

INTEGRATING LOCAL CULTURAL PRACTICES INTO SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF KANKAIN KARKARA AND CULTURAL AWARENESS AMONG ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN PAPUA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Kankain Karkara in fostering cultural awareness and enhancing the quality of Social Studies (IPS) education for fifth-grade students at SDN II Abepura. Additionally, it explores the methods of integrating Kankain Karkara into the curriculum and identifies both supporting and inhibiting factors. Employing a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design, the study involved participants including the Social Studies teacher, fifth-grade students, the school principal, and local customary leaders. Data were gathered through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using an interactive model of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation and member checking were applied to ensure data trustworthiness. The findings reveal that Kankain Karkara is utilized as both a thematic discussion and a deliberative learning model, enriching Social Studies lessons with character-building values. This integration not only strengthens students' knowledge and pride in local culture but also fosters respect for customary norms, increasing motivation and participation in Social Studies. Key factors supporting its implementation include teacher commitment, cultural alignment of students, and support from customary leaders. However, challenges such as limited instructional time, lack of written guidelines, and diverse student backgrounds hinder its full potential.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Education plays a critical role in shaping individuals who are knowledgeable, adaptable, and grounded in cultural values. In Indonesia, educational policies emphasize the importance of strengthening character and 21st-century competencies while preserving cultural heritage. Primary schools are crucial in this process, serving as the foundation for developing students' perspectives on themselves, their environment, and their culture.

Social Studies (IPS) is key in shaping students' awareness of their social and cultural surroundings. Beyond cognitive mastery, IPS fosters critical thinking, concern for others, and an understanding of social and cultural realities (Firdaus et al., n.d.) (Tamher et al., 2022). Thus, IPS should relate subject matter to real-life experiences and local cultures, making learning more meaningful and relevant to students.

Globalization and rapid technological advancements expose students to vast amounts of information, expanding their horizons but also threatening to weaken their cultural identity (Al Ghazali et al., 2021). The erosion of local culture among the younger generation is a growing concern (Amaruddin, 2023). The phenomenon of declining appreciation for local culture among the younger generation has become a concern for various stakeholders (Sukadari et al., 2015). This highlights the need for educational efforts to instill and strengthen cultural awareness, defined not just as knowledge of traditions, but as an appreciation for and practice of cultural values (Akmal, 2021).

Research shows that integrating local culture and wisdom into education can address these challenges effectively (Darliana et al., 2024a). This approach has been shown to enhance learning motivation, strengthen personal identity, and improve the quality of education by connecting content to students' real-life contexts (Handayani et al., 2025).

In Papua, Kankain Karkara a practice deeply embedded in local culture—presents significant educational potential. It embodies values such as togetherness, respect for ancestors, and social wisdom (Chodarsih, 2024). Integrating Kankain Karkara into IPS learning can help students connect with their culture and incorporate it into their character formation (Wabiser, 2022).

However, the use of local culture, including Kankain Karkara, in Social Studies at SDN II Abepura remains suboptimal. The teaching process is still largely textbook-driven, limiting students' engagement with their cultural context. Some students lack understanding of Kankain Karkara's meaning and values, which affects their awareness of local culture and may reduce the quality of their learning experience.

Although culture-based education and local wisdom in IPS have been studied, there is a gap in research focusing on Kankain Karkara's role in cultural awareness and learning quality at the primary school level. This study addresses this gap by offering an in-depth ethnographic analysis in the Papuan educational context.

The research questions guiding this study are: (1) How is Kankain Karkara implemented in Social Studies learning? (2) How does it contribute to cultural awareness among fifth-grade students at SDN II Abepura? (3) How does it enhance Social Studies learning quality? (4) What are the supporting and inhibiting factors in utilizing Kankain Karkara in learning?

This study aims to describe the forms and implementation of Kankain Karkara, analyze its role in cultural awareness and learning quality, and identify factors affecting its use in Social Studies at SDN II Abepura. Although numerous studies have explored culture-based education and local wisdom in Social Studies learning, empirical ethnographic research focusing on the pedagogical role of Kankain Karkara in shaping cultural awareness and learning quality at the primary level remains limited. This study addresses this gap by providing an in-depth ethnographic analysis within the Papuan educational

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic design to explore the integration of Kankain Karkara in Social Studies learning. The research was conducted at a public elementary school in Abepura, Papua. Participants included a fifth-grade Social Studies teacher, students, the school principal, and customary leaders, selected through purposive and snowball sampling.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking (Ulya & Marzuki, 2024)

Research Location

The study was conducted at SDN II Abepura, involving fifth-grade students who take Social Studies classes. This location was purposively selected because it is situated in a community that still practices Kankain Karkara culture, and both the school and teachers have begun to integrate elements of local culture into Social Studies learning, although this integration is not yet optimal.

The research participants consisted of the fifth-grade Social Studies teacher, fifth-grade students as learners who directly experience Kankain Karkara-based instruction, the principal, and customary/community leaders who understand the practices and values of Kankain Karkara culture.

Informants were determined using purposive sampling and were further developed through snowball sampling, namely by adding new informants based on recommendations from previous ones until the data obtained were considered saturated.

Research Design and Procedures

As an ethnographic study, this research positioned the researcher as the main instrument who directly conducts observations and interacts with informants. The researcher observed the Social Studies learning process in fifth grade, particularly when the teacher and students utilized Kankain Karkara as a learning source or medium. The researcher then followed or observed activities related to Kankain Karkara within the school environment as well as in the community (insofar as this was feasible and ethically acceptable). Furthermore, the researcher systematically recorded various events, conversations, symbols, and practices related to the formation of students' cultural awareness and the quality of Social Studies learning.

The research was carried out in several stages. The pre-field stage included literature review, formulation of the research focus, preparation of observation and interview guides, and obtaining permission from the school. The fieldwork stage focused on collecting data through observations, interviews, and documentation within the everyday life of the school and its surrounding community. The final analysis and writing stage involved iterative data processing, starting from data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Data Collection Techniques

Data in this study were collected using several techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation study.

1. Participant Observation

The researcher conducted participant observations in the classroom and school environment to observe directly how the teacher integrated Kankain Karkara into Social Studies learning, how students responded and engaged in learning activities, the social interactions that reflected students' cultural awareness, and the overall school atmosphere and culture related to the preservation of Kankain Karkara culture. These observations were recorded in field notes containing descriptions of events, contexts, and the researcher's reflections.

2. In-Depth Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the fifth-grade Social Studies teacher, several selected student representatives, the principal, and customary/community leaders associated with Kankain Karkara culture. The interviews aimed to explore informants' understanding of Kankain Karkara culture and its values, their experiences in integrating or experiencing Kankain Karkara in Social Studies learning, and their views on the influence of Kankain Karkara on students' cultural awareness and the quality of learning. With the informants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes.

3. Documentation Study

Documentation was used to complement and reinforce data obtained from observations and interviews. The documents included school documents (lesson plans, syllabi, school work programs), photographs of learning activities that utilized Kankain Karkara, and documents or artefacts related to Kankain Karkara practices in the school or community context.

Research Instruments

The main research instrument in this qualitative study was the researcher him/herself. To help the researcher obtain data in a more systematic manner, several supporting instruments were used, namely observation guides, interview guides, and documentation checklist formats. These instruments were developed based on the research focus, relevant theoretical reviews, and preliminary studies, and were then flexibly adjusted to the dynamics encountered in the field.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out inductively and interactively by referring to the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Data Reduction involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and categorizing data from observations, interviews, and documentation in accordance with the research focus, such as the forms and implementation of Kankain Karkara in Social Studies learning, the role of Kankain Karkara in shaping students' cultural awareness, the role of Kankain Karkara culture in improving the quality of Social Studies learning, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in its utilization.

Data Display referred to the presentation of reduced data in the form of descriptive narratives, matrices, or charts that facilitated the researcher in viewing patterns, relationships among categories, and emerging tendencies. These displays became the basis for deeper interpretation.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification were conducted by continuously testing and verifying preliminary conclusions that emerged during data collection through re-examination of the data, comparison among data sources, and discussions with informants (member checking), until robust and accountable findings were obtained.

Data Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed several techniques, namely source and technique triangulation, member checking, and ensuring the adequacy of references. Source and Technique Triangulation was carried out by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation, as well as by comparing information from various informants (teachers, students, the principal, and customary leaders).

Prolonged Engagement and Persistent Observation were undertaken by spending sufficient time in the field to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context, build trust with informants, and reduce misinterpretation of data. Member Checking was conducted by presenting preliminary results or summaries of findings to several key informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretations were consistent with their experiences and views. Adequacy of References was ensured by supporting data analysis and interpretation with relevant theoretical literature and previous research on culture-based education, Social Studies learning, and ethnographic studies in education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Forms of Kankain Karkara Integration in Social Studies Learning

The integration of Kankain Karkara into Social Studies learning at SDN II Abepura takes several distinct forms, as observed through teacher-student interactions, interviews with customary leaders, and classroom observations. Kankain Karkara is utilized in three primary ways: as discussion material, as a deliberative learning model, and as a source of cultural values.

In the first instance, the teacher employs Kankain Karkara as a cultural reference to introduce customary institutions and deliberation processes in Biak society. The practice of "sitting together, thinking, and discussing customary matters" serves as a real-world example for resolving social, land, and kinship issues, which are central to Social Studies content. In subsequent lessons, the teacher creates a learning environment where students discuss the

connections between these practices and broader Social Studies concepts, such as social norms and community institutions.

The classroom structure is adapted to reflect the principles of Kankain Karkara, with students seated in a deliberative circle. This format encourages participation, with each student given the opportunity to voice their thoughts. The teacher assumes the role of facilitator, guiding discussions to ensure they adhere to values of respect, active listening, and consensus building. This integration of local wisdom into the learning process exemplifies an ethnopedagogical approach, where cultural practices inform pedagogical methods (Utomo, 2024).

These findings support the notion that integrating local culture into Social Studies learning provides a meaningful context for students. By linking abstract Social Studies concepts to their lived experiences, students are better able to internalize the material and apply it to their own social realities (Hamna et al., 2025). This aligns with the ethnopedagogy framework, which emphasizes the use of local knowledge and culture to enrich learning experiences and make education more relevant to students' identities and communities (Darliana et al., 2024b).

Cultural Awareness Development

Through the integration of Kankain Karkara, students' cultural awareness develops both cognitively and affectively. Observations show that students are increasingly able to articulate the meaning of Kankain Karkara, recognizing it as a key cultural practice within the Biak community. They also express pride in their local heritage, demonstrating an emotional connection to the values embodied in Kankain Karkara, such as mutual respect, responsibility, and community harmony.

This shift in cultural awareness is evident in students' active participation during lessons. The deliberative model of learning encourages students to reflect on their own cultural practices and compare them with the values presented in Kankain Karkara (Wabiser, 2025). Interviews with students revealed that they began to understand the importance of maintaining politeness, respecting elders, and resolving conflicts peacefully—values deeply embedded in Kankain Karkara (Wabiser, 2022).

This development of cultural awareness not only aligns with the goals of Social Studies education, which seeks to foster a sense of social responsibility and cultural identity, but also strengthens the students' connection to their cultural roots. The findings echo the importance of culture-based education in enhancing students' self-awareness and social engagement (Akmal, 2021). Furthermore, this aligns with research on ethnopedagogy, which advocates for the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into the curriculum to promote a more inclusive and culturally relevant educational experience (Kamarusdiana, 2019).

Implications for Social Studies Learning Quality

The integration of Kankain Karkara also has significant implications for the quality of Social Studies learning. The teacher's ability to connect students' cultural experiences with Social Studies content fosters a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment. Observations suggest that when local cultural practices are incorporated into the learning process, students exhibit greater engagement and a deeper understanding of social concepts.

Students who previously exhibited low participation in class become more involved in discussions, demonstrating a clearer understanding of concepts such as social norms, community structures, and conflict resolution. This shift in classroom dynamics is indicative of the positive impact of local culture integration on student motivation and academic performance.

This finding aligns with research that highlights the benefits of culture-based learning models, which increase student motivation by making learning more relevant to their daily lives. The use of Kankain Karkara in Social Studies learning thus not only improves students' engagement but also contributes to a more holistic understanding of the subject matter, blending cognitive knowledge with cultural and social competencies (Firdaus et al., n.d.).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Several factors support the successful integration of Kankain Karkara in Social Studies learning. These include the teacher's commitment to incorporating local culture into the curriculum, students' familiarity with and cultural proximity to Kankain Karkara, and support from customary leaders who enrich the learning process with insights into local traditions.

However, the study also identifies several inhibiting factors. The limited instructional time allocated for Social Studies poses a challenge in fully exploring the cultural aspects of Kankain Karkara. Additionally, the absence of written guidelines or structured modules on integrating local culture into the curriculum relies heavily on the teacher's creativity and personal understanding of the practice. Finally, the diverse backgrounds of students, with varying degrees of exposure to Kankain Karkara, requires additional efforts to ensure that all students are equally able to connect with the content.

These findings reflect broader challenges in implementing local culture-based education, such as time constraints, resource limitations, and varying levels of cultural knowledge among students. Previous studies have noted similar challenges, including the need for teacher training and curriculum development to effectively incorporate local wisdom into the classroom (Sukadari et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Kankain Karkara functions as an effective ethnopedagogical resource in Social Studies learning by strengthening cultural awareness and improving learning quality among elementary students. Through its integration as a discussion context, deliberative learning model, and source of character values, students demonstrate increased cultural pride, active participation, and deeper understanding of social concepts.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating local cultural practices into primary education to ensure contextual and meaningful learning. Despite contextual limitations, this study offers insights that may inform culture-based Social Studies instruction in other multicultural settings. Future research is encouraged to explore comparative cases across regions and to examine the long-term impact of ethnopedagogical approaches on students' character development.

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