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INDONESIAN STUDENTS' IDENTITY REPRESENTATION AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of arts and cultural training in shaping cultural identities and strengthening micro-cultural diplomacy among Indonesian diaspora students at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). Using a participatory ethnographic approach, this study explores how traditional dance not only functions as an aesthetic expression but also as symbolic media for transmitting cultural values within a transnational educational atmosphere. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation involving students, teachers, and parents. The findings signal that cultural transmission occurs in a non-linear manner through selective adaptation and symbolic reinterpretation influenced by students' sociocultural contexts. A thematic dance titled *Gelianus* emerges as a culturally pedagogical model capable of fostering emotional engagement and a sense of belonging among young members of the diaspora. The study also highlights the importance of inclusive participation that takes into account gender dynamics and the diversity of sociocultural backgrounds within diaspora education. This study contributes to the discourse on tangible cultural diplomacy by demonstrating that arts learning in diaspora schools can preserve cultural continuity, strengthen national identity, and serve as an effective form of soft power. The study recommends the integration of contextualized cultural curricula and the use of digital learning innovations to amplify the sustainable impact of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy on a global scale.

Keywords: cultural identity; diaspora education; traditional dance; cultural diplomacy; participatory ethnography

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, known for its rich Nusantara cultural identity, encompasses hundreds of ethnic groups, languages, and traditions (Agus et al., 2021). In the era of globalization and migration, Indonesian schools abroad, such as Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), serve as the frontline of micro-level cultural diplomacy. Data from the Ministry of Culture (Kebudayaan, 2020) show that thousands of students at SIKL participate in the Merdeka curriculum along with cultural extracurricular programs, reflecting institutional efforts to strengthen national identity among the diaspora. This trend is significant, as cross-border education now plays a crucial role in enhancing the home country's soft power (Adrian et al., 2023).

Cultural identity is a social construct formed through processes of symbolic representation and cultural interaction within certain settings, including transnational contexts. In this era of globalization and massive international mobility, serious challenges arise regarding the continuity of local cultures, especially among younger generations of the diaspora (Salsabila et al., 2024). Indonesian diaspora communities, including those living in Malaysia, grow up in a dominant cultural environment, namely Malay culture, which is historically connected yet still differs in its expressions and cultural values (Maksum, 2022). In this situation, the risk of cultural assimilation becomes real, especially in the absence of systematic interventions to maintain cultural transmission.

The underlying issue motivating this study is the concern over the potential decline of Indonesian cultural identity among diaspora students due to their intensive interaction with the dominant culture of the host country (Mustagis & Sukarno, 2024). In such circumstances, the state must provide educational spaces that enable cultural transmission to continue in meaningful and contextual ways (Fang, 2024). This urgency is reinforced by the increasing frequency of cultural disputes between Indonesia and partner countries—such as heritage disagreements with Malaysia—which occasionally trigger diplomatic tensions (Sulistiyono, 2020). As a diaspora cultural institution, SIKL holds the potential to mitigate such conflicts through accurate and inclusive cultural representations. However, existing literature remains focused on state-level or ministerial cultural diplomacy, while evaluations of cultural activities within diaspora educational institutions are still scarce. Cultural representation at SIKL remains partial. Many cultural materials are dominated by Javanese or specific traditions, while transformative representations of the broader Nusantara cultural richness remain underdeveloped (Alifuddin & Setyawan, 2021). Contributing factors include limited extracurricular cultural curricula, insufficient collaboration with cultural actors from Indonesia, and an approach that remains symbolic rather than substantive (Kasmahidayat et al., 2023).
Cultural diplomacy aims not only to promote Indonesia's traditional arts but also to function as part of Indonesia's soft power strategy for building emotional connections and national identity among diaspora generations. Cultural diplomacy is a soft power

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instrument that operates through attraction (the power of attraction) to shape global public attitudes and sympathies through distinctive cultural values, identities, and expressions. In this context, the collective identities cultivated through cultural practices foster a sense of belonging and emotional attachment, strengthening cross-national solidarity and reconstructing the identity of Indonesian diasporic communities. Thus, cultural diplomacy plays a vital role in deepening Indonesia's engagement with global communities while positioning culture as a sustainable, non-coercive form of influence within international society.

Traditional dance is selected as the central medium in this study because it conveys cultural values, narratives, and philosophies in visual, symbolic, and affective forms (Mukhambetzhanov & Nussipzhanova, 2024). Dance serves as a concrete cultural expression that is accessible to students while also representing the vast diversity of the Nusantara cultural landscape (Kasmahidayat & Herliawan, 2023; Wahyudi, 2023); (Kasmahidayat & Herliawan, 2023). However, it is important to recognize that cultural transmission through arts training abroad does not occur in a linear manner (Garber, 1995). The culture taught in schools such as Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) is not absorbed by students completely or uniformly; instead, it undergoes processes of selection, adaptation, and reinterpretation shaped by the social context and cultural backgrounds of diaspora students. This situation raises important questions about how these students interpret Indonesian cultures learned through traditional dance training, and the extent to which such cultural representations can rebuild their sense of attachment to Indonesian national identity.

Based on the aforementioned issues, the study aims to analyze how Indonesian culture is represented in SIKL's traditional dance training programs and to examine diaspora students' responses and interpretations of the cultural meanings embedded in these artistic practices. The research further seeks to determine how effectively traditional dance serves as a medium for rebuilding emotional connections and cultural identity among Indonesian youths living abroad (Kasmahidayat et al., 2024).

This study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in cultural anthropology, allowing for an in-depth exploration of symbolic meanings, representational processes, and cultural interactions between teachers, students, and their social environments (Eny Junyanti, 2024). Data collection techniques include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation. In the context of cultural diplomacy, this approach contributes insights into the effectiveness and challenges of cultural arts programs as components of Indonesia's broader soft power strategy (Pratama et al., 2023).

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Previous literature has discussed cultural diplomacy as a form of soft power (Nye, 2019), as well as the role of traditional arts in preserving local cultural identities (Geertz, 1973; Hall, 1997). Several studies have also highlighted the significance of cultural representation in diaspora contexts ((Clifford, 1994); (Hannerz, 1996)). However, this study focuses specifically on the representation of Nusantara culture in traditional dance training for Indonesian diaspora students in Malaysia—an area that remains underexplored. It offers new insights by examining micro-cultural diplomacy within diaspora schools. Whereas existing studies often focus on macro-level diplomacy conducted by embassies or scholarship programs, this study highlights diplomacy embedded in everyday interactions within schools that directly engage local communities, diaspora students, and their parents.

This study is founded on the hypothesis that the representation of Nusantara cultural identity in SIKL's arts training programs is not a complete or static form of inheritance but rather a result of selection, adaptation, and reinterpretation aligned with diaspora students' sociocultural contexts. The variables investigated include forms of cultural representation (symbols, narratives, dance movements), students' perceptions of the cultural content taught, and challenges encountered during training and intercultural communication. The research employs a qualitative cultural anthropology framework with techniques of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation (Mahendra et al., 2024).

Previous studies show that cultural transmission in diaspora contexts often faces challenges such as differing values, shifting cultural preferences, and limited access to authentic cultural resources. Yet, cultural arts activities have also been shown to be effective media for rebuilding diasporic youth's cultural identity and sense of belonging to their ancestral homeland.This study is expected to offer new insights into the transmission of Indonesian culture abroad and address questions surrounding the sustainability of cultural identity amid globalization and cross-cultural integration. Culture is not passively inherited but actively negotiated and reinterpreted by young diaspora communities. Therefore, both the government and diaspora communities need to create educational spaces that not only transmit cultural knowledge technically but also revive emotional connections between younger generations and their homeland.

As an initial conclusion, this study demonstrates that cultural representation abroad is neither passive nor linear but active and contextual, shaped jointly by teachers and learners as they construct new meanings of regional cultures. Nevertheless, further questions remain such as the sustainability of cultural transmission after training ends and the extent to which similar programs can be replicated in other diaspora communities.

2.0 METHOD

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This study employs an ethnographic approach as the primary method to deeply explore the processes of cultural representation and identity construction within the Nusantara arts training program at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). The ethnographic approach was selected because it reveals cultural meanings from the participants' perspectives and enables the researcher to directly observe the social and symbolic dynamics occurring in the day-to-day interactions among trainers, students, and the school environment.

As a member of the training team in the cultural arts program, the researcher was actively involved in the field activities, making this study a form of participatory ethnography. Data collection techniques included participant observation during practice sessions and performances, in-depth interviews with SIKL students participating in the training, and visual documentation in the form of photos, videos, and field notes. Interviews were conducted semi-structurally using open-ended questions to enable respondents to freely express their experiences and perspectives.

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify recurring patterns of meaning, symbols, and narratives that emerged during the training process (Kasmahidayat et al., 2024). The analysis focused on understanding the cultural symbols employed (dance movements, costumes, music, and narratives) and how these symbols were interpreted by diaspora students whose sociocultural backgrounds differ from the cultural context of origin. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (students, trainers, teachers), methodological triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation), and the researcher's reflexivity during direct involvement in the field.

The research was conducted throughout the entire cultural training program—from planning and implementation to the final performance at SIKL. The research site centered on the school environment and the designated arts training areas. The study participants included SIKL students taking part in the cultural training program, arts trainers (including lecturers and the researcher), parents, and accompanying teachers involved in supervising the activities. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive depiction of the social and cultural meanings that emerge within arts-based cultural diplomacy practices in a diaspora educational setting.

3.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Strengthening Cultural Identity through Traditional Dance Training

This study shows that cultural arts training at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) functions as an important space for reconstructing cultural identity awareness among Indonesian diaspora students. Through traditional dance training, students not only gain

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artistic skills but also indirectly engage in the internalization of their ancestral cultural values. The cultural representations embedded in movement, music, costume, and local narratives form a kind of “cultural bridge” that connects the diaspora generation to the roots of their identity (Mailina & Kasmahidayat, 2023).

In SIKL’s cultural arts training program, the main focus is the introduction of traditional dance as part of Indonesia’s cultural heritage, which is then developed into a thematic dance work titled Gelianus, an acronym for *geliat anak* Nusantara (“the vibrance of Nusantara children”). This choreography represents everyday activities of Indonesian children, from waking up in the morning to playing with friends, reflecting the dynamics of childhood within a local cultural frame. The use of wooden sticks as props and the incorporation of *rampak kendang* movements, traditional children’s games, and dance elements from various regions of the archipelago form the foundation of Gelianus. The dance highlights symmetrical floor patterns, paired movements, and dynamic tempos, all symbolizing the spirit of gotong royong and communal togetherness among children.

Bright costumes combined with traditional Sundanese motifs reinforce the cheerful world of childhood, while the accompanying music—based on simple rhythmic traditional instruments—is arranged in an accessible way for primary school students. The symbolism is conveyed not only through movement but also through a holistic sensory experience that shapes students’ understanding of the cultural philosophies they perform. Thus, Gelianus serves not only as a medium of aesthetic expression but also as an educational tool in cultural diplomacy, introducing the richness of Indonesian cultural values in contextual ways within an overseas educational environment. An excerpt from a student interview illustrates this enthusiasm:

> *"Saya suka banget bisa nari kayak anak Indonesia. Walaupun saya tinggal di Malaysia, rasanya kayak pulang kampung waktu latihan dan tampil."* (Briana, kelas 4)
> [“I really love being able to dance like Indonesian children. Even though I live in Malaysia, it feels like homecoming whenever we practice and perform.”]
> (Briana, Grade 4)

3.2 Social Dynamics Based on Gender and Social Background

During the training process, significant social dynamics were identified, particularly in relation to gender and students’ social backgrounds. Of the initial 15 participants before the final selection of three students, all were female. This reflects prevailing socio-cultural stereotypes that associate dance with feminine forms of expression. Although there were no formal restrictions for male students, their low participation indicates the need for a more inclusive recruitment approach in future programs. The fact that all observed participants were girls was not the result of any selection policy, but rather a reflection of

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cultural constructions that position dance as a female domain. These findings reinforce long-standing arguments in cultural anthropology that gender-based role distributions in performing arts continues to reproduce traditional stereotypes.

The students demonstrated high levels of engagement, particularly in exploring expressive movements and bodily improvisations. This was evident in their responsiveness to musical rhythms, their use of dance props (wooden sticks), and their ability to make spontaneous adaptations in group formations. These observations align with Csikszentmihalyi (1996) concept of *flow experience* (Łucznik et al., 2021) in which participants become fully absorbed and enthusiastic in creative activities, enabling the emergence of authentic improvisation.

Meanwhile, students' diverse family backgrounds—ranging from migrant workers to entrepreneurs and embassy professionals—did not show a direct correlation with the quality of their engagement in the training. Although the initial assumption suggested that students with stronger exposure to Indonesian cultural practices at home might more readily grasp the symbolic context of the movements, observations revealed that this factor was not a primary factor. Responses to the training materials were more strongly influenced by individual dispositions such as self-confidence, prior artistic experience, and personal learning styles. This supports Bourdieu' (1986) theory of *habitus* and cultural capital, which are shaped through lived experience rather than socioeconomic status alone.

In terms of group dynamics, a micro-level social stratification emerged based on grade differences. Azizah (Grade 3) and Briana (Grade 4) displayed a more cohesive partnership, while Ceria (Grade 5), despite being the senior member, tended to isolate herself. This suggests the presence of emotional distance or social discomfort rooted in age gaps or individual personality differences. These findings are relevant to collaborative pedagogy, which emphasizes the need for socially inclusive training strategies to ensure that all participants can contribute equitably (Vygotsky, 1978) in (Mugabekazi et al., 2025).

3.3 Perceptions, Responses, and Cultural Diplomacy Projections

Overall, the dance training in this program is not merely a transmission of artistic techniques, but a space for cultural identity formation through the internalization of values, symbols, and social interaction. The students' interest in cultural narratives and their questions about other types of Indonesian dances reflect a sustained sense of belonging to their ancestral culture, even while living in a multicultural environment abroad (Kuswandi & Carolin, 2019). This reinforces the relevance of cultural anthropology approaches within cultural diplomacy, where traditional performing arts function as a medium for educating identity in a living and dynamic form (Tisnakusumahnita & Putri, 2024).

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The cultural arts training program implemented at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur received positive responses from various stakeholders, including students, accompanying teachers, and parents. The program is not merely a lesson in traditional dance but also an effective medium of cultural diplomacy for reinforcing national cultural identity within a transnational environment. Through structured interviews, students expressed enjoyable learning experiences and a growing sense of pride in Indonesian culture. Many of them even demonstrated an interest in exploring other regional cultural traditions, indicating an expanded cultural perspective and cross-cultural appreciation. This aligns with cultural transmission theory, which emphasizes the importance of direct engagement with cultural practices in shaping attitudes and collective identity awareness.



Figure 1: Students' Training Process at SIKL
(Personal Documentation, 2025)

In-depth interviews with students, accompanying teachers, and parents support these observational findings. Students reported feeling more confident after performing on stage, expressed interest in learning about other regional cultures, and hoped that similar programs would be offered regularly. Accompanying teachers noted improvements in students' discipline, active participation in cultural discussions, and an increased sense of belonging to Indonesian culture. Parents, on the other hand, expressed pride in their children's involvement in the training and conveyed strong support for the program's continuation. However, several aspects, such as students' understanding of symbolic movements and the inclusion of male students, still require further improvement. To illustrate respondents' perceptions and satisfaction more systematically, the following tables present selected interview findings and satisfaction levels regarding the cultural arts training program at SIKL.

Table 1: Interview Findings and Satisfaction Levels of the Cultural Arts Training Program for Students at SIKL

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No	Question Category	Satisfaction Indicators	Summary of Responses	Satisfaction Level
1	Feelings after the training	Enthusiasm, enjoyment, new experiences	Students felt happy, gained new experiences, and felt closer to Indonesian culture.	High (5)
2	Most memorable experience	Active participation, self-expression, artistic appreciation	The dance performance was the most memorable moment because they could perform in front of many people.	High (5)
3	Interest in Indonesian culture	Curiosity, desire to explore other regional cultures	Students became interested in learning about other cultures, such as Balinese and Papuan arts after the training.	Fairly High (4)
4	Confidence after performance	Self-confidence, self-expression	Students felt more confident and less afraid to perform in public after appearing in the school event.	Fairly High (4)
5	Expectation for future programs	Desire to continue learning culture, program continuity	Students hoped the training could be held more frequently and that they would have opportunities to learn dances from other regions.	High (5)
6	Impact of the training on Indonesian culture in Malaysia	Understanding of Indonesian cultural identity, appreciation of Indonesian culture within a Malay environment	Students stated that the training helped them better understand their Indonesian cultural identity despite living in a Malay cultural environment. They felt prouder to present Indonesian culture in Malaysia.	Fairly High (4)

Based on the results of the student satisfaction evaluation for the cultural arts training program, the findings show that the majority of responses indicate a high level of satisfaction. Students felt enthusiastic, happy, and gained new experiences that strengthened their connection to Indonesian culture. The most memorable experience for the students was the opportunity to perform in front of an audience, which directly

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enhanced their active engagement and appreciation of the arts. The program also encouraged students' interest in learning about other Indonesian cultural traditions, such as those from Bali and Papua, although satisfaction with this indicator fell into the "fairly high" category. In addition, the training contributed to increased student confidence, particularly in expressing themselves in public spaces. Students' expectations for the program were also highly positive; they expressed a desire for similar activities to continue in the future with broader cultural coverage. Overall, the evaluation results demonstrate the program's effectiveness in fostering cultural appreciation, performance confidence, and students' motivation to continue exploring the richness of Indonesian cultural arts. Below is a pie chart presenting the interview results and student satisfaction levels regarding the cultural arts training program at SIKL.

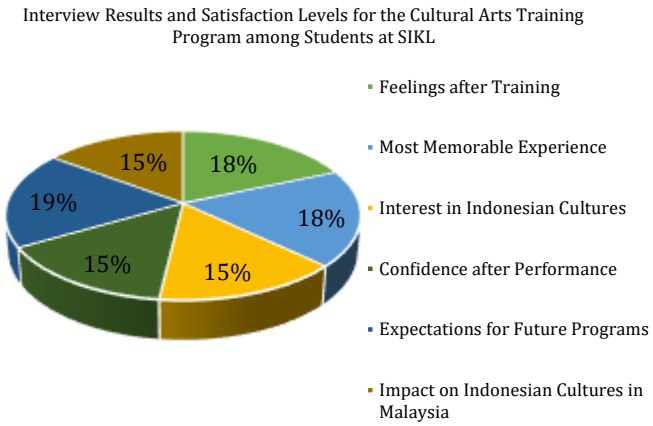


Figure 2. Interview Results and Satisfaction Levels for the Cultural Arts Training Program among Students at SIKL
(Personal Documentation, 2025)

Below are the interview results and satisfaction levels regarding the cultural arts training program from the perspective of the accompanying teachers at SIKL:

Table 2. Interview Results and Satisfaction Levels for the Cultural Arts Training Program among Accompanying Teachers at SIKL

No	Question Category	Satisfaction Indicators	Summary of Responses	Satisfaction Level
1	Students' development	Improvement in technical and non-technical skills	Teachers observed significant progress in students' gestures, expressions, and discipline throughout the training.	High(5)

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2	Changes in attitudes and confidence	Increased confidence and enthusiasm for cultural learning	Students became more open and confident after performing on stage.	Fairly High(4)
3	Students' interest in Indonesian cultures	Active engagement in cultural discussions, exploration of cultural symbols	Students actively asked about the meaning of movements and cultures from other regions; teachers noted an increased interest in exploration.	Fairly High(4)
4	Strengthening cultural identity	Enhanced sense of belonging, increased cultural literacy	The program helped students connect their personal identity with Indonesian culture, especially those born or raised abroad.	High(5)

The table above shows that the program was significantly beneficial in students' development. Teachers noted improvement in both technical and non-technical skills, namely: gestures, expressions, and discipline during the training program, highlighting its effectiveness. In terms of students' attitudes and confidence, students became more open and confident after the performance, highlighting the program's success in promoting confidence and cultural learning. Additionally, teachers also reported an increase in students' involvement in cultural discussions where they were actively asking questions and showing interest in the meaning of symbols and dance movements from various Indonesian origins. This further exemplifies the program's ability to promote students' curiosity and cultural discovery. Furthermore, it also contributes to strengthening students' cultural identity, especially for those who were born and raised overseas. Teachers noticed that this program served as a tool in improving a sense of cultural belonging by incorporating cultural literacy. Therefore, the cultural training program affects not only students' skills and attitudes, but also the internalization process of national cultural identity. Below is the pie chart of the interview results and satisfaction levels for the cultural arts training program among accompanying teachers.

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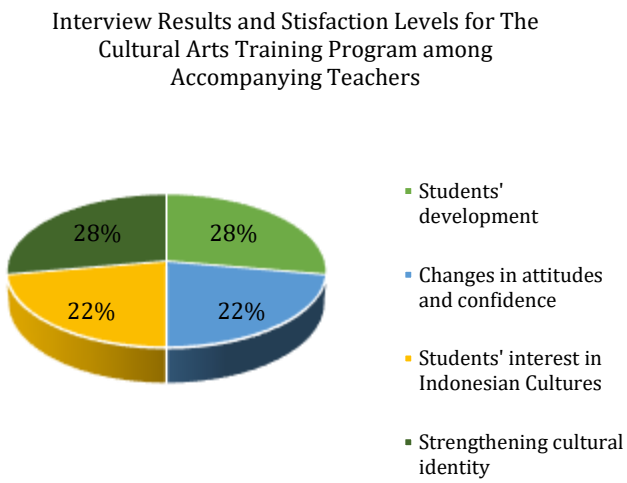


Figure 3: Interview Results and Satisfaction Levels for The Cultural Arts Training Program among Accompanying Teachers at SIKL
(Personal Documentation, 2025)

Below are the interview results and satisfaction levels for the cultural arts training program among parents at SIKL:

Table 3. Interview Results and Satisfaction Levels for The Cultural Arts Training Program among Parents at SIKL

No	Question Category	Satisfaction Indicators	Summary of Responses	Satisfaction Levels
1	Responses towards students' involvement	Participation support, appreciation towards students	Parents felt proud and happy because their children actively participated in the training and on-stage	High (5)
2	Students' changes	Changes in attitudes, confidence, and cultural interests	Students became more open, confident, and eager in cultural learning after the program.	Fairly High (4)
3	Support for subsequent cultural learning	Commitment to supporting students' deeper cultural exploration	Parents were supportive of their children participating in the program and expected a more intensive and varied subsequent program	High (5)
4	Expectations for future training programs	Expectations for continuity, trainers' competence, and cultural diversities	Parents expected more diverse cultures and competent and patient trainers	Fairly High (4)

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Parents showed considerable appreciation for their children's involvement. They were proud and exhilarated because their children could participate actively and perform in front of a large audience, highlighting their full support for the cultural program. From the perspective of personal development, parents observed positive changes in their children, particularly in terms of openness, self-confidence, and an increased interest in arts and culture after participating in the training. In addition, parents expressed a strong commitment to encouraging their children to continue joining similar activities in the future, even hoping for follow-up programs that are more intensive and varied. Their expectations for future training also include improvements in the quality of instruction, such as the presence of competent and patient trainers, as well as the provision of more diverse cultural materials. Overall, parents' responses reflect supportive and constructive attitudes toward the continuation of cultural training programs as a means of developing children's character, self-expression, and understanding of Indonesian cultures. The following pie chart presents the interview results and satisfaction levels of parents regarding the cultural arts training program at SIKL.

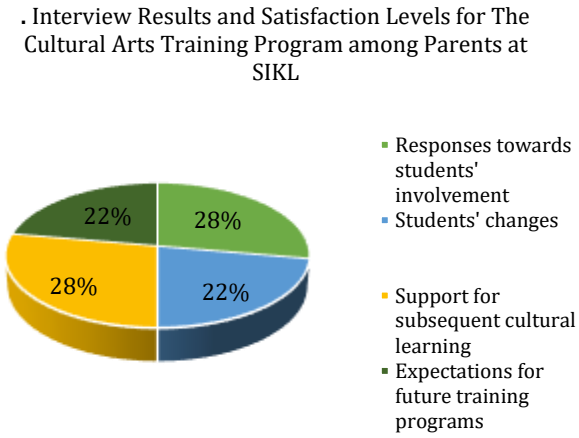


Figure 4. Interview Results and Satisfaction Levels for The Cultural Arts Training Program among Parents at SIKL
(Personal Documentation, 2025)

To enhance the visualization of respondents' perceptions across all examined aspects, the following radar chart is presented based on the scores in the table above.

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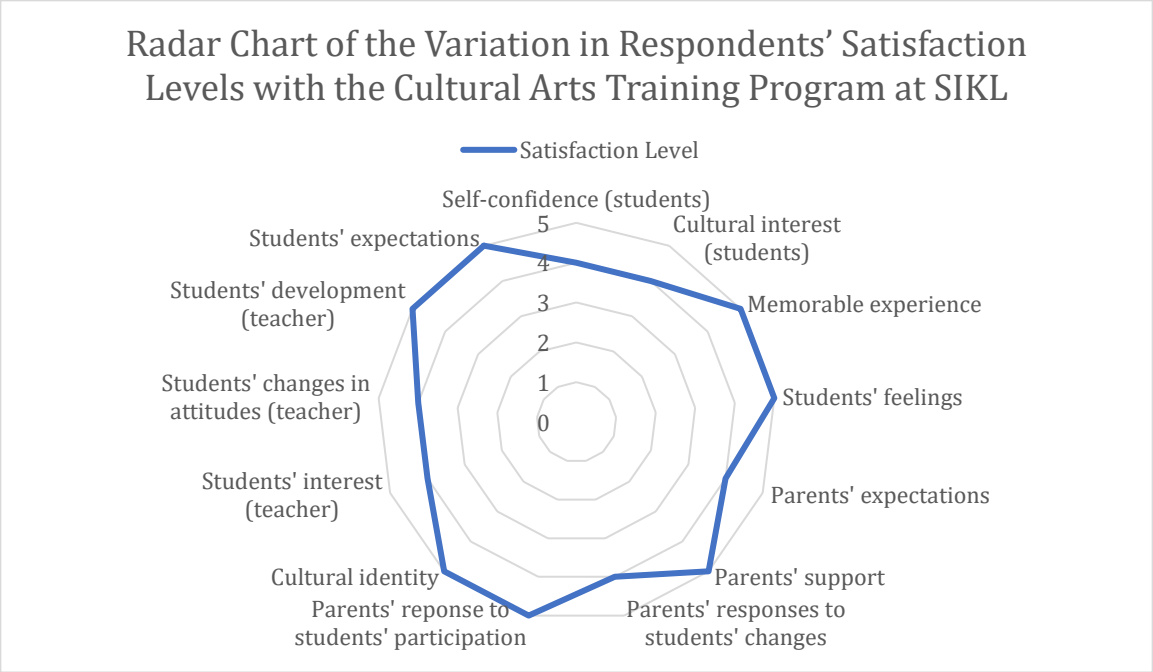


Figure 5: Radar Chart of the Variation in Respondents' Satisfaction Levels with the Cultural Arts Training Program at SIKL
(Personal Documentation, 2025)

These findings affirm Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of cultural representation, as cited in Sa'diyah et al. (2025), which formulates that cultural identity is not a fixed entity but is constituted through the social and symbolic practices actively performed by individuals and groups. In the context of diaspora students, cultural arts training functions as a symbolic arena that enables them to negotiate and rearticulate their Indonesian identity. Moreover, cultural diplomacy is no longer limited to state institutions such as embassies, but can be effectively carried out by educational institutions through participatory and experiential approaches of this kind (Nye, 2019).

On the other hand, accompanying teachers observed significant changes in students' attitudes and behaviors after participating in the program. There was an increase in self-confidence, pride in their ancestral culture, and more pronounced collaborative attitudes during practice sessions and performances. The participatory learning method employed—particularly dance practice using distinctive props such as wooden sticks—contributed to a contextual and meaningful learning experience. Parents also noted that their children became more enthusiastic about learning Indonesian culture and even expressed interest in continuing to study cultural arts after the program concluded. Thus, the program not only created an educational space but also a symbolic space for the actualization of cultural identity as part of diaspora life.

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Figure 6: Students' Performance at SIKL
(Personal Documentation, 2025)

Anthropologically, this program demonstrates that cultural representation is constructed not only through symbols and narratives but also through embodied experiences directly lived by cultural actors, in this case, students as the younger generation of the diaspora (Weiner, 1997). Activities of this kind are crucial within the context of cultural diplomacy because they provide participatory spaces for citizens living abroad to remain connected to their cultural roots (Kasmahidayat et al., 2025). Although the short-term impacts are clearly visible in the increased attitudes and interest toward culture, a longitudinal evaluation of the program's long-term effects is still needed. Therefore, developing a system of continuous assessment and employing educational ethnography can serve as a foundation for measuring the extent to which this training influences the strengthening of cultural identity and cultural diplomacy in a global context. Nevertheless, several important notes remain regarding the sustainability of the program. There is still no long-term post-training evaluation system, and the participation of male students remains limited. Hence, participatory policy strategies and the development of an adaptive, experience-based cultural curriculum are required. The radar chart visualization also indicates high levels of satisfaction across all indicators.

3.4 Policy Relevancies and Strategic Implications

When it comes to policy, it is also important to highlight the juridical foundations that support the implementation of cultural diplomacy through overseas Indonesian schools (Gultom et al., 2024). Cultural arts programs in Indonesian schools abroad, including SIKL, operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemlu). This policy aligns with the mandate of Law No. 5 of 2017 on the Advancement of Culture, which emphasizes the importance of protecting, developing, utilizing, and fostering Indonesian culture, including within diaspora communities. Furthermore, the role of Kemlu in supporting Indonesian schools abroad forms part of Indonesia's public diplomacy strategy, as outlined in the Ministry of Foreign

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Affairs' Strategic Plan, which promotes strengthening the image of Indonesian cultures through education and cultural exchange. With this legal framework in place, cultural arts training in overseas schools is not merely an ad hoc activity, but part of the state's strategic agenda to disseminate Indonesian cultural values globally.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that cultural arts training programs for diaspora students should not be incidental, but integrated as a sustainable extracurricular curriculum in Indonesian overseas schools. Additionally, the development of contextual and interactive local cultural learning modules can help students gain a deeper understanding of ancestral cultural values. The use of digital media—such as tutorial videos, cultural animations, and online learning platforms—is also crucial for reaching students across different countries and technological environments (Abdilah et al., 2025). To support the sustainability of the program, training should be provided for overseas arts teachers so they can deliver regional cultural content adaptively. Furthermore, collaboration among the government, academics, and diaspora communities becomes an important strategy for strengthening cultural diplomacy rooted in community participation and youth engagement.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study asserts that cultural arts training at the Indonesian School of Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) was an effective strategy in strengthening the cultural identity of the diasporic young generation while also serving as community-based cultural diplomacy. Through a participatory ethnographic approach, the study highlights that cultural transmission does not occur in a linear manner but rather through embodied experiences, social interactions, and the symbolic interpretation of cultural values. Traditional dance, as a medium of cultural representation, has been shown to foster students' emotional attachment to Indonesia despite their residence abroad. These findings also highlight the importance of contextual and inclusive learning approaches that take into account gender dynamics, social backgrounds, and individual cultural character. The strategic implications of this research include the need for continuous policy support, the development of an adaptive cultural curriculum, and the use of digital media to expand the reach of Indonesian cultural diplomacy systematically and measurably within transnational contexts.

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6.0 AI DECLARATION

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to assist in refining the wording, improving grammatical accuracy, and enhancing the clarity and academic style of selected paragraphs and supplementary sentences in this manuscript. The use of AI was limited to language editing and textual refinement, without altering the core arguments, research findings, methodological approach, or overall intellectual substance of the article. The author retains full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and integrity of the content presented in the manuscript.

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