

Literacy And Cultural Identity Of Generation Z In Preserving Banyuwangi Culture

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Abstract: *The rapid development of globalization and digital technology has significantly influenced the cultural orientation of young people, including Generation Z. While digitalization provides wider access to information and cultural resources, it also poses challenges to the preservation of local cultures. This study aims to explore cultural literacy, cultural identity, and their implications for the preservation of Banyuwangi culture among Generation Z. The study employed a qualitative case study approach conducted in Glagah District, Banyuwangi Regency, East Java. Ten Generation Z participants actively involved in cultural activities were selected purposively. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The findings reveal that cultural literacy among Generation Z is developed through family, community, school, and social media interactions. Participants demonstrated understanding of local cultural elements such as the Osing language, Gandrung dance, Seblang tradition, Kebo-Keboan ritual, and Banyuwangi cultural festivals. Cultural identity is reflected through the preservation of local language, participation in traditional arts, and a strong sense of pride toward Banyuwangi culture. Furthermore, Generation Z actively contributes to cultural preservation through participation in cultural communities, digital cultural promotion, festival involvement, and creative cultural content production. The study concludes that cultural literacy and cultural identity are important foundations for sustaining local culture in the era of globalization and digital transformation.*

Keywords : Banyuwangi Culture, Cultural Literacy, Cultural Identity, Cultural Preservation, Generation Z.

1. INTRODUCTION (Heading 1)

Culture is an essential component of social life that shapes collective identity and social cohesion. Indonesia, as a multicultural nation, possesses a rich diversity of local cultures that serve as important cultural assets. However, the rapid development of globalization and digital technology has transformed the way young people interact with culture. Generation Z, commonly defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, has grown up in a highly connected digital environment where information, values, and cultural practices from around the world are easily accessible. This situation creates opportunities for cultural exchange while simultaneously posing challenges to the preservation of local cultural heritage.

Banyuwangi Regency, located at the eastern tip of Java Island, is known for its unique cultural heritage rooted in Osing culture. Cultural expressions such as the Osing language, Gandrung dance, Seblang ritual, Kebo-Keboan tradition, Barong Ider Bumi, and Gandrung Sewu Festival represent important elements of local identity. These cultural traditions continue to attract public attention and contribute to Banyuwangi's image as a cultural tourism destination. Nevertheless, increasing exposure to global culture through

digital media may affect younger generations' attachment to local traditions.

Cultural literacy has emerged as an important concept in addressing these challenges. UNESCO defines cultural literacy as the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and participate in cultural practices meaningfully. Cultural literacy enables individuals to recognize cultural values, appreciate cultural diversity, and actively engage in preserving cultural heritage. For Generation Z, cultural literacy is not only acquired through formal education but also through family interactions, community participation, and digital media engagement.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of cultural literacy in strengthening cultural identity. Nurcahyo (2024) found that local wisdom-based digital literacy contributes to critical thinking skills and cultural awareness among young people. Amelia et al. (2024) demonstrated that social media platforms can serve as effective tools for enhancing cultural literacy among Generation Z. Similarly, Fitri (2025) reported that despite strong global influences, Indonesian youth continue to express pride in local culture through creative digital activities. However, studies specifically focusing on the relationship between cultural literacy, cultural identity, and cultural preservation in the context of Banyuwangi culture remain limited.

This study therefore seeks to examine how Generation Z develops cultural literacy, constructs cultural identity, and participates in preserving Banyuwangi culture. Understanding these dynamics is important for designing educational and cultural programs that support the sustainability of local cultural heritage

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultural Literacy

Cultural literacy refers to the ability to understand, appreciate, analyze, and actively participate in cultural life. It encompasses not only cultural knowledge but also the ability to interpret cultural meanings within social contexts and adapt to societal changes. According to Hirsch (1987), cultural literacy enables individuals to understand and engage effectively within their cultural environment. For Generation Z, cultural literacy is increasingly important because they are exposed to diverse cultural influences through globalization and digital technology.

Cultural literacy is also reflected in young people's participation in cultural activities such as traditional art performances, cultural festivals, and heritage preservation programs. UNESCO (2013) highlights that cultural literacy involves understanding cultural values and actively engaging in cultural practices. Such participation strengthens cultural identity and supports the preservation of local culture amid rapid social change and globalization.

2.1.1 Cultural Literacy through the Family

The family serves as the primary environment for cultural transmission, where children first learn cultural values, norms, language, and traditions. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning and cognitive development occur through social interaction, particularly with significant individuals in one's immediate environment. Therefore, families play a crucial role in fostering cultural literacy by introducing cultural practices and values from an early age.

2.1.2 Cultural Literacy through Society

Communities and social environments provide opportunities for individuals to gain direct cultural experiences. Bourdieu (1986) explains that cultural knowledge and understanding develop through cultural capital, which consists of values, skills, and experiences acquired through social interaction. Participation in community and cultural activities enables young people to understand the meanings and functions of culture, thereby strengthening their cultural awareness and identity.

2.1.3 Cultural Literacy through Schools

Schools play a strategic role in developing cultural literacy through formal education. Banks (2008) states that cultural education helps students understand their cultural identity, appreciate diversity, and develop cultural awareness. Through curriculum content, extracurricular activities, cultural

festivals, and culture-based learning programs, schools can effectively introduce and preserve local cultural heritage among younger generations.

2.1.4 Cultural Literacy through Social Media

Social media has become an important platform for developing cultural literacy among Generation Z. Jenkins (2009), through the concept of participatory culture, argues that young people actively create, share, and disseminate information rather than merely consuming it. Social media enables Generation Z to access cultural information, promote local traditions, and participate in cultural preservation efforts. Consequently, social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a space for cultural learning, expression, and preservation in the digital age.

2.2 Cultural Identity

Hall (1996) defines cultural identity as a dynamic social construction continuously shaped by historical experiences, social interactions, and cultural contexts. Cultural identity is not fixed but constantly negotiated and reconstructed. For Generation Z, cultural identity emerges through interactions between local traditions and global cultural influences.

2.2.1 Language as Cultural Identity

Language is an important element in shaping cultural identity. According to Claire Kramsch (1998), language is not only a means of communication but also a medium for expressing and symbolizing cultural reality. Through language, communities transmit values, norms, traditions, and knowledge across generations, making language a key marker of cultural identity.

In the context of Banyuwangi, the Osing language serves as a symbol of the cultural identity of the Osing community. Its use in families, communities, and cultural activities reflects efforts to preserve Banyuwangi's cultural identity. Conversely, the declining use of the Osing language among younger generations may indicate changes in cultural identity practices. Therefore, maintaining the use of the Osing language is essential for sustaining the cultural identity of Banyuwangi society.

2.2.2 Arts as a Representation of Cultural Identity

Arts are an important component of culture that represent the identity of a community. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), arts function as a medium for expressing cultural values, norms, and ways of life. Therefore, arts play a significant role in introducing, preserving, and strengthening cultural identity.

In Banyuwangi, Gandrung Dance, traditional Banyuwangi music, and cultural festivals represent the region's cultural identity. These cultural expressions reflect the history, values, and characteristics of the local community. Participation in artistic activities allows Generation Z to gain direct cultural experiences, fostering pride, a sense of belonging, and

attachment to their local culture. Thus, arts function not only as cultural expressions but also as a means of strengthening cultural identity among young people.

2.2.3 Cultural Identity of Generation Z

Cultural identity is a dynamic social construct that develops through interactions between individuals, society, and changing social conditions (Hall, 1996). For Generation Z, cultural identity is shaped by the interaction between local culture and global influences. Growing up in the digital era, they are exposed to diverse global cultures while remaining connected to their local heritage.

Studies show that Generation Z tends to adopt global cultural elements, such as popular music and fashion, while still maintaining local traditions, including traditional arts and regional culture (Rahmawati, 2021). This process creates a hybrid cultural identity that combines local and global values. However, balancing these influences remains a challenge.

In this context, cultural literacy plays an important role in helping Generation Z understand, appreciate, and preserve their cultural heritage. Cultural literacy and contextual education can strengthen cultural awareness and encourage greater participation in cultural preservation efforts (Sari, 2021). As a result, Generation Z can maintain their cultural identity while adapting to the demands of a globalized world.

2.3 Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning and development. Cultural knowledge is acquired through interactions with family members, peers, educators, and community members. Cultural tools, including language, traditions, and digital media, facilitate the internalization of cultural values.

2.4 Cultural Preservation

Cultural preservation involves efforts to maintain, transmit, and adapt cultural heritage to contemporary contexts. Smith and Akagawa (2009) argue that preservation should not be understood merely as conserving the past but also as ensuring cultural relevance for future generations. In contemporary society, digital media plays a crucial role in cultural preservation by enabling broader cultural participation and dissemination.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach. Research was conducted in Glagah District, Banyuwangi Regency, East Java, from April to May 2026. Ten Generation Z participants were selected purposively based on their active involvement in cultural activities, including traditional arts, cultural communities, cultural festivals, and digital cultural promotion.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions,

and cultural practices related to Banyuwangi culture. Observations focused on cultural events, community activities, and cultural performances. Documentation included photographs, social media content, and community archives.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation was employed to enhance credibility and trustworthiness.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Cultural Literacy of Generation Z

The findings indicate that Generation Z in Banyuwangi possesses a relatively good level of cultural literacy. Participants demonstrated knowledge of local cultural elements, including the Osing language, Gandrung Dance, Seblang tradition, Kebo-Keboan, and various cultural festivals. This knowledge was acquired through family, schools, communities, and digital media. In addition, Generation Z actively accesses cultural information through social media and participates in cultural activities, indicating that cultural literacy extends beyond knowledge to active engagement in cultural preservation. Despite these positive findings, challenges remain, particularly the growing influence of global culture and the declining use of the Osing language among young people.

4.1.1 Cultural Literacy through Family

The family emerged as the primary source of cultural literacy for Generation Z. Participants reported learning the Osing language, local traditions, and cultural values through daily interactions with parents and other family members. The family plays an important role in transmitting cultural knowledge and practices, making it a key environment for preserving Banyuwangi culture across generations.

4.1.2 Cultural Literacy through Society

Community involvement contributes significantly to the development of cultural literacy. Cultural communities provide opportunities for young people to engage directly with local traditions through discussions, traditional arts, and cultural activities. These experiences help Generation Z gain a deeper understanding of the meanings, values, and social functions of Banyuwangi culture.

4.1.3 Cultural Literacy through School

Schools contribute to cultural literacy by introducing students to local culture through classroom learning, cultural performances, and extracurricular activities. Participants reported gaining knowledge about Banyuwangi culture, particularly Gandrung Dance and Osing traditions, through school programs. Although schools primarily provide foundational cultural knowledge, they remain important institutions for fostering cultural awareness among young people.

4.1.4 Cultural Literacy through Social Media

Social media has become an important source of cultural information for Generation Z. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube allow young people to access information about local traditions, cultural festivals, and traditional arts. The findings show that social media increases interest in Banyuwangi culture and provides opportunities for Generation Z to promote local culture through digital content creation.

4.2 Cultural Identity

The findings reveal that the cultural identity of Generation Z in Banyuwangi is still strongly associated with local cultural elements, particularly the Osing language and traditional arts. Despite the influence of globalization and digital culture, young people continue to express pride and attachment to their cultural heritage through participation in cultural activities and the preservation of local traditions.

4.2.1 Cultural Identity through Language

The Osing language remains an important symbol of Banyuwangi cultural identity. Although its use has declined compared to previous generations, many participants continue to use and understand the language, especially within family settings and cultural events. The findings suggest that the Osing language functions not only as a communication tool but also as a medium for transmitting cultural values, traditions, and local identity.

4.2.2 Cultural Identity through Arts

Traditional arts continue to play a central role in shaping cultural identity among Generation Z. Participation in Gandrung Dance, traditional music, Gandrung Sewu, and cultural festivals fosters cultural pride and strengthens young people's connection to Banyuwangi culture. Through these activities, Generation Z actively experiences and expresses its cultural identity.

4.3 Cultural Preservation among Generation Z

The study shows that Generation Z contributes to cultural preservation through the continued use of the Osing language, participation in traditional arts, involvement in cultural festivals, and engagement in cultural communities. Families, schools, communities, and digital media all play important roles in supporting these efforts. Although challenges such as globalization and declining language use remain, Generation Z continues to demonstrate awareness and commitment to preserving Banyuwangi's cultural heritage for future generations.

5. CONCLUSION

Cultural literacy among Generation Z in Banyuwangi is developed through family, community, school, and social media. The family serves as the primary source for introducing the Osing language and local culture, while communities, schools, and social media strengthen young people's cultural understanding and participation in cultural activities.

The cultural identity of Generation Z is reflected in the use of the Osing language and participation in Banyuwangi's traditional arts. Although the use of the Osing language has declined compared to previous generations, it remains an important symbol of cultural identity. In addition, Gandrung Dance, traditional music, and cultural festivals play a significant role in fostering pride and strengthening young people's attachment to Banyuwangi culture.

The preservation of Banyuwangi culture by Generation Z is demonstrated through the use of the Osing language, involvement in cultural activities, participation in cultural communities, and engagement in traditional arts. Strong cultural literacy contributes to the development of cultural identity, while a strong cultural identity encourages young people to actively participate in preserving Banyuwangi culture amid the challenges of globalization and rapid technological development.

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