

KNITTING UNITY THROUGH TONE: STRENGTHENING NATIONALISM THE NATION'S CHILDREN THROUGH THE ART OF SOUND

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Abstract

The 2025 Solo Vocal Competition and National Choir organized by Ombas Arts Indonesia is a tangible form of community service that integrates sound arts with character education and strengthening nationalist values. Through the active participation of children aged 9-14 years from various regions, this activity aims to instill the spirit of nationalism, strengthen cultural identity, and shape the character of the younger generation through meaningful musical expression. This activity is designed as an educational and inclusive space, where vocal art is used as a medium of social and emotional learning. This article examines the background of the activity, the implementation method, as well as the results and social impact on the participants and the surrounding community. The analysis was conducted with an art-based character education approach and supported by academic literature and community-based art practices. The results of the study show that art activities such as national vocal competitions are able to strengthen the love of the homeland, increase children's confidence, and build social cohesion between participants and supporting institutions. This article recommends the development of similar activities as a sustainable strategy in character education and art service to the community.

Keywords: Community Service, Vocal Arts, Nationalism, Character Education, School-Age Children

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a multicultural country faces challenges in maintaining the spirit of nationality in the midst of globalization and digitalization. The younger generation tends to be exposed to foreign cultures that can shift national identity if not balanced with strong character education (Prasetyo & Nugraha, 2023). Art, especially vocal music, has great potential as a medium for learning national values because of its emotional, collective, and accessible nature. Strengthening national values among the younger generation is an increasingly relevant challenge in the era of globalization and digitalization. The rapid flow of information and the dominance of foreign popular culture have the potential to shift national identity if it is not

balanced with contextual and creative character education. In this context, sound art has a strategic role as a social and emotional learning medium that is able to touch the hearts and shape the character of the nation's children (Asmi, Sariyani, & Mufaro'ah, 2023; Rahiem, 2025).

The national vocal competition activity is an educational strategy that combines artistic expression with patriotic values. National and regional songs are not only musical works, but also symbols of the nation's history and struggle (Santoso et al., 2023). Through this activity, children not only learn vocal techniques, but also understand the meaning behind the lyrics and melodies they sing.

In an effort to strengthen the spirit of nationalism among the younger generation, Ombas Arts Indonesia designed an art activity that is not only competitive, but also educational and reflective. The interest in organizing the Solo Vocal Competition and the National Choir departed from the observation of the lack of space for musical expression which specifically raised national and regional songs as a medium of character formation. In the midst of the flow of globalization and the dominance of digital entertainment content, there is a need to present activities that are able to instill national values in a creative and touching way.

The initial idea of this activity grew from a cross-disciplinary discussion within Ombas Arts Indonesia, which consisted of lecturers from various fields of science: information technology, sound arts, medicine, management and accounting, physics, and performing arts. This multidisciplinary collaboration is a major strength in designing activities that are not only artistic, but also structured, safe, and far-reaching. IT experts support digital registration and documentation systems, voice arts experts design vocal curriculum and assessment criteria, while medical teams ensure health protocols and participant comfort. Support from the fields of management and accounting guarantees transparency and budget efficiency, while contributions from physicists and performing arts enrich the technical and aesthetic aspects of the stage.

The planning process of this activity began with an internal discussion about a form of art service that has a broad and inclusive impact. After going through the idea curation stage, it was decided that the vocal competition with the theme of nationality was the most relevant and strategic form to reach elementary and secondary school age children. This theme was chosen because the national anthem have symbolic and emotional power that can form a sense of love for the homeland, strengthen national identity, and foster pride in local culture.

Registration for participants was opened online, with high enthusiasm from various schools and art communities in North Sumatra. In a short time, dozens of participants from diverse backgrounds registered, showing that the spirit of nationalism through art is still alive and in demand. The selection process was carried out openly and transparently, taking into account vocal talent, participants' motivations, and commitment to national themes. National anthems including *Indonesia Jaya* (as a mandatory song), *Bagimu Negeri*, and regional songs such as *Butet*, *Sikacang Toro ale turang*, *Sengko-Sengko* (as the song of choice) are the main choices in this competition, because they have symbolic and emotional power that evokes a sense of love for the homeland (Santoso et al., 2023; Albayan, 2019).

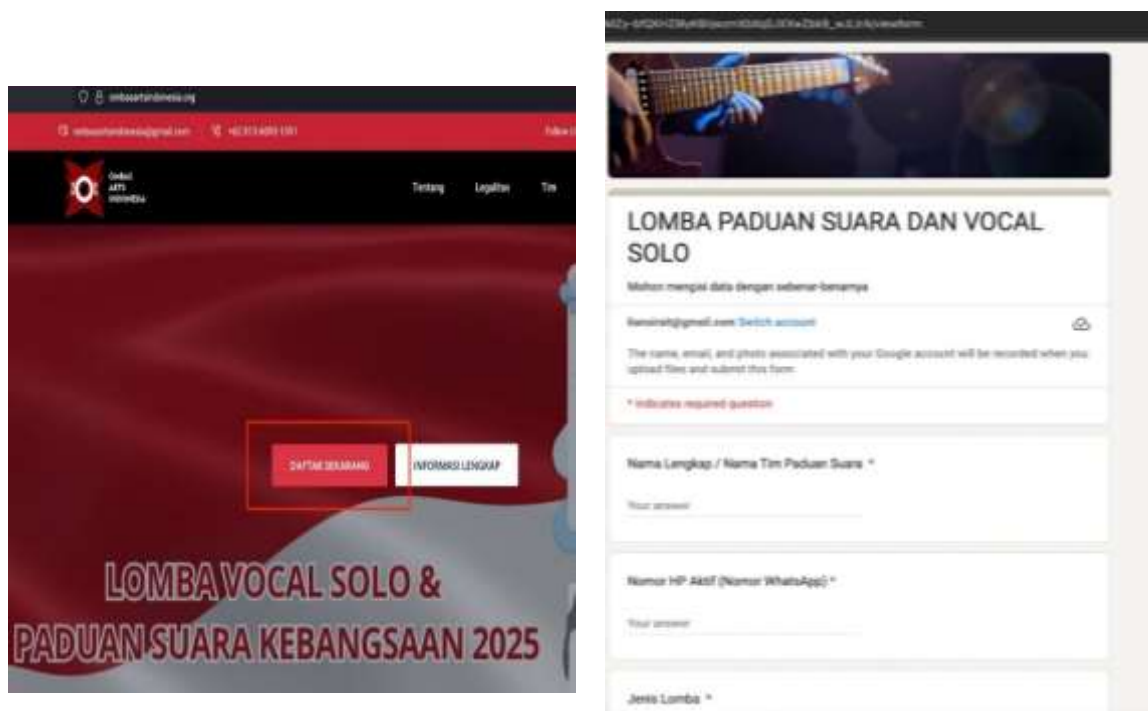


Figure 1. Online registration

This activity was then designed as part of the celebration of the 80th Indonesian Independence Day, with the hope that it can become a social and emotional learning space for children, as well as strengthen the relationship between arts, education, and community institutions. This article will examine the implementation of the activity, its impact on participants and communities, and reflections on the role of sound art in shaping national character and identity. Cross-disciplinary collaboration in this activity is in line with community-based community service practices advocated by various higher education institutions (Sebelas March University, 2025; Bunda Mulia University, 2025).

Purpose and Significance of Activities

This activity aims to integrate national values into the practice of sound art as an inclusive and transformative medium of character education. Specifically, the main objectives to be achieved include:

1. Internalize national values through meaningful musical expression.
2. Increasing children's participation in community-based arts activities as a form of social and cultural engagement.
3. Strengthening the character of participants through a competition mechanism that is healthy, educational, and oriented towards the values of togetherness.
4. Growing a sense of pride in local and national cultural heritage as a collective identity.

Academically, this activity has a strong relevance to the art-based approach to character education. According to Rahiem (2025), art has significant potential in forming a generation that is free from violence and more empathetic to others. Through active involvement in art activities, participants not only develop aesthetic competencies, but also social values that support holistic character development.



Figure 2. National Solo Vocal & Choir Competition Poster 2025

The visual representation of the goal is explicitly reflected in the race announcement poster that has been disseminated to the public. This poster not only serves as an information medium, but also as an instrument of value communication, with a design that highlights national symbols, national identity colors, and illustrations of children singing in a positive competitive atmosphere. The systematic placement of visual and text elements, starting from the theme of the activity, the date of implementation, to the invitation to participation, illustrates the commitment of the organizers in creating an inclusive and educational space of expression.

Semiotically, the poster strengthens the narrative of the activity as a forum for character formation through sound art. The presence of the institution's logo, inspirational quotes, and visualization of togetherness between participants is a sign that this activity is not only ceremonial, but also has a deep pedagogical dimension. Thus, this publication media also supports the achievement of the objectives of the activity conceptually and practically, as well as expanding the reach of the national message to the wider community.

Implementation Method

This community service activity was carried out for two days, located in Manhattan Times Square, Medan; a strategic public space that allows cross-community interaction and increased visibility of art activities in urban communities. This program carries two main competition categories, namely solo vocals and choirs, which are designed to accommodate different levels of abilities and backgrounds of participants.

Participants came from primary and secondary schools, as well as local art communities spread across the North Sumatra region. The recruitment process is carried out openly through social media, official invitation letters, and digital posters that are disseminated to the network of education and cultural partners. The selection of participants is carried out taking into

account the principles of inclusivity and diversity, so that this activity can be accessed by children from various social and cultural backgrounds.

The competition scoring system is designed based on pedagogical and aesthetic indicators, including:

1. **Vocal techniques**, including intonation, articulation, and sound dynamics.
2. **The expression and appreciation of the song**, as a reflection of the emotional understanding and values contained in the lyrics.
3. **Stage performance and etiquette**, including attitudes, costumes, and participants' interactions with the audience.
4. **Understanding the meaning of the national anthem**, as a form of reflection on the values of nationalism and cultural pride.

The jury team consists of music academics, performing arts practitioners, and educational figures who have competence in the field of vocal and character education. The assessment is carried out objectively and transparently, using standardized evaluation sheets that have been prepared by the organizing committee.

This activity is supported by national sponsors engaged in education, media, and culture, and involves local media for publication and coverage of events. The presence of the media not only serves as documentation, but also as a means of public education about the importance of art as an instrument of character formation.

In addition to the competition, this activity also includes a short debriefing session for participants and companions, in the form of a workshop on the meaning of the national anthem and ethics in the performing arts. This session aims to strengthen participants' understanding of the cultural context and values that they want to convey through the activity. The evaluation of the activity was carried out qualitatively through brief interviews with participants, accompanying teachers, and judges, as well as quantitatively through participation analysis and assessment scores. The results of the evaluation showed that this activity succeeded in increasing children's involvement in sound arts, strengthening a sense of nationality, and building a healthy and educational atmosphere of competition.

Social Outcomes and Impacts

The solo vocal and choir competition which was held for two days successfully attracted the active participation of 43 individual participants and 5 choir teams from various schools and art communities in North Sumatra. The high enthusiasm of the participants reflects the success of the inclusive approach implemented by the committee, as well as the relevance of the activities to the artistic expression needs of children and adolescents at the local level.

Based on the results of field observations and brief interviews with participants and companions, it was found that there was a significant increase in several aspects of participants' social and personal development, including:

1. **The confidence and ability to perform in public** can be seen from the increased courage of participants in expressing musical expressions openly in front of a wide audience.
2. **The understanding of national values** is reflected in the participants' appreciation of the lyrics of the national anthem and the attitude of respect during the performance.

3. **Ability to work together in a team**, especially in the choir category, where participants demonstrate vocal coordination, exercise discipline, and empathy for group members.

This activity also received a positive response from parents, teachers, and the surrounding community. Many parties expressed their appreciation for the organization of the competition which was not only competitive, but also educational and character building. The presence of local media also expands the impact of the activity by displaying coverage that encourages community participation in art activities based on national values.

Theoretically, these findings are in line with the study of Lapien et al. (2018) who stated that choir training can be an effective means of character education, as it involves elements of discipline, cooperation, and empathy between individuals. In the context of community service, the sound art-based approach has proven to be a transformative social learning medium, especially for children and adolescents who are in the identity formation phase.

Furthermore, this activity contributes to strengthening the local art ecosystem, expanding networks between communities, and encouraging educational institutions to more actively integrate art as part of the strategy of shaping students' character. The social impact created is not only individual, but also collective, with the emergence of a sense of togetherness and pride in national culture.





Figure 3. The Race Process

The activities of the 2025 National Solo Vocal Competition and Choir can be studied through an *arts-based character education* approach, which is art-based character education that places artistic expression as a medium for the formation of social, emotional, and national values. UNESCO (2025) affirms that arts education contributes significantly to social development, cross-cultural understanding, and civic engagement. Sound art, especially in the form of solo vocals and choirs, has the power to convey national messages emotionally and collectively, thus being able to form a strong national identity.

Music as a medium of collective expression also has a profound social function. According to Mulumbot et al. (2025), vocal training in the community not only improves technical skills, but also strengthens social participation and local identity. In the context of this activity, national anthems such as *Indonesia Raya* and regional songs such as *Sinanggar Tulo* are used as a tool for historical reflection, cultural pride, and strengthening the spirit of unity.

The results of the activity show that this approach has been successfully applied concretely. In the solo vocal category, participants showed a deep appreciation for the songs performed, both in terms of technique and expression. The winners of the solo vocal category are:

1. **First Place:** Quinn Fernanda Hutaaruk
2. **Second Place:** Juliyanti Mangihut Br. Napitupulu
3. **Third Place:** Olivia Dior Lim
4. **Runner-up:** Chessavani Kornelia Sinaga
5. **Harapan II:** Laura Anastasia
6. **Hope III:** Mary Arta Pasaribu

Meanwhile, in the choir category, teamwork and vocal coordination are the main indicators of success. The songs performed succeeded in creating an atmosphere of togetherness and arousing a sense of nationalism among the audience. The winners of the choir category are:

1. **First Place:** GKPS Pansur V Choir, Pematang Siantar
2. **Second Place:** SD Antonius Medan
3. **Third Place:** St. Cecilia Choir, Junior High School Bintang Timur Pematang Siantar

The achievements of the participants not only reflect musical ability, but also success in internalizing national values through art. Each winner received a trophy, medal, certificate, and cash prize as a form of appreciation, while all participants received a certificate of participation in recognition of their dedication.

Thus, this activity is not only an art competition, but also a cultural-based character learning space. The sound arts proved to be an effective instrument in shaping a young generation that was not only musically skilled, but also had a strong social and national consciousness.

The implementation of the 2025 Solo Vocal Competition and National Choir provides empirical evidence that sound art can function as an effective and inclusive medium of community service. This activity is not only a musical competition, but also a learning space for national values that can be accessed by various levels of society.

Reflections from the implementation show some important findings:

1. **The children of the participants showed a deeper understanding of national values when conveyed through song, compared to the formal lecture method.**
Songs such as *Indonesia Raya*, *Sinanggar Tulo*, and other regional works became a means of internalizing the values of patriotism, unity, and cultural pride.
2. **Wide Social Reach**
Art activities are proven to reach diverse communities, including elementary schools, church communities, and local art groups. The active participation of different regions shows that the arts-based approach has universal appeal and the potential to strengthen social cohesion.
3. **Constructive Multi-Sector Collaboration**
The success of this activity cannot be separated from the collaboration between art institutions, educational institutions, and sponsors. Support from Ombas Arts Indonesia, local governments, and private partners enables a professional and sustainable implementation. The involvement of sponsors also strengthens the legitimacy and reach of the activity.

Based on these reflections, several strategic recommendations can be proposed:

1. **Mainstreaming Activities as an Annual Agenda**
This competition deserves to be an annual agenda that is officially supported by local governments and educational institutions. Consistency of implementation will strengthen the long-term impact on art-based character education.
2. **Development of Vocal Arts Education Module Based on National Values**
It is necessary to prepare a vocal art learning module that integrates national values to be applied at the elementary school level. This module may include basic vocal techniques, the history of national songs, and the reflection of social values through music.
3. **Partnerships with Local Arts Communities**
Involving the local arts community as an implementing partner will strengthen cultural roots and increase community participation. These communities have the capacity to accompany participants, disseminate national values, and maintain the sustainability of the program.

In closing, this activity has proven that sound art is not just an aesthetic expression, but also an instrument of character education and strengthening national identity. With the right policy support and cross-sectoral collaboration, similar activities can become a model of community service that has a broad and sustainable impact.

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This activity is not just a competition, but an educational space and artistic expression that strengthens the unity of the nation through young voices full of hope. Hopefully this activity can become a sustainable annual agenda and continue to give birth to a generation that excels in art and love for the homeland.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Solo Vocal Competition and National Choir organized by Ombas Arts Indonesia is a tangible form of community service that integrates art, education, and national values in one unit of activity. Held on August 22-23, 2025 at Manhattan Times Square, Medan, this activity succeeded in enlivening the commemoration of the 80th Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia with a spirit of unity and strong cultural expression.

Conceptually, this activity reflects an *arts-based civic engagement approach*, where sound art is used as an instrument of character formation and national identity. Through mandatory songs such as *Indonesia Jaya* and selected songs that include regional works, participants not only show vocal skills, but also internalize the values of patriotism, diversity, and cultural pride.

The active participation of 43 solo vocal participants and 5 choir teams aged 9–14 years showed that this activity reached the younger generation widely. Their performance was judged based on four main criteria, intonation, singing technique, expression, and performance, by a

jury consisting of Dr. Ken Steven, M.Mus and Ondi Yohan Tambunan, S.Sn. The results of the assessment showed high musical quality and a deep appreciation of the national theme.

Each winner receives a trophy, medals, certificates, and cash prizes, while all participants receive a certificate of participation as a form of appreciation for their dedication.

The impact of this activity is not only artistic, but also social and educational. The formation of creative platforms for the younger generation, the increasing public appreciation of vocal arts, and the birth of new seeds in the field of music show that sound art is an effective and inclusive medium in building the spirit of nationalism. These activities also strengthen collaboration between arts institutions, educational institutions, sponsors, and local communities, creating a sustainable cultural ecosystem.

With these achievements, the 2025 Solo Vocal Competition and National Choir deserves to be used as a model for annual activities that are not only oriented towards artistic achievements, but also on the formation of the nation's character. The art of sound, in this context, has proven itself as a social force capable of uniting, inspiring and shaping the young generation who love the homeland.

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