



## Music as a Strategy for Character Development in Junior High School

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### Abstrak

Musik, dengan berbagai manfaatnya, dapat menjadi strategi efektif dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai karakter dalam pendidikan. Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi yang diterapkan melalui musik, khususnya dalam kegiatan bernyanyi dengan menggunakan lagu “Mars Gembira Bergerak.” Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif dan mengadopsi pendekatan kualitatif. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara, serta dokumentasi, termasuk transkripsi notasi lagu untuk memahami syair dan makna yang terkandung di dalamnya. Narasumber primer dalam penelitian ini adalah pencipta lagu tersebut. Teknik triangulasi digunakan untuk mengevaluasi strategi pendidikan yang diterapkan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lagu ini mengandung nilai-nilai karakter seperti tanggung jawab, semangat, kemandirian, kreativitas, dan kebijaksanaan. Gerakan yang disertakan dalam bernyanyi dengan lagu ini juga penting untuk menyesuaikan karakter anak usia SMP. Implikasi dari penelitian ini memberikan saran bagi guru untuk menciptakan gerakan ritmis yang sesuai dengan irama musik tersebut. Selain itu, syair lagu ini mencakup slogan Kabupaten Bengkayang, yang mengajarkan peserta didik untuk mengacungkan jempol sambil mengucapkan kata “mantap,” sehingga gerakan ini dapat dijadikan bagian dari gerakan ritmis yang mendukung pembelajaran karakter.

**Kata Kunci:** Strategi, Pendidikan Karakter, Musik

### Abstract

Music, with its various benefits, can serve as an effective strategy for instilling character values in education. This study examines the strategy applied through music, particularly in singing activities using the song “Mars Gembira Bergerak.” The research is descriptive and adopts a qualitative approach. Data analysis is conducted through the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation, including the transcription of the song's notation to understand the lyrics and their meaning. The primary informant in this study is the song's creator. Triangulation techniques were used to evaluate the educational strategy implemented. The findings show that the song contains character values such as responsibility, enthusiasm, independence, creativity, and wisdom. The movements included in the singing activity are also essential for aligning with the character of junior high school students. The implications of this research suggest that teachers should create rhythmic movements in accordance with the music's rhythm. Additionally, the lyrics of the song incorporate the slogan of Bengkayang Regency, which teaches students to raise their thumbs while saying the word “mantap,” making this movement a part of the rhythmic activities that support character learning.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Character Education, Music

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The strategy of learning through music can involve audio and visual elements, allowing the instillation of character values to be effectively conveyed (Firat & Laramee, 2018; Rajendran & Shah, 2020). Through songs that are easily accessible to children of junior high school age and have memorable lyrics, these songs not only serve as enjoyable learning media but also function as reminders of the importance of character values in daily life. Especially after the covid-19 outbreak, adapting to technology has become very important, and this has already been implemented by schools in Bengkayang Regency (Özdemir, 2022; Purnasari & Sadewo, 2021). Moreover, the fact on the ground indicates that Bengkayang Regency, as a border area between Indonesia and Malaysia, requires equitable education so that children can receive proper education. (Dimmera & Purnasari, 2020;

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Purnasari & Sadewo, 2020). Thus, it is necessary to enhance education in the border regions of Indonesia, particularly teaching students moral principles.

The use of singing, with lyrics that contain aspects of character formation for children, can become a medium for conveying material or meaning, so the impact can be seen in everyday life (Purwanto, 2019; Yudiana, 2020). Even amidst the emergence of chat GPT in the digital transformation, including in the academic field, educational transformation is also necessary to integrate cultural values into the development of educational strategies in Indonesia by utilizing technology (Halaweh, 2023; Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022; Suyatno et al., 2019). Through an in-depth qualitative approach, this research investigates the strategy of instilling character values, which is disseminated on YouTube. Analysis of the song's lyrics and direct observation of its implementation allow for the identification of these strategies and their impact on the students at the school.

Character education has become a central issue in the development of the younger generation. This research explores a unique innovation in instilling character values through a song created by the Principal of SMP Negeri 2 Bengkayang, West Kalimantan. By highlighting local wisdom and the city's vision and mission, the song "*Mars Gembira Bergerak*" not only entertains but also integrates character values relevant to the *Pancasila* Student Profile. The lyrics of the song that contain these values are in line with research findings that state that literacy can serve as a medium in the character-building process. (Suwastini et al., 2023; Vhalery, 2024). The integration of character values in the lyrics of this song aligns with the government's efforts to also strengthen the *Pancasila* Student Profile, which includes students who are faithful, devoted to God Almighty, globally diverse, cooperative, independent, critical thinkers, and creative (Rahayu et al., 2023; Yatim et al., 2023).

Previous study mentioned that the phrase aimed to invite the community to come together and unite to advance all aspects of life through optimal coordination (Ahmad, 2010). In line with this phrase, this aspiration was reiterated in 2023, specifically in the field of education during the opening ceremony of the new academic year (Dekawati, 2020). On the other hand, the Principal wants to realize the P5 program / *Pancasila* Student Profile Strengthening Project that can be linked to the vision and mission of Bengkayang Regency through a song (Qomariyah et al., 2022; Sagala & Putra, 2024). By combining the local wisdom of Bengkayang and the city's vision and mission, the government hopes that education will not only be relevant to the cultural context of the students but also make a tangible contribution to the development of national character. Education can serve as a medium to shape that character and integrate it into school learning activities.

As a principal, as well as someone with a musical soul, Mr. Marsel Marselus intends to create a song to fulfill that expectation. As a reflection of the values that live within society, songs become an effective medium for instilling an understanding of morality and the good values of Indonesian society (Murti et al., 2020; Sipahutar et al., 2021). Previous research shows that music, especially songs originating from the region, can be an effective medium for instilling character values in children from an early age (Rapita et al., 2021; Seftiandani & Hidayatullah, 2023; Suri, 2021; Yasinta et al., 2022). Thus, it is hoped that these songs can create a generation of young people who are characterized and also love culture, especially the culture of the Bengkayang community. Internal strategies are used, namely through habituation to activities that can actualize a love for learning and moral character (Imtihanudin & Mariana, 2021; Yudhar et al., 2021). Positive habituation, as referenced in the research becomes an effective means to instill character values or specially designed programs (Hidayat et al., 2022). This habituation begins with singing the song at every Monday ceremony. This is not only done at SMP Negeri 2 Bengkayang but is also implemented in schools in the city of Bengkayang. Preparation and planning in this matter

are very necessary to comply with government regulations, school conditions, and educators (Dishon & Gilead, 2020; Nurhalimah, 2022).

The novelty of this study is applying an innovative approach in developing the character of junior high school students by using music as the main strategy. This innovative approach successfully creates a strong emotional bond between students and character values, making the internalization of these values more effective. The thought of previous study emphasizes that character formation is a long journey (Venturo-Conerly et al., 2022). This is in line with the view which stresses the importance of instilling character values from an early age (Ladamay & Mustakim, 2023).

This study examines the strategy applied through music, particularly in singing activities using the song “*Mars Gembira Bergerak*”. Thus, it is expected that individuals will be able to develop good attitudes, control their emotions, and build healthy relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature. These findings have important implications for the development of music curricula in schools and efforts to integrate cultural arts into the learning process. These findings have important implications for the development of music curricula in schools and efforts to integrate cultural arts into the learning process.

## 2. METHODS

Qualitative research in the study of music education aims to observe musical activities within a specific group and interview sources to gather more in-depth data for analysis and to find connections between the two (Febriyona et al., 2019). This research uses qualitative methods by conducting in-depth interviews with the Principal on August 18, 2023, to explore further the use of the song “*Mars Gembira Bergerak*” as a strategy for instilling character values in students at SMP Negeri 2 Bengkayang, as shown in Figure 1. The data found will be analyzed through the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This technique is used to test the validity of data related to the strategy in character education using triangulation techniques. In addition, observations were also conducted resulted in a finding of a singing activity conducted at the end of the flag ceremony. This song is sung by all the students, led by a conductor. Additionally, observations made on YouTube revealed that this song was once competed in, specifically for elementary school children (Granić & Marangunić, 2019). The primary source, has a background as an educator and is currently serving as the principal. He has talent and interest in the field of singing. Based on observations on platforms such as Spotify and YouTube, his musical works, in the form of songs themed around patriotism, were found. The songs are titled “*Bengkayang Damai*” and “*Indonesia Tangguh*,” among others.

Data related to this strategy were obtained based on in-depth interviews with the teacher. In addition, literature review and documentation were also conducted as part of the data collection technique to understand how this song was disseminated through online choir competitions on YouTube. The data obtained were then reduced, presented, and conclusions were drawn. Meanwhile, the validity of the data was tested using triangulation techniques to compare the results of interviews, literature studies, and documentation.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### *Innovation in Creating Songs*

The Regent of Bengkayang stated at the first assembly of 2023 that teachers must innovate to realize the motto “*Gembira bergerak, pelajar kuat dan bangga sekolahku dengan kearifan lokal*” or happy to move, strong students, and proud of my school with local

wisdom. The teacher at that time served as the Headmaster of SMP Negeri 2 Bengkayang, intended to create a song that embodies the values of diversity and love for the homeland, as well as the characters that shape the nation in each of its verses. He then formulated the lyrics and melody of the song, resulting in the creative process yielding a song titled "*Mars Gembira Bergerak*". Score of the song is show in Figure 1.

## MARS GEMBIRA BERGERAK

Ciptaan : Marsel Marselius, S.Pd.  
Transkrip : Mastri Dihita Sagala, M.Pd.

**Moderato**

5  
8  
12  
16  
20  
23

Voice Tu-nai-kan tu-gas pang-gi-lan mu-li - a Gi-gih dan bi - jak pe-  
 Voice nuh ins - pi - ra - si Ku - at - kan te - kad dan se - ma - ngat di - ri Ber-  
 Voice wi - ba - wa pe - nuh da - ya cip - ta Te - kun be - la - jar in - san Pan - ca - si - la Sma - ngat  
 Voice ber - ge - rak ju - ga ber - bu - da - ya Me - nu - ju ma - sa de - pan yang ce - mer - lang Ge  
 Voice ne - ra - si mu - da ha - ra - pan bang - sa Bang - ga se - ko - lah - ku pe - la - jar ku - at  
 Voice wu - jud - kan ci - ta - ci - ta yang lu - hur Gem - bi - ra ber - ge - rak  
 Voice I - tu sem - bo - yan ki - ta S S D M ung - gul Beng - ka - yang Man - tap

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**Figure 1.** Score of the Song "*Mars Gembira Bergerak*"

The song material that was competed was the song "*Mars Gembira Bergerak*." This idea was followed up by creating a musical arrangement. This also included the production of a video featuring the song's lyrics. This convenience allows students to learn and memorize the song independently from home. Based on the search results on YouTube, the schools that participated in this competition are SMP Negeri 1 Samalantan, SMP Negeri 3 Ledo, SMP Negeri 4 Jagoi Babang, SMP Negeri 1 Lumar, SMP Negeri 1 Ledo, SMP Negeri 1 Sungai Raya, SMP Negeri 6 Monterado, SMP Negeri 3 Seluas, SMP Negeri 1 Monterado, SMP Negeri 1 Seluas, SMP Negeri 2 Capkala, SMP Negeri 2 Bengkayang, and other schools in Bengkayang. Not only found at the junior high school level, videos of this song being sung were also found at the elementary school level.

This song has a distinctive AB structure, with section A repeated twice with slight variations at the end of the melodic phrase. The narrow melodic intervals make the song easy for children to sing, as explained in the research. There is a repetition of the melody in

section A, referred to as A', with slight changes at the end of the melodic phrase. Furthermore, the melodic intervals in the song are not too wide, so it can be concluded that this march is suitable for children to sing.

### ***The Process of Mechanism for Instilling Character Values***

This research reveals the mechanism of instilling character values through the song "*Mars Gembira Bergerak*." Through observation and in-depth interviews, it was found that the lyrics of the song, which contain positive values, are gradually internalized by the students. The song classified as a march was chosen as a strategy for instilling character values because its lyrics align with the desired goals and are simple. This means that, musically, the melody of this song does not have intervals that are too wide, making it accessible and singable for children. The rhythm leads to a cheerful atmosphere and generates interest or attention, similar to a march rhythm. The march rhythm creates an impression of enthusiasm, making it suitable for fostering a passion for learning among school students.

This internalization process is reinforced through regular group singing activities. Previously, the Principal provided the song material to the teachers. Then, the teachers invited the students to sing and memorize the lyrics of the song. Students imitate the song sung by the teacher using the imitation and drill method (repetition). This training process is conducted at specific times after school. The song notation shows the selection of melodies and rhythms that can inspire and motivate the students. The results of this observation provide a clear picture of how they are motivated to practice and memorize the song at school.

Marselus, as the creator and principal, revealed that this song was born out of concern for the importance of student character in the era of globalization. He sees the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia as an opportunity to instill character values through music, and singing activities can be an effective strategy to achieve this. In addition, a policy has been issued to sing this march song at every flag-raising ceremony. By singing the song repeatedly, students can memorize the lyrics, understand the moral message, and ultimately internalize the values contained within it. Thus, Marselus believes that his song can contribute to the character development of students. He inspires teachers and students to memorize and sing the song regularly, so that the values contained in the lyrics can be internalized within them.

### ***Implications for Education***

The results of this research have broad implications for the world of education, particularly in the context of character development for students. The use of the song created by the principal, "*Mars Gembira Bergerak*," as a medium for instilling character values at SMP Negeri 2 Bengkayang has had a significant impact. This song not only adds to the children's song repertoire but also serves as an effective tool in instilling values such as responsibility, enthusiasm, independence, creativity, and wisdom. In-depth analysis of the song's lyrics shows alignment with the *Pancasila* Student profile, particularly in the dimension of global diversity through reflection on the vision and mission of Bengkayang Regency. This program is based on multidisciplinary learning to address global challenges. This innovation shows great potential in integrating the art of music with character education, as well as making a tangible contribution to the efforts to realize the expected graduate profile for the generation of Bengkayang Regency. Happiness, characterized by feelings of joy and cheerfulness, plays a significant role in the learning process. Thus, it can be concluded that creating a positive and enjoyable learning atmosphere is key to improving the quality of education and reducing stress among students.

Movement, as explicitly stated in the title and lyrics of this song, is not merely a physical activity. Movement can be interpreted as change, where change is something dynamic and inevitable. Every individual, including students, must be able to adapt to the changes that occur, whether in terms of position, attitude, or perspective. These adaptation skills will help students face life's challenges more effectively and efficiently. I see that the title of the song contains the word "movement," which is related to the "*Sekolah Penggerak*" program by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. The driving school focuses on achieving comprehensive learning outcomes that encompass competencies and character, starting with superior human resources.

## Discussion

In the context of Character Education in Indonesia, this research reveals the potential of the song "*Mars Gembira Bergerak*," created by the Head Master, in shaping the character of junior high school students in Bengkayang Regency. The analysis of the lyrics of this song shows a strong alignment between the moral message of the song and the character development of students in accordance with the vision of Indonesian education (Alkhasawnh & Alqahtani, 2019; Irawati et al., 2022; Suwija et al., 2022). The opening verse emphasizes the importance of wisdom in a student's educational journey. In addition to academic knowledge, students also need to have the ability to act wisely, which means the ability to make the right decisions by considering long-term consequences. This is in line with the view of (Putra & Supanggah, 2018; Sakban & Sundawa, 2023) who define wisdom as behavior that aligns with norms and is future-oriented.

This strategy can also be a suitable step in enhancing the creativity of students at SMP Negeri 2 Bengkayang. Based on the literature review, creative character is defined as the ability to generate original ideas, solve problems, and adapt to changes. Research shows that creativity is not only related to cognitive abilities but also to attitudes such as courage, responsibility, and perseverance (Arnidha & Fatahillah, 2021; Iswantiningtyas et al., 2023). According to other study the character in question possesses high spirits and an innovative soul, which is reflected in the courage to think outside the box (Dirlanudin, 2018). Innovation in children often leads to new discoveries. Furthermore, as emphasized by other study innovative individuals also have a sense of responsibility for their actions, including when facing unexpected consequences (Djafri et al., 2020). In other words, they dare to take risks while still being an inspiration to others.

The verses that evoke determination and self-spiritedness, especially in lines 5 to 7, can trigger the growth of fighting spirit within children. The marching rhythm and energetic rhythmic patterns further amplify its impact, motivating children to become agents of change in the future. The success of future generations greatly depends on their fighting spirit in facing the various challenges that will come (Gutama, 2020; Tambunan, 2021; Young et al., 2016). This was clearly evident in the enthusiastic singing activity during the Monday flag ceremony. The song that is continuously sung not only makes the children memorize the lyrics but also, hopefully, the lyrics become ingrained and meaningful to the students. Verses that awaken determination and self-spiritedness, especially in lines 5 to 7, can trigger the growth of fighting spirit within children. The marching rhythm and energetic rhythmic patterns further amplify its impact, motivating children to become agents of change in the future. The success of future generations greatly depends on their fighting spirit in facing the various challenges that will come (Azizah et al., 2019; Hurriyati et al., 2022; Islamiah & Rif'an, 2023). This is clearly evident in the enthusiastic singing activities during the Monday flag ceremony. The songs that are continuously sung not only make the children memorize the lyrics but also, hopefully, the lyrics become ingrained and meaningful for the students.

Another implication found in the strategy of using this song is instilling a love for culture and local wisdom of the Dayak community, which is the majority ethnic group in Bengkayang Regency. As emphasized by previous study the noble values contained in the customs and arts of a culture can serve as a strong foundation in building individual character (Marini et al., 2019; Wibawa & Awaliah, 2023). In Bengkayang, for example, the local wisdom of the Dayak, rich in life values, needs to be continuously preserved. Although the march song is rooted in Dayak culture, the message of tolerance contained within it encourages students to appreciate the cultural diversity in Indonesia. As stated in the online news report (Olendo, 2020; Sagala, 2024), this school continues to maintain tolerance and respect for the cultural differences that grow and develop in Bengkayang Regency.

The lyrics that say "*Semangat bergerak juga berbudaya*" or the spirit of moving forward is also cultured, provide a clear picture of the noble values of the Dayak people, especially their perseverance and appreciation for culture. Previous research has confirmed the importance of cultural values in the lives of the Dayak community (Eko et al., 2020; Sumarsono, 2023) argues that the cultural richness of the Dayak can broaden children's perspectives. Therefore, this song can serve as a window for us to gain a deeper understanding of the positive values upheld by the Dayak community.

The study has significant implications for the field of education, particularly in fostering students' character development. The findings of this research can provide educators with insights into how music can be utilized as an effective tool to nurture values such as discipline, empathy, collaboration, and creativity among students. Moreover, the study may encourage schools to integrate music-based programs into their character education curriculum. Policymakers in education can also use the results as a foundation to design more holistic policies, where arts, especially music, are incorporated into the learning process to shape students who are not only academically competent but also possess strong and positive character traits.

However, this study also has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the results may not be widely generalizable due to differences in cultural contexts, curricula, and access to musical facilities across schools. Second, the focus on the junior high school level might not provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of music on character development across other educational levels. Additionally, external factors such as family background, social environment, and students' personal experiences may also influence character development, which may not be fully addressed in this research. Therefore, further studies with a more comprehensive approach are needed to strengthen these findings.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research innovatively reveals the potential of a song created by a school principal in instilling character values in junior high school students, particularly in the context of implementing the *Pancasila* Student Profile Strengthening Project. The analysis of the lyrics of the song 'Mars Gembira Bergerak' shows a strong correlation between the moral message of the song and the character development of students within the vision of Indonesian education, while also highlighting the importance of the role of school leaders in creating a character-building learning environment. The results of this study show that the school anthem can enhance discipline, responsibility, and enthusiasm for learning among students, which in turn impacts the improvement of educational quality.

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