejad and "*Mencintai Budaya Sendiri*" by Vergilia Agam Saputri, are effective Indonesian language learning media for instilling patriotic character values in students at MTs Darul Falah Sumbergempol. The first short story highlights the values of religiosity, perseverance, and patriotism, whereas the second emphasizes tolerance, curiosity, responsibility, and pride in local heritage. The integration of both literary works into the learning process has been proven to enhance students' reading

motivation, cultural understanding, and nationalistic spirit.

In the era of globalization characterized by the widespread influence of foreign cultures through digital media the moral and cultural values conveyed in local literature assume a crucial role as a safeguard of national identity. Locally rooted short stories function not only as instruments for literary appreciation but also as vehicles of cultural resistance against the uniformity brought about by global culture. Hence, the distinctive contribution of this research lies in its assertion that local literary works can serve as contextual and meaningful approaches to character education in the digital era.

The practical implication derived from these findings is the importance of encouraging other schools to incorporate local literature into their curricula as a means to strengthen students' cultural awareness and resilience. Teachers are also encouraged to creatively combine literary texts with digital media to make learning more engaging and address the challenges of globalization. This way, the younger generation will not only be literate but also develop a sense of national identity and resilience against the influx of foreign cultures.

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